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**NORTH CAROLINA STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION  
Policy Manual**

**Policy Identification**

**Priority:** High Student Performance

**Category:** Course for Credit

**Policy ID Number:** HSP-M-001

**Policy Title:** Policy defining "Course for Credit"

**Current Policy Date:** 06/05/2008

**Other Historical Information:** Previous board dates: 05/05/1988, 08/02/2001, 02/07/2002, 12/05/2002, 07/01/2004, 11/04/2004, 05/03/2007

**Statutory Reference:** GS 115C-81

**Administrative Procedures Act (APA) Reference Number and Category:**

**\*\*\* Begin Policy \*\*\* (Do not tamper with this line)**

1. A credit course, one for which credit toward high school graduation is awarded and which qualifies as part of the instructional day:
  - 1.1 must consist of 150 clock hours of instruction in a traditional schedule or
  - 1.2 must consist of a minimum of 135 clock hours of instruction in a block schedule; developed curriculum guides, or Advanced Placement syllabi in which high school students are enrolled; and
  - 1.3 must be directed by a teacher.
2. Public University, Community College, and Private College Courses
  - 2.1 Courses taken for high school graduation requirements at community colleges and private or public colleges/universities are exempt from the 135 or 150 instructional hours with the exception of the following courses required for high school graduation, which must be taken at the high school or middle school where indicated:
    - English I, II, III, IV;
    - Algebra I, Algebra II, Geometry, and any higher level mathematics course with Algebra II as the prerequisite that will be used to fulfill the fourth mathematics requirement or Integrated Mathematics I, II, III (These mathematics courses may be taken in middle school.)
    - Biology, Earth/Environmental Science, and a physical science course that is used

to fulfill the third science requirement (These science courses may be taken in middle school.);

- Civics and Economics, US History, World Studies;
- first year of a Second Language (This Second Language course may be taken in middle school.);
- second year of the same Second Language (This Second Language course may be taken in the middle school.); and
- one credit of Health/Physical Education.

3. Beginning in the 2007-08 school year, students who pass mathematics or foreign language courses during grade 6-8 that are described in the *North Carolina Standard Course of Study* for grades 9-12 must achieve level III or IV on an EOC, if available, to meet that high school graduation requirement. High school mathematics and foreign language courses taken in grades 6-8 which do not have an EOC shall use high school course codes and shall be aligned to the *North Carolina Standard Course of Study* for grades 9-12. The courses will count toward graduation requirements, but the students' GPA will be computed with courses taken during the high school years.
4. Beginning in the 2008-09 school year, students who pass science courses during grades 6-8 that are described in the *North Carolina Standard Course of Study* for grades 9-12 must achieve the level III requirement. High School science courses taken in grades 6-8 which do not have an EOC shall use high school course codes and shall be aligned to the *North Carolina Standard Course of Study* for grades 9-12. The courses will count toward graduation requirements, but the students' GPA will be computed with courses taken in the high school years.

5. Beginning in the 2009-2010 school year, students who pass social studies courses during grades 6-8 that are described in the *North Carolina Standard Course of Study* for grades 9-12 must achieve the level III requirement. High school social studies courses taken in grades 6-8 which do not have an EOC shall use high school course codes and shall be aligned to the *North Carolina Standard Course of Study* for grades 9-12. The courses will count toward graduation requirements, but the students' GPA will be computed with courses taken in the high school years.

65. Laboratory facilities must meet safety requirements and state and national guidelines for laboratory expendables and equipment to allow the same opportunities for laboratory work as the high school laboratory in the local education agency.

76. Each local superintendent may grant a waiver to allow students to take the courses listed above at the Public University, Community College, and Private College and exempt them from the 135 or 150 instructional hour requirement, if these courses are not available to the student at his or her local high school. Courses taken at a Community College that have a corresponding end-of-course assessment at the high school require that the assessment be taken.

- | 87. Each local superintendent shall ensure that all required and elective courses have sufficient rigor, breadth, and depth to be awarded high school credit.
- | 98. An e-learning course qualifies for course credit if it meets the following requirements:
  - | 98.1 Any K-7 e-learning course or 8-12 course taken for credit toward a diploma must first be approved for credit by the NC Virtual Public School (NCVPS).
  - | 98.2 E-learning courses offering instruction in courses included within the NC Standard Course of Study must meet the Standard Course of Study competency goals and objectives. E-learning courses offered for Advanced Placement or International Baccalaureate credit must align with nationally validated standards for AP and IB, where available.
  - | 98.3 E-learning courses offering instruction in courses not included in the Standard Course of Study curriculum must have rigor, depth and breadth comparable to courses included in the Standard Course of Study. When determining whether an e-learning course has such rigor, depth and breadth, the NCVPS shall consider whether the course meets the SREB (Southern Regional Education Board) and/or NACOL (North American Council for Online Learning) criteria for awarding credit or is offered for credit toward a degree by a University of North Carolina institution, an institution in the North Carolina Community College System, or a regionally accredited college.
  - | 98.4 Where available, end-of-grade tests, end-of-course tests, and post assessments must be used as an indicator of student mastery. The student's base school schedules and administers EOC and EOG tests. These scores shall be included in the determination of the base school's ABCs and AYP status.
  - | 98.5 Enrollment in an e-learning "for credit course" shall count toward satisfying local board requirements related to minimum instructional days, seat time policies, student attendance, athletic and/or extracurricular obligations. Furthermore, LEAs are instructed to be purposeful in establishing processes and procedures to enroll and manage such e-learning students in an environment where they can be successful.
- | 109. Credit may not be awarded for school bus driving, office assistance, teacher assistance, or laboratory assistance.

# Middle Grades Education and High School Graduation Requirements

## **Background Information**

Current State Board of Education Policy HSP-M-001 adopted by the State Board of Education in May 2007, revised in 2008.

- Students who pass mathematics, foreign language, or science courses during grade 6-8 that are described in the *North Carolina Standard Course of Study* for grades 9-12 must achieve level III or IV on an EOC, if available, to meet graduation requirements. High school courses taken in grades 6-8 which do not have an EOC shall use high school course codes and shall be aligned to the *North Carolina Standard Course of Study* for grades 9-12. The courses will count toward graduation requirements, but the students' GPA will be computed with courses taken during the high school years.

## **More Rigorous Content in Middle Grades**

Research supports more rigorous content at the middle grades. Three current documents summarize the need for increasing academic rigor to meet high standards:

<b>Research Study</b>	<b>Summary</b>
Jensen, J. (2008). <i>Academic Excellence: Rigorous Standards for All Students</i> . (p. 8). New Jersey Department of Education Office of District and School Improvement Services.	<i>This article focuses on the importance of providing adolescent learners with courses that challenge students to truly use their minds. It reminds us that instruction must move from coverage of content to more substantive issues and skills.</i>
Bottoms, G. (2006). <i>Preparing Middle Grades Student for High School Success: Teaching A Rigorous Curriculum</i> . Southern Regional Education Board (SREB).	<i>This publication of Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) offers suggestions for insuring that all middle grades students have access to core curriculum that accelerates learning and is challenging in skills.</i>
Lipsitz, J., Mizell, H., Jackson, A., & Austin, L.M (1997). <i>Speaking with one voice</i> . Phi Delta Kappan, 78(7), 553.	<i>This article states the importance of not underestimating the intellectual capabilities of middle grades students. Adolescence is a time of significant growth in reasoning capacity, and coursework should reflect students' increasing ability to think hypothetically and systematically.</i>

## **Policies in Other States**

An informal survey of other states' policies regarding students taking high school courses (specifically Civics & Economics and U.S. History) in middle grades was conducted by reviewing websites and email queries to other State Agency staff. The queries revealed that many states allow high school courses to be taken for credit before 9<sup>th</sup> grade, primarily in Math and Science.

## **Recommendation**

Beginning in the 2010-11 school year, students who pass *Civics & Economics and U.S. History* high school courses for credit during grades 6-8 as described in the *North Carolina Standard Course of Study* for grades 9-12 must achieve level III or IV on an EOC to meet high school graduation requirements. Recommendations for offering High School Social Studies Courses in Middle School:

# Middle Grades Education and High School Graduation Requirements

## **Recommendation (continued)**

1. Teachers should be licensed and fully qualified to teach the high school course.
  2. High school social studies courses should be in addition to, not in place of, the middle school *Standard Course of Study* in social studies, which may be compacted.
  3. The course may be used to meet a particular high school social studies course requirement (such as Civics and Economics).
  4. Courses should meet the same assessment and time requirements as required for credit in high school courses (i.e. EOCs and 135 hours)
  5. High school courses should be open to all middle school students, not just a selected group.
  6. Each local superintendent shall ensure that all required courses have sufficient rigor, breadth, and depth to be awarded high school credit.
  7. An e-learning course qualifies for course credit if it meets requirements by the NC Virtual Public Schools (NCVPS).
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## **LEA Responsibility**

Each local school district is to provide access for middle grades students to take high school courses Civics and Economics and U.S. History for credit.

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## **Guiding Principles for High School Courses Taken at Middle Grades**

The following principles should be considered when allowing/offering high school courses to be taken in the middle school:

- **Access and Equity** - Acceleration provides a cumulative educational advantage. Numerous studies have shown that opportunities for accelerated and rigorous courses have been inequitably distributed in the past. Districts should establish a coherent plan, which would enable a higher proportion of students to benefit from accelerated study. By treating all middle school students as potential participants, they will expose all students to the documented benefits of a rigorous and challenging curriculum. LEAs accelerating students should be required to review their policies and practices to be sure that they are promoting equity in access to these courses and that there are opportunities to enter advanced courses even for students who may not have been accelerated in the earlier grades. A further equity consideration is to ensure that middle schools offering high school courses have the resources to ensure that the courses are substantially equivalent to the same courses offered at the high school. This includes materials, participation in district-wide common assessments, and teacher opportunities for professional development.
  - **Balanced Middle School Curriculum** - Research studies have shown that middle school students benefit from a balanced curriculum, including adequate time for **all** disciplines, while testing incentives have led to overemphasis on the tested subjects. Acceleration can be accomplished by providing time for equity in the instruction of all middle school curriculums.
  - **Instructional Time** - High school courses offered in the middle school should be held to the same standards as those offered at the high school. There should also be evidence that all students are given adequate opportunities to learn the *Standard Course of Study* for grades 6-8 in order to provide a solid foundation for students when they enroll in high school social studies courses.
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# Middle Grades Education and High School Graduation Requirements

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## **Guiding Principles for High School Courses Taken at Middle Grades (continued)**

- **Rigor**- When making decisions to accelerate students in middle school the LEA should plan across schools and grade levels to ensure the rigor of the high school program.
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## **Rationale**

The intent of adopting a policy to allow high school social studies courses to be taken at the middle school is to allow students the opportunity to take more challenging courses throughout their middle and high school experience, which will most likely produce stronger globally competitive students needed in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Currently, three social studies courses are required for graduation, two of these, *Civics and Economics* and *U.S. History*, have accompanying end-of-course tests.

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## **LEA Responsibility**

Each local school district is to provide access for middle grades students to take high school courses Civics and Economics and U.S. History for credit.