***1/13/16 DRAFT: FOR DISCUSSION PURPOSES***

**New Approaches to Determining College & Career Readiness:**

**Recommendations for Piloting Competency-based High School Graduation Requirements**

**Overview**

The charge of the HR 477 Committee is to deliver recommendations for a pilot implementation of competency-based high school graduation requirements. Below is a proposed framework for a pilot program that incorporates input from the first two meetings.

This framework proposes allowing districts in the Competency-Based Pathways Pilot Program to replace graduation requirements with competencies. The framework for the pilot program is driven by district innovation. The pilot program consists of district level participants and a system of state level support. Interested districts would:

* Create a plan for a Competency-Based Pathways Model to be used in their district. The plan needs to address a number of the basic elements for a competency-based program.
* Submit an application for participation in the pilot program.
* If the model is approved, receive state-level support for implementation of their Competency-Based Pathways Model.

One goal of the pilot program is to create a library of Competency-Based Pathways Models. Definition of competency-based approaches is non-trivial and having models that can be replicated across the state would allow for high school graduation requirements to eventually be fully replaced with a competency approach. The library will consist of Competency-Based Pathways Models from the districts who participated in the pilot program. The districts participating in the pilot would be “developing districts”. These districts are charged with creating and implementing a Competency-Based Pathway Model.

In the future, districts interested in implementing a Competency-Based Pathways Model could choose from the library of models that were collected from the “developing districts.” That way, the outcomes of the pilot will support a much broader, and potentially statewide, future implementation by “replicating districts.”

One important element of the program will be understanding the approach to data collection and reporting. Competency-based models tend to have technology to support capture of information about the performance indicators for each competency. Districts will need to be able to provide a plan for this data capture. In addition, the state will need to determine what level of data it would like to collect. An important implementation element of competency-based approaches to graduation requirements is how higher education will use the information captured by the high school. For this reason it is important for the district to have a higher education partner, however even with a higher education partner, they will need to be able to translate their competency-based approaches to grades that can be used for other higher education institutions.

Finally, it is often understood that competency-based approaches should allow for districts to meet state requirements and mandates in a different manner then the law currently envisions. At this point it is not in the purview of this committee to review all state requirements that may need to be adjusted to allow for easier implementation of competency-based approaches. For this reason, we suggest that the state create a streamlined waiver process for districts that are part of the pilot. This includes the ability to waive requirements such as seat time requirements for GSA, line of sight requirements for teachers and even certification requirements (though this should be done with an understanding that teachers must be involved in the determination of competency – even if they are not always responsible for instruction). While the pilot will provide significant flexibility for participating districts, this flexibility must be coupled with accountability for outcomes.

**Structuring the Pilot Program**

**Common Elements of Competency-based Learning Systems:**

1. Students must demonstrate mastery of all required competencies to earn credit.
2. Students advance once they have demonstrated mastery, and students receive more time and personalized instruction to demonstrate mastery if needed.
3. Students have the ability to attain advanced college and career-related competencies beyond those needed for graduation.  There is “no ceiling” for competency attainment while in high school.
4. Students are assessed using multiple measures to determine mastery, usually requiring application of knowledge.
5. Students can earn credit toward graduation in ways other than seat time, including learning opportunities outside the traditional classroom setting.

**Pilot Components:**

* **General Pilot Parameters:**
  + *Purpose:* The district’s proposed approach to competency-based learning must be a core strategy supporting the community’s efforts to better prepare high school students for college, career, and life. It cannot be a technical exercise disconnected from a broader vision.
  + *Flexibility (at two key levels):* 1) Districts can select which graduation requirements they intend to replace with a competency-based system (e.g., math, language arts, or both; elective requirements), or which years they intend to replace (e.g., 2 years of math requirements). 2) Flexibility is not a one-time event – districts can obtain flexibility for implementation throughout the pilot.
  + *Required Plan Components:*
    - Development of map between competencies and academic standards
    - Approach to assessment and determination of mastery. This should include assessment of out-of-school experiences
    - Approach to data collection and data reporting (external validation, report to state, and collaboration component to cross-reference data)
    - Approach to development of grades and external reporting for students
    - Plan for professional development- need an assessment to determine teacher/ staff needs (i.e. professional development for creating performance assessments and teaching adaptive competencies)
    - Plan for community engagement
  + *Academic and CTE Integration:* Districts replacing core academic graduation requirements (language arts, math, or science) with a competency-based system must demonstrate how competencies can be demonstrated in career and technical education courses and professional learning experiences. Integrated courses including equal focus on academic and CTE components are encouraged, particularly courses addressing the “transitional math” competencies associated with postsecondary education math pathways.[[1]](#footnote-2) Pilot projects should also have a connection to elementary/ middle schools.
  + *Adaptive Competencies:* All plans must incorporate “adaptive competencies” – foundational skills needed for success in college, careers, and life including problem-solving, preparedness, communication, and collaboration.
    - Adaptive competencies will be defined. There will be a bank of adaptive competencies and districts will have the flexibility to choose which adaptive competencies to focus on. There will be a minimum number of adaptive competencies that districts will be required to focus on.
  + *Competency Translation for Higher Education.* Districts need to develop an approach for taking a set of competencies and turning it into a course grade (Districts will work with their higher education partners to determine what information higher education will need to know and how this information will be reported.)
  + *Plan for Providing Information to the State.* Must develop plan for providing the state with summative information on each competency (this will provide information that will allow for eventual evaluation of the pilot program). The success rate and a reflection should be included in the report.
  + *Diverse Representation:*There should be a range of district types for the pilot implementation.
* **Required Commitments and Partners:**
  + Support for district application from superintendent, school board, and teachers union
  + Must have community college and 4-year institutional partner
  + Districts must have a plan for engaging with any feeder elementary school districts on the proposed program.
* **2-Stage Process:** 
  + *Initial application:* General description of approach to pilot, with an emphasis on how the proposed approach to competency-based learning helps the community better prepare high school students for college, career, and life. The application must demonstrate required local commitments and partners, how the approach meets the common elements of all competency-based learning systems, and include a model for data collection and tracking student progress. The application must detail any flexibility from state laws and regulations needed for implementation.
    - Selection based on quality of proposed approach, strength of local commitments and partnerships, diversity of district types (rural, urban, etc.), and diversity of approaches (e.g., one subject only, multiple subjects, academic and CTE, etc.). Approval processes will include the use of expert panels.
  + *Complete plan:* Technical assistance provided to districts selected through the initial application process to fully develop the implementation plan for the pilot.
* **State Supports, Evaluation, and Documentation:**
  + *District Funding:* Limited state funding to districts for pilot implementation
  + *Waivers:*Streamlined waiver process for participating districts (seat time for GSA, certification requirements, etc.)
  + *Expert TA:* Funded by philanthropy. The State should vet professional development resources.
  + *Evaluation:* Evaluation of pilot and publication of report
  + *Networking:* Conference and networking opportunities for pilot districts to create a community of practice. Take advantage of technology to allow districts to learn from one another and use existing resources including ROEs. “Developing” districts will have a role in coaching the “replicating” districts. Residency models for teachers and administrators in the replicating districts should be considered. The networking models should focus on bringing teachers together to address similar subject areas, in addition to the administrators.
  + *Communications Supports:* Communication toolkit and coaching for engaging stakeholders
  + *Library of Models:* Documentation of pilot models for future replication
* **Timeline:**
  + Fall 2016: Application released
  + Late 16/early 17: Phase 1 application reviewed
  + Spring 17: Pilot sites selected
  + Late summer 17: Complete implementation plan due
  + 17-18 SY: Initial implementation activities
  + 20-21: Evaluation of pilot and consideration of further scaling
  + Pilots can continue indefinitely if they meet defined outcomes in plans approved by ISBE.

1. Transitional math competencies are addressed in the recommendations by the HR 477 advisory committee for scaling up 12th grade developmental education models. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)