

Middle School Students Keeping High School Credit FAQ

Q: When does this change take effect?

A: Allowing middle school students to keep high school credit earned by taking high school courses, for the express purpose of earning high school credit early, became a requirement June 10th, 2024.

Q: Can it be used retroactively so that middle school students who took a non-SOEP high school course before June 10th, 2024, can keep the high school credit?

A: It was not a requirement to issue credit in the past so whatever your policy was at that time is sufficient to stand.

Q: What about courses taken through the Statewide Online Education Program (SOEP) before June 10, 2024; do middle school students still get to keep that high school credit?

A: Yes, R277-726 has allowed students in grades 6-8 to keep high school credit earned through the SOEP for many years. This guidance document only pertains to high school credit taken by middle school students outside of the SOEP.

Q: Is earning credit before grade 9 good for every student?

A: Each student and situation is different, and counselors should work with the family to inform them of the potential consequences of accelerating a student.

1. For example, the course taken will be recorded in the student's high school transcript, so grades earned will be included in the student's 9th grade GPA.
2. The credit, for high school graduation purposes, is guaranteed (if the student successfully earns it), however, **scholarship and college/university eligibility may be affected**. Please make sure the family knows to check with scholarships and colleges/universities that

their student is interested in and check on whether courses taken before grade 9 could affect their eligibility status.

Q: What about classes like Health 1 (middle school) and Health 2 (high school)?

A: The subject of health is unique in that it requires content to be taught in specific student grade levels. Providing a health course to students outside of those years would be out of compliance with the code. You can see the specific wording in [53G-10-\(401-408\)](#). Please do not enroll students in any health courses outside the years specified in law.

Q: I thought the NCAA didn't recognize credit before grade 9, is that true?

A: The NCAA has always recognized some credits, but not others. Rather than LEAs trying to keep up with changes to the division eligibility requirements, guide families to check on scholarship and college entry eligibility before accelerating a student.

Q: what about classes that include students from multiple grade levels (eg. an art class with grades 7-9) in the same class?

A: Courses are attached to grade bands which indicate what grade level the course is intended for. For example, Art Foundations 1 (02010000060) is meant for grades 7-8. High School Art Foundations (02010000061) is meant for grades 9-12. Students in grades 7-8 should be assigned to the art course for their grade band and the 9th grade students should be assigned the unique course code for the high school grade band. In this way, the middle school students are taking their required art course, and the high school students are fulfilling their art requirements. The teacher may use similar instructional strategies and assignments to teach and assess the standards associated with each course. In essence, the students are NOT in the same course, however they are learning with the same teacher at the same time.

Q: What should be done with courses that have cactus numbers with larger grade bands that span across middle school and high school (e.g. Orchestra courses) and there is no other cactus course number that can separate them?

A: The USBE is creating new CACTUS numbers to be able to separate all courses between middle school and high school. Information regarding these new numbers will be sent out as soon as they are created.

Q: Can my school decide to just use the high school cactus course number for all students in a combined middle/high school class period and have all the middle school students earn high school credit?

A: No, R277-700-3-(4) states, “An LEA may not use high school courses to replace middle school educational requirements.” Using the same course number was a common practice in the past when only the 9th graders kept the high school credit, however, a student cannot use a high school course to replace a middle school requirement. Therefore, students should be assigned different CACTUS course numbers appropriate to their grade band, as described above.

Q: Can middle school students take high school demonstrated competency assessments and keep the credit if they pass the assessment?

A: The wording of R277-700-3(3)(a) states, “Through recording of credits in a student’s transcripts for grades 9-12, for purposes of high school graduation, an LEA shall recognize high school credits earned before grade 9.” Since demonstrated competency assessments (DCA) is a pathway to earn credit, a middle school student who takes and passes a DCA may keep the credit. **Caution: parents should be counseled to make sure that a DCA and/or credit earned before grade 9 does not cause eligibility issues for scholarships or college entry requirements. The high school credit is guaranteed, however, there may be other unintended consequences of acceleration.**

Q: How does the credit make it on a high school transcript?

A: The school registrar should record the course in the grade 9 transcript regardless of the middle school grade that the student was in during the course. It is important, however, to have the course name indicate when the credit was actually earned. This can be done by adding the grade level or date to the course name when entering it into the transcript.

Q: Can the middle school student earn original credit through a platform like Edgenuity, or does the credit have to be earned in a classroom?

A: Any accredited pathway that you allow your high school students to earn original credit is allowable for a middle school student, however, if a platform-based course is not already a service offered by a middle school, then this option does not need to be provided. **Note: Platform-based instruction is not a demonstrated competency assessment and is meant for a student to obtain instruction before being assessed. Care should be taken to make families aware that a platform-based learning program relies on a student's ability to navigate the content without assistance from an instructor. Careful consideration for the student's success should be taken when direct access to an instructor is not provided.** Platform-based learning does not include courses taken through the SOEP.

Q: Can middle school students take courses from anywhere and have it count toward their high school graduation?

A: No, just like courses taken by high school students, high school credit must be earned from a Cognia-accredited institution to be awarded credit. If a student takes a course from a non-Cognia accredited source, the LEA may provide a demonstrated competency assessment to check for competency in the course standards before awarding credit. (put citation here)