



# THE WASHINGTON STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

*A high-quality education system that prepares all students for college, career, and life.*

## IMPLEMENTATION OF 24-CREDIT GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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**Definition of a Credit and Competency-Based Crediting**

**1. Are there seat-time requirements for earning a high school credit?**

No. The Board adopted rules in November 2011 removing the seat-time requirement from the definition of a high school credit. The applicable rule is [WAC 180-51-050](#).

**2. If seat time is not a requirement for earning a high school credit, does this mean we can give credit for Advisory regardless of the seat time?**

Yes, credit may be awarded for Advisory regardless of seat time. As an example, some districts are awarding 0.25 credits per high school year for Advisory. Since there are no state-adopted learning standards for Advisory, the local governing board or its designee should determine the learning standards for successful completion of an Advisory class. [Career Guidance Washington](#) provides a program model design. An Advisory class may be a vehicle for students to create and work on their High School and Beyond Plan, and earn credit.

[WAC 180-51-050](#) defines high school credit as:

As used in this chapter the term "high school credit" shall mean:

- (1) Grades nine through twelve or the equivalent of a four-year high school program, or as otherwise provided in RCW [28A.230.090](#)(4):
  - (a) Successful completion, as defined by written district policy, of courses taught to the state's essential academic learning requirements (learning standards). If there are no state-adopted learning standards for a subject, the local governing board, or its designee, shall determine learning standards for the successful completion of that subject; or
  - (b) Satisfactory demonstration by a student of proficiency/competency, as defined by written district policy, of the state's essential academic learning requirements (learning standards).

**3. Can a district award credit for successful completion of state assessments? Could such a credit meet a graduation requirement (i.e. Algebra I or a credit in English)?**

Yes, the definition of a high school credit allows for competency-based credit that could meet graduation requirements. As an example, some districts award 0.5 credits for meeting standard on a Math End-of-Course assessment to students who were not successful in passing the required course. To award competency-based credit, a district would need a written policy that identifies the assessment being used and the learning standards that are being assessed, in accordance with [WAC 180-51-050](#).

The [Washington State School Directors Association](#) has a model policy (Policy #2409) for competency-based crediting in World Languages that could be modified for other subjects.

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**4. If there is a sequence of courses and a student does not satisfactorily pass the course in the first semester but successfully completes the second semester, can the student earn credit for the first semester retroactively after completion of the second semester? Can a student “back-earn” credit?**

For students to earn credit in this manner a district would need to have a policy to award competency credit that stipulates that success in the second semester demonstrates competency in the knowledge and skills aligned with the standards covered in the first semester.

In the situation where a student has missed a full year of Algebra 1 or Geometry, the district could have a policy to award credit for the missing math credit, if the student is successful in higher level course and this constitutes demonstration of mastery of the lower level content. It would be a best practice for a district to allow students who have been successful in their higher level math courses and would find a lower level math course repetitive and unchallenging to move forward in their math studies. However, the policy should address the definition of “success” (ie. a student who earns an “A” in the higher level course is different from a student who earns a “D”) and should be carefully applied to ensure students avoid major gaps in their math knowledge.

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**5. How much discretion does a teacher have over competency-based crediting? How much discretion does the district have?**

The district must have a written policy in order to award competency-based crediting. The district’s policy may specify discretion for the teacher.

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**6. How many credits can a student earn through competency-based crediting?**

There are no limits on the number of credits that a student may earn through competency-based crediting.

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**7. What is the most common subject area for competency-based crediting?**

Currently the most common subject area for competency-based crediting is World Languages. As long as the district has a policy, competency-based crediting could be earned in any subject.

The [Washington State School Directors Association](#) has a model policy (Policy #2409) for competency-based crediting in World Languages that could be modified for other subjects.

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### **8. What is needed to do competency-based crediting?**

A written district policy that identifies the learning standards to be addressed and the assessment(s) that will allow students to demonstrate proficiency or mastery of those learning standards is needed for awarding competency-based crediting. The [Washington State School Directors Association](#) has a model policy (Policy #2409) for competency-based crediting in World Languages that could be modified for other subjects.

[WAC 180-51-050](#) defines high school credit as:

As used in this chapter the term "high school credit" shall mean:

- (1) Grades nine through twelve or the equivalent of a four-year high school program, or as otherwise provided in RCW [28A.230.090](#)(4):
    - (a) Successful completion, as defined by written district policy, of courses taught to the state's essential academic learning requirements (learning standards). If there are no state-adopted learning standards for a subject, the local governing board, or its designee, shall determine learning standards for the successful completion of that subject; or
    - (b) Satisfactory demonstration by a student of proficiency/competency, as defined by written district policy, of the state's essential academic learning requirements (learning standards).
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### **Career Technical Education (CTE) Course Equivalencies and "Two-for-One" Crediting**

#### **9. Can a student be awarded more than one credit in one class? For example, in a Career and Technical Education course approved for course equivalency a student can meet two graduation requirements with one course; could they also earn two credits??**

No. Under the CTE "Two-for-One" policy, a student may meet two graduation requirements by completing one course that is recognized by the district as a CTE equivalency, but a student would receive only one credit. [WAC 180-51-050](#) defines a high school credit. In high schools, earning a credit indicates successful completion of a course taught to state learning standards, or locally determined standards if there are no state learning standards for that subject. Districts may award less than a full credit for some classes, for example .25 for advisory or .5 credits for Washington State History, but most high school courses are transcribed as one credit.

There is not a minimum hour requirement associated with a high school course or high school credit. Districts have local control over the curricula, the design and the delivery of the class.

[WAC 180-51-067](#) and [WAC 180-51-068](#) articulates the "two for one policy," that allows student to earn two graduation requirements for one credit.

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#### **10. If students meet two graduation requirements with only one CTE equivalency credit ("two-for-one"), do they still need to earn a total of 24 credits in order to graduate under the 24-credit graduation requirements?**

Yes. Earning "two-for-one" credit will allow students more flexibility in their schedule but they will still need to earn 24 total credits.

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**11. What is the difference between CTE course equivalencies and 2-for-1 crediting?**

CTE course equivalencies permit students to meet core subject area graduation requirements through a CTE course. All CTE course equivalencies may be used for “two-for-one” crediting but it is not required that they be used in that way.

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**12. Can courses other than CTE Course Equivalencies meet two graduation requirements with only one credit?**

Yes. For example, a physical education dance course could be recognized by a district as meeting two graduation requirements (i.e. fitness and an arts requirement).

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**13. What documentation is required when students access the two-for-one credit?**

The documentation for meeting graduation requirements would be locally determined. A reasonable place to record the two-for-one crediting is the High School and Beyond Plan. The transcript should reflect the College Academic Distribution Requirements (CADRs) if possible. Courses meeting CADR are determined by the school district and noted on the transcript with the “B” course designation code. More information about transcripts may be found on the [OSPI Transcripts webpage](#), including a [High School Transcripts FAQ](#).

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**14. If a student meets two graduation requirements with one credit, does the student still need to earn 24 credits in total?**

Yes, meeting two graduation requirements with one credit does not preclude the student from the requirement to earn 24 credits. However, it does provide flexibility for the student to take an additional elective course.

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**15. What resources are available for districts to use course equivalency frameworks developed by other districts or the state?**

The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction [CTE Office](#) has information about state course equivalencies and other CTE frameworks.

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**“Unusual Circumstances” Waivers for Individual Students**

**16. Where can the Washington State School Directors Association model policy for the two credit waiver for individual students for “unusual circumstances” be found?**

The [Washington State School Directors Association](#) has a model policy (Policy #2418) for the Waiver of High School Graduation Credits. More information may be obtained through WSSDA’s Policy & Legal Office.

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**17. Is the two-credit waiver for individual students for “unusual circumstances” at the district’s discretion? In other words, can the district choose not to have it, or choose to have it with more limiting “special circumstances?”**

Yes. The [Washington State School Directors Association](#) has a model policy (Policy #2418) for the Waiver of High School Graduation Credits. More information may be obtained through WSSDA’s Policy & Legal Office. Districts are not required to use the model policy. Districts may create their own policy or choose not to have a policy.

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**18. How is the “unusual circumstances” waiver developed? Who decides?**

A school board may decide to adopt a policy for the “unusual circumstances” waiver. The district may consider the [Washington State School Directors Association](#) model policy (Policy #2418) or may develop its own.

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**19. Can any type of credits be waived for “unusual circumstances?”**

No. The waiver is limited to the flexible credits within the 24-credit framework. The flexible credits are the Personalized Pathway Requirements and elective credits ([WAC 180-51-068](#)).

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**20. Does a student have to attempt 24 credits in order to receive a two-credit waiver for “unusual circumstances?”**

No.

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**21. Can the “unusual circumstances” waiver be applied to an individual student during the ninth grade year?**

Yes.

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**Awarding High School Credit in Middle School**

**22. For high school credit to be granted for courses taught in middle school, is the middle school teacher required to be Highly Qualified and certified to teach high school?**

No. Educators teaching outside of their endorsement is not a best practice but a high school endorsement is not a requirement for offering high school credit. Highly Qualified has been eliminated under the new federal Every Student Succeeds Act. The requirement for offering high school credit in middle school is that the academic level of the course exceeds the requirements for seventh and eighth grade and the course is similar or equivalent to a course offered at a high school in the district as determined by the school district board of directors ([RCW 28A.230.090](#)).

### **23. Can a 6th grader take Algebra I or Spanish I and earn high school credit?**

Yes. There is nothing to preclude a younger student from earning high school credit as long as high school standards are met. [RCW 28A.230.090](#) (4) specifies circumstances under which a student may earn high school credit before high school. In order for the student to earn high school credit and meet graduation requirements, the credit must be requested by the student or his or her family.

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### **24. Can a middle school student satisfy graduation requirements without earning high school credit?**

Yes, a middle school student may satisfy graduation requirements without earning high school credit in math and Washington state history. A student may take Algebra I prior to ninth grade but the student or his or her parents may elect not to put the credit on his or her transcript. The student would still need to earn three credits of high school math, but the requirement to take Algebra I would have been met.

OSPI's [Learning By Choice](#) booklet provides information on student enrollment options in Washington, including taking high school coursework before 9<sup>th</sup> grade.

A student may take Washington state history prior to ninth grade but the district is not required to award high school credit. The student would meet the Washington state history graduation requirement. Washington state history is a non-credit graduation requirement. However districts may award credit for Washington state history if it is taught to high school learning standards. In order for the student to earn the high school credit and meet graduation requirements, the credit must be requested by the student or his or her family.

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### **25. What are subjects that students are earning high school credit for during middle school?**

Most common subjects for which student are earning high school credit in middle school are Algebra I, Geometry, Washington state history and World Language. Any subject could be offered for high school credit if the high school learning standards are taught and the requirements of [RCW 28A.230.090\(4\)](#) are met.

## **Definition of Laboratory Science**

### **26. What does the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) define as lab science?**

The NCAA does not explicitly define what a lab science is, but does identify courses that they accept as a lab science on their [High School Portal](#).

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### **27. Which courses can be considered lab science?**

Districts decide which science courses are lab science courses. Rules adopted by the State Board of Education, [WAC 180-51-068](#), defines laboratory science:

"Laboratory science" means any instruction that provides opportunities for students to interact directly with the material world, or with data drawn from the material world, using the tools, data collection techniques, models and theories of science. A laboratory science course meeting the requirement of section (3) may include courses conducted in classroom facilities specially



designed for laboratory science, or coursework in traditional classrooms, outdoor spaces, or other settings which accommodate elements of laboratory science as identified in this subsection;

This definition allows districts flexibility in offering science laboratory courses. Laboratory courses do not need to be offered in a dedicated laboratory facility, but could also be conducted in a traditional classroom, outdoors, or in a combination of settings.

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### **High School and Beyond Plan and Personalized Pathway Requirements**

#### **28. What if a student changes his or her mind about career and education goals? How should that be handled in the High School and Beyond Plan?**

A best practice is to revisit the [High School and Beyond Plan](#) with each student at least once a year.

WSIPC (a public cooperative that provides information services to school districts) offers an online tool that is available for use at no cost to the districts. Districts that are not already WSIPC clients pay a one-time nominal set-up fee. The fee is for connecting the district's student information system to the WSIPC High School and Beyond tool so that student information can automatically populate the tool. (Contact [WSIPC](#) for more information.) For districts that use this online tool revisiting the High School and Beyond Plan is simple, and can be done at any time by the student or the school counselor.

Resources for comprehensive guidance and counseling, including resources for the High School and Beyond Plan and Personalized Pathway Requirements, may be found on [OSPI's Guidance and Counseling webpage](#).

The requirements of the High School and Beyond Plan within the 24-credit graduation requirements is specified in [WAC 180-51-068](#):

“(10) Each student shall have a high school and beyond plan to guide his or her high school experience, including plans for post-secondary education or training and career. The process for completing the high school and beyond plan is locally determined and designed to help students select course work and other activities that will best prepare them for their post-secondary educational and career goals. Students shall create their high school and beyond plans in cooperation with parents/guardians and school staff. School staff shall work with students to update the plans during the years in which the plan is implemented in order to accommodate changing interests or goals.”

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#### **29. Are the Personalized Pathway Requirements a sequence of three courses? Do students need to complete a sequence of three courses to meet the Personalized Pathway Requirements?**

No. The student's Personalized Pathway Requirements need to align with the student's career and education goals, but the student's goals may change during high school. If a student changes his or her mind about their career and education goals, their next choice for a Personalized Pathway Requirement should align with their new goals based on their High School and Beyond Plan. The student does not need to start over with a new sequence of three courses. The purpose of the Personalized Pathway Requirement is for the student to have intentionality in their high school course choices.

“Personalized pathway” and “personalized pathway requirement” are defined in [WAC 180-51-068](#):

“(b) "Personalized pathway" means a locally determined body of coursework identified in a student's high school and beyond plan that is deemed necessary to attain the post-secondary career or educational goals chosen by the student;

(c) "Personalized pathway requirements" means up to three course credits chosen by a student under subsections (6) and (8) of this section that are included in a student's personalized pathway and prepare the student to meet specific post-secondary career or educational goals.”

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### **30. Are Personalized Pathway Requirements simply electives?**

Personalized Pathway Requirements are similar to electives, but electives allow students to explore, while the Personalized Pathway Requirements are meant to relate to their education and career goals as expressed in their High School and Beyond Plan.

“Personalized pathway” and “personalized pathway requirement” are defined in [WAC 180-51-068](#):

“(b) "Personalized pathway" means a locally determined body of coursework identified in a student's high school and beyond plan that is deemed necessary to attain the post-secondary career or educational goals chosen by the student;

(c) "Personalized pathway requirements" means up to three course credits chosen by a student under subsections (6) and (8) of this section that are included in a student's personalized pathway and prepare the student to meet specific post-secondary career or educational goals.”

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### **31. How can we implement individual High School and Beyond Plans if counselors have a large caseload and the district does not yet have a district-wide electronic system for the HSBP?**

WSIPC (a public cooperative that provides information services to school districts) offers an online tool that is available for use at no cost to the districts. Districts that are not already WSIPC clients pay a one-time nominal set-up fee. The fee is for connecting the district’s student information system to the WSIPC High School and Beyond tool so that student information can automatically populate the tool. Contact [WSIPC](#) for more information.

Resources for counselors may be found on OSPI’s [Guidance and Counseling webpage](#), and on the State Board of Education’s [webpage on the High School and Beyond Plan](#).

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### **32. Do Personalized Pathway Requirements need to be documented on the student transcript?**

No.

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### **33. Where should a student’s Personalized Pathway Requirements be documented?**

The Personalized Pathway Requirements should be documented in the student’s High School and Beyond Plan.

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**34. What are College Academic Distribution Requirements in Washington state?**

The Washington Student Achievement Council provides [information on admissions requirements to four-year institutions](#), College Academic Distribution Requirements (CADRs) in Washington State. The 24-credit graduation requirements align closely with CADRs, but not exactly. For example, to fulfill the CADRs students need to take a math-based quantitative course in their senior year and students need to take 2 credits in *the same* World Language.

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**35. Do students have to choose between three Personalized Pathway Requirement courses and two language and one arts course?**

No. Personalized Pathway Requirements may be used in any combination.

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**What Are Districts Doing to Implement 24-Credit Requirements?****36. What are some innovative ways that districts are changing their schedules to increase the opportunity to earn more credits?**

The Association of Washington School Principals (AWSP) is looking at ways that districts are increasing their credit offerings. They have produced a [video](#) featuring notable school and district examples. Examples of ways to increase the opportunity to earn credits include changing from a semester to a trimester or changing from a six-period to a seven-period day. For more information, visit [www.awsp.org](http://www.awsp.org) or contact Scott Seaman at [scott@awsp.org](mailto:scott@awsp.org)

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**37. How many districts already require students to earn at least 24 credits to graduate as part of their locally adopted graduation requirements?**

Based on data for the Class of 2016 from the Basic Education Compliance reports that the State Board of Education receives from all school districts, 41 percent or 103 school districts out of 249 high school districts require at least 24 credits. There are 295 school districts in the state but only 249 have high schools.

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**38. What percentage of high schools offer competency-based crediting?**

Based on data for the Class of 2016 from the Basic Education Compliance reports 36 percent or 89 school districts out of 249 high school districts offer competency-based crediting.

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**39. Where can I find more information about district graduation requirements? Which districts already require 24 or more credits? Which districts allow for competency-based crediting?**

Each year the State Board of Education collects data from all school districts through its Basic Education Compliance report. The district graduation requirements comparison spreadsheets can be found in the “Resources” section at the bottom of [www.sbe.wa.gov/graduation.php](http://www.sbe.wa.gov/graduation.php)

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**Other Questions**

**40. Has the Legislature allocated funding for the implementation of the 24-credit graduation requirements?**

\$97 million dollars was allocated to districts for the implementation of the 24-credit graduation requirements in the 2013-2015 Washington state budget. That funding carries forward, with growth for enrollment and increased staff counts in subsequent budgets.

The budget notes from the 2014 supplemental budget (page 176) provide further explanation:

**Opportunity for 24 Credits and Instructional Hours**

Funding in the amount of \$97.0 million is reallocated within the program of basic education from implementation of increased instructional hours as directed under Chapter 4, Laws of 2013, 2nd sp.s., to implement Chapter 217, Laws of 2014 (E2SSB 6552). Under the reallocation, funding is provided for a class size enhancement for two laboratory science classes within grades 9 through 12, increased prototypical high school guidance counselor allocations, and an addition MSOC allocation for grades 9 through 12. A proportional increase for educational staff associate ratios in career and technical education and skill center allocations is also provided. Additionally, funding is provided for rule making at the State Board of Education and for the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) to develop curriculum frameworks for a selected list of career and technical education courses. The net impact of this shift is a reduction of \$0.2 million.

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**41. Will completion of a *Bridge-to-College* course count as meeting the testing requirement for high school graduation?**

No, not under current law.

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**42. Given that some districts will have a temporary waiver to delay implementation of the 24-credit graduation requirements, how should students who are transferring from a district requiring only 20 credits to a district requiring 24 be addressed?**

Districts should have a policy for addressing the needs of transfer students.

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**43. Is the physical education requirement waiver still available for students?**

Yes (RCW [28A.230.050](#)). The fitness waiver was unchanged by the 24-credit graduation requirements.

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**44. If the CTE (Occupational Education) course is not taught by CTE-certificated staff, can the district access state CTE funding for that course?**

No.

If you have any questions about 24-credit graduation requirements, please contact Linda Drake at [linda.drake@k12.wa.us](mailto:linda.drake@k12.wa.us)