BRIEFING ON COMPETENCY-BASED CREDIT FOR WORLD LANGUAGES

BACKGROUND

The State Board of Education (SBE) has endorsed competency-based approaches to education since the inception of education reform in Washington. In addition to the SBE's support for performance-based assessments like the state's High School Proficiency Exam, Washington is one of 35 states with a state competency-based credit rule[1].

SBE's competency-based credit rule allows high school credit to be awarded upon:

> … Satisfactory demonstration by a student of clearly identified competencies established pursuant to a process defined in written district policy. Districts are strongly advised to confirm with the higher education coordinating board that the award of competency-based high school credit meets the minimum college core admissions standards set by the higher education coordinating board for admission into a public, baccalaureate institution. (WAC 180-51-050)

Although this statement has been in place for a number of years, few districts[2] have implemented it, in part because of the additional resources needed to establish comprehensive procedures that could be fairly applied. State funding policies also have not rewarded districts whose students might use competency-based credit to accelerate their studies.[3]

Definition. Competencies (also known as proficiencies) are generally perceived to be a cluster of knowledge, skills, and/or attitudes that can be measured against well-accepted standards. The concept of awarding credit for competencies is attractive because it can help students:
1) Demonstrate and validate expertise they have already gained.
2) Free time in their schedule to pursue other interests.
3) Apply learning (depending upon the nature of the assessment used to demonstrate competency).

In the process of revising state graduation requirements, the SBE looked for ways to build on the state's performance-based approach. The opportunity to earn competency-based credit was viewed as a strategy that could create more scheduling flexibility for students. The SBE also sought ways to recognize assets that learners brought to the table, in particular those students with expertise in another language.

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[1] http://mb2.ecs.org/reports/Report.aspx?id=740. Policies vary in their breadth: some are specific only to certain subjects; others allow for the possibility of credit in all subjects.

[2] Evergreen School District is one exception. In July 2008, the SBE heard Superintendent John Deeder describe his district's efforts to develop assessment measures and procedures to grant credit, in lieu of enrollment, for English, mathematics, science and social studies.

[3] Districts receive state funding based upon student enrollment hours in class (WAC 392-121-122). If a student tests out of a class, then there is no funding "event" to generate money. There is no relationship between the number of hours required for a credit and funding.

Removing barriers. The dearth of state models for local policies and procedures has been a barrier to district implementation. The SBE, in collaboration with the Washington State School Directors' Association (WSSDA) and the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), embarked on an initiative in 2009 to develop sample policies and procedures that districts could adapt to fit their local needs (see Attachment A).

World languages were selected as the starting point. Because world languages are skill-based and have widely-available standardized assessments with national norms, the subject lends itself more readily to competency-based practices.

The SBE used Gates funding to convene a World Languages Advisory Group[4]. The Advisory Group was asked to advise the SBE about: 1) the level of competency (i.e. language proficiency) students would need to attain in order to earn credit; 2) the manner of assessment that would be appropriate; and 3) the areas (e.g., speaking, reading, writing, and/or listening) in which competency might be expected. The Advisory Group met three times in 2009 and was comprised primarily of world languages teachers and professors from K-12 and higher education.

The SBE also conducted a small assessment study[5] to compare the proficiency of high school students with two years of language study to that of college students with two academic quarters of college study. Washington's data was then compared to national data. The study was not intended to be representative of all students but rather to give the Advisory Group data that could serve as a catalyst for discussion. Despite these limitations, the study found similarities between the Washington data and the national data. For instance, writing scores were generally higher than speaking scores, and speaking scores were higher than reading scores. The Advisory Group used the data, as well as a review of selected other states' policies (Connecticut, New Jersey, and Utah) to make recommendations about the level of proficiency needed to award credit. (See Attachment B for examples of other states' policies.)

Sample Competency-based World Languages Policy and Procedure. WSSDA, OSPI, and SBE staff have collaborated to develop a sample competency-based credit world languages policy and procedure. Once published by WSSDA, the sample policy and procedure will serve as a guide for districts seeking to award competency-based credit.

Next Steps. WSSDA will disseminate the sample policy and procedure to its members. All three organizations (SBE, WSSDA, OSPI) will post the policy and procedure on their respective websites, so the information is available to all public, private, and tribal schools within the state.

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[4] The World Languages Advisory Group included: Amy Ohta (University of Washington, Japanese), Ana Fernandez Dobao (University of Washington, Spanish), Blythe Young (Bellevue School District, Spanish), Bridget Yaden (Pacific Lutheran University, Spanish), Chunman Gissing (University Prep, Chinese), Dave Cotlove (Highline School District, Puget Sound Skills Center), Hedwige Meyer (University of Washington, French), Joshua Hansell (Seattle School District, Japanese), Karen Eitreim (North Thurston School District, German), Klaus Brandl (University of Washington, German), Maria Gillman (University of Washington, Spanish), Rachel Halverson (Washington State University, German), Rachel Martin (Cheney High School, French), Rick Beck (West Valley School District, German), Sue Webber (Arlington School District, German), Trish Skillman (Western Washington University, TESOL), Vince Eberly (Central Valley School District, Russian)

[5] The study used the STAMP (Standards-based Measurement of Proficiency) to assess 465 students (196 college; 269 high school) in Spanish, French, German, Japanese and Chinese, in three areas: reading, writing, and speaking.

OSPI will publicize the policy and procedure in world languages presentations, as well. A list of FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions) will also be posted on the websites (see Attachment C).

SBE will work with the Higher Education Coordinating Board (HECB) to identify and negotiate any barriers to the acceptance of world languages competency-based credit towards meeting the College Academic Distribution Requirements (CADRs). This conversation has already begun. SBE staff will work with OSPI staff on the manner in which competency-based credit would be acknowledged on the standardized transcript.

With this first model in place, staff plans to pursue other subject areas to develop sample policies and procedures. The next subject has not yet been identified.

EXPECTED ACTION

Staff recommends that the SBE consider issuing a resolution to endorse the development of sample policy and procedures to provide guidance to districts seeking to adopt competency-based credit (see Attachment D).

CREDIT FOR COMPETENCY/PROFICIENCY

(This policy is designed for competency/proficiency credit in world languages, however, a district can expand the policy to multiple subjects.)

World Languages

The board recognizes the value of preparing students to be global citizens with the skills to communicate in English and other world languages. In our state's diverse communities, it is not unusual for students to have various opportunities to develop language skills, for example, through experiences of using the language at home, attendance at language programs offered in the community, learning online or time spent living abroad. The district encourages students and their families to take advantage of any language learning opportunities available to them.

To enable students to fully benefit from the advantages of multilingualism, the district will encourage students to learn to understand, speak, read and write at a high level of language proficiency. Proficiency can also be demonstrated in languages that are only spoken or signed.

In order to recognize the language proficiency of students, the superintendent is directed to develop procedures for awarding world language credits to students based on demonstrated proficiency across a range of language skills.

Legal References: RCW 28A.230.090(4)(5)   High school graduation requirements or equivalencies
WAC 180-51-050   High school credit - Definition

Adoption Date:
School District Name
Revised: 6.10
Classification:

World Languages Credit for Competency/Proficiency

A. **Definition:**

For purposes of this procedure, a world language is defined according to the definition used by the Higher Education Coordinating Board as "[a]ny natural language that has been formally studied […], including American Sign Language (AMESLAN, the language of the deaf community), and languages no longer spoken, such as Latin and ancient Greek. However, neither computer 'languages' nor forms of deaf signing aside from AMESLAN are acceptable."

B. **Demonstrating Competency/Proficiency in a World Language**

The district will manage the assessment process so that students seeking competency based credit can demonstrate competency/proficiency across language skills. Assessments will be aligned to the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) Proficiency Guidelines in order to ensure consistency across languages. The district will select the appropriate assessment instrument(s) from the following:

- Standards-based Measurement of Proficiency (STAMP) in reading, writing, and speaking (and listening, if available) for all languages for which it is available (as of 2010, Spanish, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Chinese). STAMP is offered by Avant Assessment (http://avantassessment.com).

- American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) assessments Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI) or Oral Proficiency Interview Computer Based (OPIc) and Writing Proficiency Test (WPT) — for languages for which STAMP is not available or for which ACTFL assessments are deemed to be more appropriate. ACTFL assessments are offered through Language Testing International (http://www.languagetesting.com).

- Appropriate assessments for American Sign Language such as the Sign Language Proficiency Interview (SLPI).

- For languages that do not currently have any other nationally available proficiency based assessment, the district will work with local language communities and the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) World Languages Program to develop a collection of evidence process, such as LinguaFolio, that is aligned with ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines.

C. **Determining Competency and Credit Equivalencies**

The district will award one or more credits based on the student demonstrating an overall proficiency level according to the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines as follows:

Novice Mid – 1 credit (Carnegie Unit)

Novice High – 2 credits

Intermediate Low – 3 credits

Intermediate Mid – 4 credits

Since students may demonstrate varied levels of proficiency across skills, credits will be awarded based on the lowest common level of proficiency demonstrated across the skill areas.

(Example: If a student demonstrated Intermediate Mid level proficiency in Speaking, but Novice Mid in Reading and Writing, then credits would be awarded based on the lowest common level of demonstrated proficiency, i.e. one credit for Novice Mid. The student would not receive individual credits for separate language skills. In this example, the student would not receive four credits for Intermediate Mid in Speaking and one credit each for Novice Mid in Reading and Writing. The total award is one World Language credit.)

D. **Offering Testing Opportunities**

The district will manage the assessment process so that students have multiple (*district may insert here the number of opportunities*) opportunities to take or retake the assessment(s) required to demonstrate proficiency. Assessments must be offered in a proctored setting with appropriate technology. The district will approve the site(s) where the assessments are offered, which could include individual schools, district buildings, community colleges, universities, educational service districts, or other community settings.

E. **Paying for Assessments**

The district will set a fee for the assessments to cover administrative costs, test fees, and/or proctoring. Fees may vary depending on the assessment costs. The district will offer financial assistance to students who demonstrate need, such as qualifying for free or reduced price lunch. (*Insert language here if the district plans to pay the assessment fee or subsidize the student's cost.)*

Current fees and financial assistance information are available from (*insert specific district location here*).

(*Insert assessment fee schedule here.*)

F. **Reporting Results**

The district will receive official test results for each student participating in the assessment process. The district will provide a letter to the student with a copy of the test results and an indication of how many world language credits, if any, may be awarded. If requested by the student, the school counselors will record the world language credits earned on the official transcript. Credits will be awarded with a grade of "Pass."

Date: 6.10

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Accountability | World-Class Math and Science Standards | Meaningful Diploma/CORE 24

Attachment B

Comparison of Five States with Proficiency-based World Languages Requirements:
Connecticut, Michigan, New Jersey, New York and Utah

State	WL Grad Req?	Cost to Student	Competency-based Policy	World Language Assessment	Proficiency Levels To Earn Credit	
					Level	Credit
CT	Yes, 2 credits, class of 2018	?	CT permits local school boards to grant a student credit upon completion of a world language course offered privately through a nonprofit provider, provided such student achieves a passing grade on an examination prescribed, within available appropriations, by the Commissioner of Education and such credits do not exceed four. CT extends the proficiency-based credit policy to other subjects, as well. World Language Standards: http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/cwp/view.asp?a=2618&q=320992	What Student Must Do: • Complete a world language course offered privately through a nonprofit provider • Achieve a pre-determined proficiency score Assessments: • American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI) *and* • ACTFL Written Proficiency Test (WPT), taken in the same language If the ratings differ, the credits will be awarded based on the lower of the two ratings. Students can take the tests while in Grades 7-12.	Novice High Intermediate Low Intermediate Mid Intermediate High ***Maximum 4 credits may be earned by state law; ACTFL would suggest more	1* 2** 2* 3** 4* 4** 4*** *Category I & II languages, e.g., I: French, Italian, Spanish, Dutch II: German, Urdu **Category III & IV languages, e.g., III: Russian, Vietnamese IV: Arabic, Mandarin, Japanese

State	WL Grad Req?	Cost to Student	Competency-based Policy	World Language Assessment	Proficiency Levels To Earn Credit	
					Level	Credit
MI	Yes, 2 credits in 2016	?	MI has a general proficiency-based credit policy. In addition, local board must grant high school credit to a high school student who demonstrates proficiency in American Sign Language, or who demonstrates "proficiency in a foreign language outside of a public or private high school curriculum" either by competency test "or other criteria established by the board." http://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/WL_Guidelines_FINAL_206823_7.pdf	What Student Must Do: • Complete 2 units of high school study, or • Demonstrate proficiency <u>prior</u> to high school or • Provide formal documentation of proficiency through assessments listed below <u>or</u> through transcript documentation of continuous and successful experiences of at least one academic semester (for one credit) or two academic semesters (for two credits) at a school in which classes were conducted in the language for which credit is sought. Assessment: • Standards-based Measurement of Proficiency (STAMP) • National language organization exam such as the American Association of Teachers of Spanish and Portuguese (AATSP) national Spanish exam • Combination of district assessments AND commercially-prepared assessments (e.g., Simulated Oral Proficiency Interview—SOPI); Student Oral Proficiency Assessment –SOPA; Early Language Learning Oral Proficiency Assessment—ELLOPA; Standards-based Measurement of Proficiency—STAMP;	Novice Mid, Level I, European Level A1 Novice High, Level II, or European Level A2	1 2

State	WL Grad Req?	Cost to Student	Competency-based Policy	World Language Assessment	Proficiency Levels To Earn Credit	
					Level	Credit
				Signed Communication Proficiency Interview—SCPI; Oral Proficiency Interview—OPI)		
NJ	Yes, 1 credit	?	NJ has a general state policy that permits students to earn credit by establishing proficiency. In addition, the policy specifies that, in lieu of completing the five credit graduation requirement (equivalent to 1 WA credit) in world languages, a student may demonstrate proficiency. http://www.state.nj.us/education/aps/cccs/wl/guide.htm#II1	What Student Must Do: • Experience world language instruction in K-8 • Test out of the world language graduation requirement at the end of 8th grade by demonstrating a Novice High level of proficiency or • Earn credit by taking world language classes in high school Assessments: • Standards-based Measurement of Proficiency (STAMP) or • Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI) or Modified Oral Proficiency Interview (MOPI)	Novice High	5 (equivalent to 1 WA credit)
NY	Yes, 1 credit	?	NY has a general state policy that permits students to earn credit by establishing proficiency. Students can demonstrate mastery of world language learning outcomes by completing a unit of study, earning credit by examination on the New York State Second Language Proficiency Exam, or documenting school attendance in an other-than-	What Student Must Do: • Complete a unit of study, or • Successfully complete a state exam, or • Have documented school attendance in an other-than-English speaking environment. Assessment: New York State Second Language Proficiency Exam		

State	WL Grad Req?	Cost to Student	Competency-based Policy	World Language Assessment	Proficiency Levels To Earn Credit	
					Level	Credit
			English speaking environment. http://schools.nyc.gov/RulesPolicies/ GraduationRequirements/default.ht m			
UT	No	$85 per assessment section	UT has a general state policy that permits students to earn credit by establishing proficiency. UT defines "demonstrated competence" as "subject mastery as determined by school district standards and review. School district review may include such methods and documentation as: tests, interviews, peer evaluations, writing samples, reports or portfolios." Students may complete units of credit by demonstrated competence and/or assessment, "as determined by the school district or school" and/or "review of student work or projects consistent with school district or school procedures and criteria.... School districts or schools shall designate by written policy at least three methods by which students of the district may earn credit."	What Student Must Do: • Submit a written request for taking a test to the school counselor. • Pay the non-refundable fee. • Go to a testing center and complete the reading, writing, and speaking sections of the Standards-based Measurement of Proficiency (STAMP) (Students can take an assessment only once per school year.) Assessment: • Standards-based Assessment of Proficiency (STAMP)	Novice Mid Novice High	1 2 Maximum 2 credits may be earned

State	WL Grad Req?	Cost to Student	Competency-based Policy	World Language Assessment	Proficiency Levels To Earn Credit	
					Level	Credit
			http://www.rules.utah.gov/publicat/ code/r277/r277-703.htm#T3			

World Languages Competency-Based Credit (DRAFT)
Updated: July, 2010

1. How is the State Board of Education supporting competency-based credit?
2. If a student speaks a language fluently, will he or she automatically be awarded credits?
3. How will students demonstrate their proficiency?
4. What about languages that don't currently have a standardized assessment developed?
5. Does earning credits by demonstrating proficiency suggest that the student knows less (or more) than students who attended a regular in-school language program?
6. What will be the impact on language classes once this process is implemented?
7. How will competency-based credits impact students' applications to college?
8. In the model procedure's definition of "World Languages" what does "formally studied" mean?
9. May districts collaborate to offer a testing site?
10. In what ways can the community support paying for assessments?

1. How is the State Board of Education supporting competency-based credit?

   State Board of Education (SBE) rule[6] permits districts to award credits based on satisfactory demonstration by a student of clearly identified competencies, if the district has a process defined in written district policy. Although the policy has been in place for years, few districts award competency-based credit.

   The SBE, in collaboration with the Washington State School Directors' Association (WSSDA) and the Office of State Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), embarked on an initiative in 2009 to develop sample policies and procedures that districts could adapt to fit their local needs. World languages were selected as the starting point. Because world languages are skill-based and have widely-available standardized assessments with national norms, the subject lends itself more readily to competency-based practices.

   By providing sample competency-based credit policies and procedures, more districts may develop written processes for awarding credits for competency/proficiency. Competency-based credit has the potential to create more scheduling flexibility for students, which may become increasingly important as new minimum credits for graduation are phased in.

2. If a student speaks a language fluently, will he or she automatically be awarded credits?

   Although these decisions are ultimately up to the district, the sample WSSDA policy and procedure recommend that students demonstrate proficiency across a variety of language skills, including speaking, reading, and writing. (Listening is also important, but

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[6] WAC 180-51-050 http://apps.leg.wa.gov/WAC/default.aspx?cite=180-51-050,

due to technological limitations, it is not always included in generally available online language assessments.) Therefore, it will be important for students who speak a language fluently to also make the effort to learn to read and write in the language in order to earn world language credits.

3. How will students demonstrate their proficiency?

    The model procedure recommends that districts identify nationally available proficiency assessments to use as the basis for awarding credit for proficiency. This is the most cost-effective, fair, and consistent way to make decisions about proficiency. In general, the assessments should be aligned to the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) Proficiency Guidelines (http://www.actfl.org/i4a/pages/index.cfm?pageid=4236). ACTFL uses a proficiency scale from Novice (low, mid, high) to Intermediate (low, mid, high) to Advanced (low, mid, high) and Superior. Most K-12 language learners perform at the Novice or possibly Intermediate level, but students who are native or heritage speakers or have attended K-12 immersion programs may reach the Advanced level in some skills.

    The Standards-based Measurement of Proficiency (STAMP), developed at the Center for Applied Second Language Studies (CASLS) at the University of Oregon and offered to schools and districts through Avant Assessment (www.avantassessment.com), is an example of a nationally available standards-based assessment. STAMP currently covers six languages: Spanish, French, German, Italian, Japanese, and Chinese. For other languages, there are other nationally available assessments, such as the ACTFL Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI) and Writing Proficiency Test (WPT) offered through Language Testing International (www.languagetesting.com).

4. What about languages that don't currently have a standardized assessment developed?

    Districts may want to include the option of developing a Collection of Evidence aligned to the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines for languages that do not currently have any other nationally available proficiency-based assessment. This Collection of Evidence model could be developed jointly with the assistance of the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction World Languages Program and the involvement of local language communities. OSPI is working on a project to make LinguaFolio Online, an online tool for student self-assessment and posting of evidence, available to language learners throughout the state. This could be an effective tool for supporting students seeking credit for competency/proficiency. The LinguaFolio Self-Assessment grid, which is aligned to the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines, is available to download from the LinguaFolio Online website: https://linguafolio.uoregon.edu/documents/LFGrid.pdf.

5. Does earning credits by demonstrating proficiency suggest that the student knows less (or more) than students who attended a regular in-school language program?

    The sample WSSDA world language policy and procedure recommend a standard for awarding credits for world languages proficiency after examining actual proficiency data collected at the national level and in Washington State. The goal is to set the standard at a high enough level without being unrealistic. Generally, students who earn credit for proficiency would be demonstrating a performance level similar to the top 15%-45% of the students in a traditional high school world language class, depending on the language, level, and quality of teaching. (For example, after two years of high school

language study, students of Spanish are more likely to reach higher proficiency levels than students of Japanese or Chinese, which are more difficult for native English speakers to learn.) It is quite possible that a student earning credit for proficiency would have a higher level of proficiency than some (or many) of the students who earn credits based on seat-time in a traditional language class.

6. What will be the impact on language classes once this process is implemented?

   There is no immediate impact to current language classes in the schools because the policy applies to students who have generally acquired or learned a language outside of school. For schools with a large number of heritage speakers (such as students who speak a language other than English with their families), having this option may increase their motivation to develop the ability to read and write in that language. Currently, many of those students are placed in first or second-year language classes although they are totally fluent in the spoken language. It is the intent of the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction World Languages Program to help districts provide resources that will help such students develop reading and writing skills to complement their speaking skills and to gain recognition of their skills by earning world language credits.

7. How will competency-based credits impact students' applications to college?

   Highly competitive colleges and universities like to see three-four years of world language study (including Advanced Placement) at the high school level. Since competency-based credits will appear as a grade of "Pass" on the high school transcript (and not be factored into the student's overall Grade Point Average), that may seem to be a disadvantage over earning seat-time credits. The hope is that many students who would qualify for credit for competency/proficiency would be seeking to do so early (e.g., end of 8th grade/9th grade). That would give them time for additional study of the same or a different language in high school. In addition, over time we may expect that colleges will begin to shift their focus from seat-time credits to demonstrated proficiency, so students with evidence of language proficiency (through official assessment results) may find that to be an advantage.

8. In the model procedure's definition of "World Languages" what does "formally studied" mean?

   Generally, it is assumed that to develop literacy skills in a language requires some type of formal study. This may be, for example, attendance at a language class in a school or the community, study with parents or family members, online learning, or student self-study.

9. May districts collaborate to offer a testing site?

   Yes. In fact, OSPI and the SBE would encourage them to do so in order to reduce costs and increase opportunities for students.

10. In what ways can the community support paying for assessments?

Districts are expected to set the fee for offering assessments for credit for proficiency. The community could provide financial support, for example, to cover the costs for students to take the assessments in a given language (or in all languages). This would be an excellent way to support students who are not native speakers of English but have developed proficiency in their mother language or to encourage students who have shown initiative to learn a second or third language beyond English.

Draft Competency-based Policy Resolution

WHEREAS, the State Board of Education has long supported Washington's move toward a performance-based system of education; and

WHEREAS, the State Board of Education high school credit rule allows districts to award credit to students who satisfactorily demonstrate competencies according to written district policy; and

WHEREAS, the State Board of Education seeks to encourage districts to develop and implement competency-based credit opportunities for students;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the State Board of Education endorses the publication of the Washington State School Directors' Association's (WSSDA) first sample competency-based policy and procedure in the area of world languages.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the State Board of Education will continue to collaborate with WSSDA and the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) to develop additional sample competency-based policies and procedures in other subject areas for districts to use as a guide for establishing local policies.

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Jeff Vincent, SBE Board Chair