

Independent Study /Competency Based Classes

East Union follows these guidelines for Competency Based Education opportunities provided to students:

Students may elect to take a course that is not currently offered during the school day or is offered through the school day, however the student(s) wishes to take the class during non-school hours due to scheduling conflicts or other reasons.

Any course of this nature will be considered **Competency Based**. Teachers will identify the Common Core concepts and skills that must be mastered in order for the student to receive credit or a grade for the class. The student is not required to have a certain number of “seat time” hours for the course, but rather is to meet with the teacher to determine the work that must be submitted to demonstrate the Common Core standards achieved.

Expectations, coursework, and assignments will be outlined in the course syllabus and curriculum map and approved by the Curriculum Council and Administration.

Iowa Department of Education Guidelines for PK-12 Competency-Based Pathways

Competency-based pathways provide ways to validate learning of standards that occurs outside the structure of the traditional school and offer flexibility for schools to engage students in learning that moves beyond the traditional constraints of seat time and divisions among content areas. These pathways provide opportunities for students to advance through content or earn credit toward high school graduation regardless of age or amount of time in the classroom, online, or in a setting off campus. They will enable districts and schools to provide student-centered, personalized learning systems through which students of all ages develop both ownership and control of their own learning.

Educators and students will be better able to connect learning to students’ interests.

I. *Principles

A. Students Advance upon Mastery

- Students advance to higher-level work upon demonstration of mastery of standards rather than according to age or seat time.
- Students are evaluated on performance and application.
- Students will master standards and earn credit or advance in content at their own pace. They will work through some standards more rapidly while taking more time to ensure mastery on others.

B. Explicit and Measurable Learning Objectives that Empower Students

- The relationship between student and teacher is fundamentally changed as students gain understanding of what working with standards requires and take ownership of learning and teachers provide the appropriate supports for learning.
- The unit of learning becomes modular.
- Learning expands beyond the classroom.

C. Assessment Is Meaningful and a Positive Learning Experience for Students

- Schools embrace a strong emphasis on formative assessment as the unit of learning becomes modular.
- Teachers collaborate to develop understanding of what is an adequate demonstration of proficiency.
- Teachers assess skills or concepts in multiple contexts and multiple ways.
- Attention is on student learning, not student grades.
- Summative assessments are adaptive and timely.
- Assessment rubrics are explicit in what students must be able to know and do to progress to the next level of study.
- Examples of student work that demonstrate skills development throughout a learning continuum help students understand their own progress.

D. Rapid, Differentiated Support for Students Who Fall Behind or Become Disengaged

- Educator capacity, and students' own capacity to seek out help, will be enhanced by technology-enabled solutions that incorporate predictive analytic tools.
- Pacing matters. Although students will progress at their own speeds, students who are proceeding more slowly will need more help, and educators must provide high quality interventions.

E. Learning Outcomes Emphasize Application and Creation of Knowledge

- Competencies will include the standards, concepts, and skills of the Iowa Core as well as the universal constructs (creativity, complex communication, collaboration, critical thinking, flexibility and adaptability, and productivity and accountability).
- Lifelong learning skills are designed around students needs, life experiences, and the skills needed for them to be ready for college, career, and citizenry.
- Expanded learning opportunities are created as opportunities for students to develop and apply skills as they are earning credit.

II. Definitions and Explanations

A. Advancement: Progress to more advanced work within the content area.

B. Assessment: Method through which students demonstrate what they know or are able to do. Formative and summative assessments, including examinations, performance tasks, and other evidence of learning must align with standards and be developed and scored by educators appropriately licensed and endorsed in the grade level and content area.

C. Competency-based: Advancement through content or credit earned is based on mastery or what students can demonstrate they know or are able to do. Some students may advance through more content or earn more than credit in a traditional school year while others might take more than a traditional school year to advance through the same content or to earn credit. Credit may also be earned for out-of school experiences and/or accomplishments. Students at all grade levels are afforded opportunities for more explicit or intensive instruction or enrichment within the content.

- D. Credit: A unit awarded toward high school graduation. Credit awarded toward high school graduation should be the same for students demonstrating mastery in standards through competency-based pathways as for those working through the same standards in a traditional time-based pathway or other nontraditional pathways such as online learning. PK-8th grade students advance through content independent of units of credit.
- E. Flexibility: Students may work as individuals or in groups and are provided appropriately challenging work according to their identified needs and not always a common learning objective. Elementary students may be distributed among teachers at or across grade levels and support personnel for targeted or intensified support as they struggle or advance. Students may be grouped with multi-age peers. The amount of time each student works on a specific standard and/or remains in an assigned group is determined by performance on ongoing assessments.
- F. Mastery: Demonstrated skill or knowledge required to advance to and be successful in higher levels of learning. Districts and schools participating in competency-based pathways will determine mastery levels and appropriate assessments to ensure all students being awarded credit toward high school graduation or advanced through content at any level have demonstrated the skills and knowledge required to be successful at the next level of advanced learning in the content or related areas as appropriate.
- G. Pathway: Options for advancement through content at any level or earning credit toward high school graduation. Districts and schools may award credit through a competency-based pathway while also retaining traditional time-based advancement or credit.

III. License and Endorsement

- A. Development of Assessments: Assessments used to determine mastery must be developed by educators properly licensed and endorsed in the content and academic level of the advancement or credit awarded.
- B. Determination of Mastery: Mastery of content for advancement or credit must be determined by an educator properly licensed and endorsed in the content area of the advancement or credit awarded.