

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 meeting.

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 intended to be 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 than 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).

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 are assessed using multiple measures to determine mastery, usually requiring application of knowledge
4. 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:**
 - *Flexibility:* Districts can select which graduation requirements they intend to replace with a competency-based system (e.g., math, language arts, or both; elective requirements)
 - *Required Plan Components:*
 - Development of map between competencies and academic standards
 - Approach to assessment and determination of mastery
 - Approach to data collection and data reporting
 - Approach to development of grades and external reporting for students
 - *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
 - *Adaptive Competencies:* All plans must incorporate “adaptive competencies” – foundational skills needed for success in college and careers, including problem-solving, preparedness, communication, and collaboration
 - *Competency Translation for Higher Education.* Districts need to develop an approach for taking a set of competencies and turning it into a course grade (though, no time may have been committed to the set of competencies.
 - *Plan for Providing Information to the State.* Should 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).
- **Required Commitments and Partners:**
 - Support for district application from superintendent, school board, and teachers union
 - Must have community college and 4-year institutional partner

- **2-Stage Process:**
 - *Initial application:* General description of approach to pilot, demonstration of required local commitments and partners, model for data collection and tracking student progress. 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 could 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
 - *Evaluation:* Evaluation of pilot and publication of report
 - *Networking:* Conference and networking opportunities for pilot districts to create a community of practice
 - *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