

Business and Information Technology Education And English/Language Arts Education Report

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Introduction

Public education is the foundation of economic security in Wisconsin and in an increasingly competitive global economy. Ensuring our high school students are ready for the workplace, college, and citizenship is important to the well-being and financial competitiveness of our state. In the 21st century, our high school graduates need rigorous coursework to gain the knowledge and skills to be critical thinkers, problem solvers, innovators, and effective communicators. Our students must also engage in advanced, relevant coursework.

A high school education that has meaning for today requires united efforts to engage all students in learning to ensure academic achievement and a strong foundation for success. Equally important, education options and pathways to success cannot be limited. One instructional method does not suit all learning styles.

Equivalency Work Group Understandings

Knowledge in many areas can be generated from multiple sources and through various courses at the secondary level and this conversation has begun in earnest in a number of areas. At its beginning, the state superintendent first established a work group that recommended to the department that equivalent science credit be given for certain agriculture courses.¹ Then a work group was formed to develop equivalency options for technology education courses, Project Lead the Way courses, and science courses; with similar results.² Most recently, a work group was convened to review family and consumer science courses (specifically food science) for science equivalency.³

Following the practices established by the previous equivalency work groups, a work group was formed to study possible equivalency of business and information technology education courses for English/language arts credit. The work group consisted of licensed business and information technology education teachers and licensed English/language arts education teachers, including those with particular experience in journalism and speech. Also included were higher education faculty, all of whom are involved in preservice education for each of the disciplines.

The work group grounded its work in Section PI 18.02, Wis. Admin. Code, which defines “equivalent graduation policy” as “a board policy which meets the credit requirements specified for each subject area, but which permits selected equivalent courses as long as such courses contain the time allotment and substantially the same objectives to develop the knowledge, concepts, and skills of the course for which an equivalent is proposed.”

Equivalency Process

To determine possible equivalency, the work group was charged to examine the business and information technology education standards and business education courses for English/language arts content. One virtual and one face-to-face meeting were held. Foundational context and previous equivalency processes were examined during the virtual meeting of the group.

¹ The agriculture and science work group report is housed at <http://dpi.wi.gov/ag/asec.html>.

² The technology education and science work group report can be found at dpi.wi.gov/te/terp.html

³ The family and consumer science and science education work group report can be found at dpi.wi.gov/fce/fdsci.html

The agenda of the face-to-face meeting of this group included reviewing a crosswalk of the Common Core State Standards for English/Language Arts (CCSS) (adopted as Wisconsin's standards in 2010), Wisconsin Model Academic Standards for Business Education, and the National Business Education Standards. Upon close review and through revision, the work group determined that the National Business Education Standards were much more thorough and aligned closely with the CCSS. Therefore, the work group recommended that the Wisconsin Model Academic Standards for Business Education be removed (until such time as they are updated).

Next, the work group carefully reviewed sample BIT curriculum from Wisconsin schools to determine if course content would, in fact, meet secondary and post-secondary expectations for content to be deemed "equivalent for English/language arts". Courses reviewed include the following:

- Business Communication
- Publications (Yearbook and Newspaper)
- Professional Business Procedures
- Communications Technology

Although the work group did not determine it was necessary to limit the business and information technology courses that districts may wish to pursue for English/language arts (ELA) equivalency, of the courses reviewed, the Communications Technology reviewed during this process would not contain enough ELA content for equivalency, as found by the work group. However, the work group recommends that courses similar to the following be considered:

- Business Communication;
- Publications;
- And, Professional Business Procedures.

Equivalency Recommendations

Wisconsin has a long tradition of quality education and the recommendations from this work group reinforce our commitment to serve all students. The work group recommendation to develop a process to award English/language arts equivalency credit for business and information technology education classes is firmly in line with the 2006 State High Superintendent's High School Work group Report recommendations. These recommendations will allow our students to full access to rigorous classes and the abilities to pursue multiple pathways to achieve academic success.

The work group strongly recommends that one-for-one equivalency credit in English/language arts be an option for students enrolled in certain business and information technology education courses. This recommendation is firmly grounded in Section PI 18.02, Wis. Admin. Code, the Wisconsin Standards for English/language arts (Common Core), and the National Business Education Standards.

Based on this recommendation, the work group further encourages the following:

- The Department of Public Instruction (DPI) should establish an equivalency process similar to the process recognized by previous equivalency efforts. However, this process should

include information from each district as to how students earn or receive other English/language arts credits.

- The Crosswalk of Wisconsin Standards for English/Language Arts (Common Core) and National Business Education Standards should become the basis for districts to document specific English/language arts content found in business and information technology education courses.
- Acceptance of these equivalency credits by state colleges and universities is critical. DPI should work collaboratively with the University of Wisconsin System Administration, the Wisconsin Association of Independent Colleges (WAICU), and the Wisconsin Technical College System (WTCS) for support in acceptance of approved equivalency courses as fulfilling English/language arts requirements for college admission.
- A letter from the state superintendent should be sent to each district in the state outlining the new equivalency process and sharing best practice documents developed by this work group.

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