



New Hampshire

# Department of Education Technical Advisory

*Serving New Hampshire's Education Community*

Subject: Minimum Standards for School Approval  
(with respect to changes related to competency education)

School Approval Standards:  
306.27(b)(3)d., (b)(4), (l)(5)&(6), (m),  
(n), (r), (s),(u),(v), (w), (x), (z), and (aa)

## I. Actual Text:

### **Ed 306.27 (b)(3)d, (b)(4), (l)(5)&(6), (m), (n), (r), (s), (u), (v), (w), (x), (z), and (aa) High School Curriculum, Credits, Graduation Requirements, and Cocurricular Program.**

## II. Introduction:

The 2014 School Approval Standards address the change that must take place from a traditional classroom-only educational system, to a transformed educational system that includes competency-based learning environments and multiple pathways to graduation, resulting in students that are truly college and career ready.

This technical advisory for the Minimum Standards for School Approval, to take effect on August 1, 2014, is issued in order to provide support to school boards, districts, schools, educators, and communities as they work to build learning communities that engage learners and support depth of knowledge.

The department comments below address the changes in the 2014 Minimum Standards for School Approval relative to competencies and high school curriculum, credits, graduation requirements and co-curricular programs

## III. Department Comment:

### **Ed 306.27 High School Curriculum, Credits, Graduation Requirements, and Cocurricular Program**

#### **Ed 306.27 (b)(3)d**

(b) The required curriculum content shall comply with the following:

(3) The instructional program shall include:

d. Techniques for the evaluation of student outcomes, including performance assessment of district competencies;

#### **Department Comment**

*This section states that schools will use performance assessment to evaluate students' achievement of the local course level competencies, as part of a system of assessments, locally determined.*

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### Ed 306.27 (b)(4)

(b)(4) Districts shall develop local policies that identify how the district shall engage students in creating, and support extended learning opportunities that occur outside of the physical school building and outside of the usual school day in which students demonstrate achievement as well as other educational experiences and instructional activities required by Ed 306.

### Department Comment

*This statement strengthens the previous rules regarding personalized learning in Extended Learning Opportunities and other learning experiences and activities connecting student's interests and initiative to learning by requiring that each district develop policies that identify what they will do to support that.*

### Ed 306.27 (d)

(d) Each high school shall offer maximum student opportunities, in and out of the classroom, while at the same time specifying a basic number of courses that each high school shall offer. If a student demonstrates knowledge and skills on a placement pre-test developed by the local school district for a particular course, the student shall receive acknowledgement of achievement of the district competencies contained within the course, and shall be allowed to take a more advanced level of the subject or an elective.

### Department Comment

*This section indicates that students who demonstrate proficiency in competencies for given courses will receive credit for that course and move on in their studies. A fundamental principle of competency education is that a student will "move on when ready."*

### Ed 306.27 (e)

(e) The local school board shall require that graduation be based on mastery of required graduation competencies as demonstrated through the accumulation of credits as outlined in Table 306-3 and by a certified educator. Each high school shall determine how completion of a classroom course, career and technical education courses, independent study, distance learning course, or extended learning opportunity can support student achievement and demonstration of district or graduation competencies.

### Department Comment

*The intent of this statement is to allow for students to demonstrate proficiency of required competencies through a variety of means, as acknowledged by a certified educator. It also allows for a school to more fully personalize learning paths for students, based on interest.*

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### Ed 306.27 (f)

(f) Credits shall be based on the demonstration of district and or graduation competencies not on time spent achieving these competencies. The credit shall equate to the level of rigor and achievement necessary to master competencies that have been designed to demonstrate the knowledge and skills necessary to progress toward college level and career work.

### Department Comment

*Schools will need to determine "how much is good enough" in terms of proficiency and grading.*

### Ed 306.27 (g)

(g) Students may receive acknowledgement of achievement for graduation competencies through student demonstration of a collection of work or other assessment evidence gained through prior learning activities.

### Department Comment

*This section allow for artifacts of work used to demonstrate proficiency of competencies in one course to be used in additional courses. How this is done is a local decision.*

### Ed 306.27 (j)

(j) Students shall engage with and apply English and mathematics graduation competencies during every year they are enrolled in high school even if graduation competencies for English and mathematics have been demonstrated. Such engagement may occur through integration of these graduation competencies in courses focused on content areas other than English or mathematics. Such engagement shall support students to be college and career ready in mathematics and English/language arts. Nothing contained in this section shall preclude a school or district from offering courses and other learning opportunities in addition to the minimum outlined in Ed 306.

### Department Comment

*The intent of this section is to ensure that students are engaged in English language Arts and Mathematics competencies throughout their high school education, although the credit requirement for ELA is 4 credits and Math is 3 credits.*

### Ed 306.27 (l)

(l) The following shall apply relative to the required program of studies: ...

(5) The required courses in program areas offered by each high school shall be distributed as specified in Table 306-1.

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(6) Course requirements under Ed 306.27(l)(5) may be met through school identified and sanctioned distance education programs under Ed 306.22 subject to the following:

- a. Students shall be provided courses in a classroom setting that will enable them to demonstrate achievement of graduation competencies. Students are not required to take these courses in order to demonstrate achievement of graduation competencies but may engage in distance education programs to demonstrate achievement. Duplicate, equivalent, or additional courses in those program areas may be offered through distance education, extended learning opportunities, or other alternative methods;
- b. Distance education courses or other alternative courses or programs to be counted toward the 43 courses required by Ed 306.27(l)(5) shall meet the district or graduation competencies and shall be identified in the school's program of studies;
- c. The school shall provide all equipment, software, and internet connectivity necessary to participate in distance education programs that are to be counted toward the 43 courses required by Ed 306.27(l)(5);
- d. In the cases where the school has determined that there is no other way to provide a required course, the costs of registration shall be borne by the school district for courses or alternative programs to be counted toward the 43 courses required by Ed 306.27(l)(5); and
- e. At least one staff member shall be identified and available to assist students having difficulty with distance education courses and other alternative programs;

### Department Comment

*This section describes the requirements of distance learning, often referred to as e-learning. A separate TA will be issued on distance learning in the Fall of 2014.*

### Ed 306.27 (n)

(n) The local school board shall require that a high school have in place competency assessments for all courses offered through the high school.

### Department Comment

*Competency assessment will now be required for all courses at the high school level.*

### Ed 306.27 (r)

(r) The district shall provide learning opportunities that enable students to achieve the district's graduation competencies. Graduation competencies shall align with the skills, knowledge, and work-study practices required for success in college and careers.

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## Department Comment

*Graduation competencies are defined above. This rule describes further the nature of the content of graduation competencies in aligning with skills, knowledge, and work-study practices that lead to success after high school. In addition, this rule makes the connection between the type of learning experiences a student has on the high school level and the achievement of those graduation competencies. Learning experiences cannot be passive in order for student to gain graduation competencies that prepare them for future success. In addition to knowledge, they must have experiences that encourage them to apply that knowledge in unique and challenging ways.*

## Ed 306.27 (s)

(s) Students shall demonstrate competencies contained in at least the equivalent of 20 credits. Students shall engage in learning concerning competencies in the areas of English/language arts and mathematics for every year they are in high school until graduation, regardless if English/language arts or mathematics graduation competencies have been achieved. Such engagement may occur through integration of these graduation competencies in courses focused on content areas other than English or mathematics as long as English or mathematics competencies are clear expectations of the course. Such engagement shall support students to be college and career ready in mathematics and English/language arts. Nothing contained in this section shall preclude a school or district from offering courses and other learning opportunities in addition to the minimum outlined in Ed 306.

## Department Comment

*See comments after (w)*

## Ed 306.27 (u), (v)

(u) Graduation competencies shall include competencies from the content areas as distributed in Table 306-3 in which students demonstrate proficiency as determined by the local school district no later than July 1, 2015.

(v) The rigor and number of graduation competencies shall align with the equivalent of the credits as outlined in Table 306-3.

## Department Comment

*These sections indicate that schools will need to align minimum graduation expectations and the competencies offered through courses provided by the school.*

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### Ed 306.27 (w)

(w) In addition to the graduation competencies aligned with credits as outlined in Table 306-2, students shall also demonstrate achievement of additional competencies through the equivalent of 6 elective courses, career and technical education courses, or extended learning opportunities of their choosing. These additional competencies required for graduation should align with student interests and should prepare the student for successful transitions into careers and college.

### Department Comment

*Paragraph (s) and (w) of the rule emphasize the move from credit for 'seat time' to credit for the achievement of course level and graduation competencies required by a district. In addition, because research has demonstrated that significant and long-lasting learning occurs over time, the rule states that each student shall work on achievement of English language arts and mathematics competencies in each of their freshman, sophomore, junior and senior years or in each secondary school year until they graduate from high school.*

### Ed 306.27 (x)

(x) College readiness in specific areas of learning, for example, science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) which requires higher levels of mathematical functions and reasoning, may require achievement of competencies that are above and beyond the core graduation competencies outlined above.

### Department Comment

*Given the importance to the state's future, schools are encouraged to offer pathways for students that promote rigorous courses of study in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math, which may extend beyond the minimum expectations found for graduation in these standards.*

### Ed 306.27 (z)

(z) The local school board shall adopt a policy relative to counting achievement and demonstration of graduation competencies from course work earned in one content area toward meeting any graduation competencies in another content area.

### Department Comment

*As addressed in (g) above, demonstrated proficiency of competencies attained in one course, and the artifacts of student learning used in that demonstration, may be used in another course, where the competency is the same or aligned. Proficiency will need to be determined by a*

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*certified educator. This section indicates that this concept will need to be addressed in School Board Policy.*

### Ed 306.27 (aa)

(aa) Any graduation competency in a subject area may be earned through interdisciplinary learning, subject to the following conditions:

(1) Graduation requirements met by interdisciplinary learning opportunities shall be clearly designated on student transcripts; and

(2) The high school principal may approve a particular interdisciplinary course if he/she determines that:

a. The course has been adopted by a faculty team; and

b. The course addresses equivalent district or graduation competencies for the subject areas which are covered by the course.

### Department Comment

*Schools may choose to develop interdisciplinary courses of study and related competencies. These competencies as they are achieved may count towards graduation. This can be done in lieu of specific course offerings in a single content area, as long as the competencies required for graduation as found in Table 306-2 (or 306-3 after July 1, 2015) are offered by the school.*

### IV. Resources:

*The NH Network has several networks that address competency education and performance assessment. Professional development, state, local, and national models and materials can be found there, as well as on the NH Department of Education Web Page, [http://www.education.nh.gov/innovations/hs\\_redesign/competencies.htm](http://www.education.nh.gov/innovations/hs_redesign/competencies.htm) and <http://www.education.nh.gov/career/guidance/index.htm#competency>*

### V: For more information on this Technical Advisory, please contact:

Paul K. Leather, Deputy Commissioner

NH Department of Education

101 Pleasant Street

Concord, NH 03301

(603) 271-3801 (office)

[Paul.L Leather@doe.nh.gov](mailto:Paul.L Leather@doe.nh.gov)

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