



COVID-19 and Competency / Mastery Based Credit

Responding to the extraordinary circumstances caused by the novel coronavirus/COVID-19 outbreak, the State Board of Education (SBE) has adopted emergency rules that allow school districts to apply for a waiver of credits, including core course credits. The purpose of the waiver is to protect students in the graduating class of 2020 or earlier who were on track to graduate from being negatively impacted by the governor's COVID-19 emergency proclamation on February 29, 2020. The use of competency/mastery-based crediting plays an important role in successfully implementing the emergency waiver program and may be crucial for students whose schools have closed in response to COVID-19.

The emergency rules, which expire on July 31, 2020, require school districts to make a “good faith effort” to support their students in meeting graduation requirements through existing local authority before seeking an emergency waiver. This means that districts will have considered all options to support individual students in meeting credit requirements. Options include:

- Implementing OSPI guidance, such as Bulletin 022-20;
- Providing opportunities to earn credits, such as competency/mastery credits; and
- Waiving of elective or locally imposed credits.

After considering all options, districts should determine which options they can feasibly provide, then examine individual student circumstances to determine what is needed and appropriate.

As noted above, one method for demonstrating a good faith effort is by using competency/mastery-based credit to address core course requirements and credit deficiencies. A competency/mastery approach, in which mastery is determined by the instructors, can provide course credit for those students who met standard prior to February 29, 2020. Additionally, a competency/mastery approach can provide course credit for students who had sufficient distance learning opportunities during the COVID-19 school closure.

Importantly, WAC 180-51-050 requires that for districts to award competency/mastery credit, local school boards must adopt an authorizing policy. WSSDA Model Policy No. 2409 - World Languages has been available for over a decade. That model policy is designed for competency/proficiency credit in world languages, and includes a statement that districts could expand the policy to multiple subjects. However, the SBE's annual Basic Education Compliance Survey (reported in the [Mastery-based Work Group Interim Report](#)) indicates that the subject most commonly credited through competency-based policies remains world languages.

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To help districts meet the prerequisite of having adopted a policy, WSSDA has developed new model policies for specific subjects, in addition to World Languages:

- 2402 – English Language Arts,
- 2403 – Math,
- 2404 – Science,
- 2405 – Social Studies,
- 2406 – Art, and
- 2407 – Health and Fitness

Districts that do not already have policies in place are encouraged to adopt any or all of these policies to maximize the opportunity to award students with credits that meet high school graduation requirements, despite the COVID-19 outbreak.

The SBE's preferred approach for responding to the COVID-19 school closures is for all high school students to receive full credit for as many of their courses as they were enrolled in, or were planning to be enrolled in, as is possible and appropriate. Receiving course credit helps alleviate the long-term impacts of school closures, such as not meeting the College Academic Distribution Requirements (CADRs). Receiving course credit helps alleviate possible long-term impacts of school closures on the student's life after high school. Students graduating with the waiver may need to make up content later when they go to college or prepare for a career.

For an extended guidance document intended for district staff, please see the [SBE website](#).