

# **Frequently Asked Questions South Dakota Department of Education Credit Before Grade 9 and Course Equivalency**

## **Why does a school district need to request a waiver from the Department of Education to offer high school credit before Grade 9 or Course Equivalency exams?**

A school district needs to request a waiver from the Department of Education when that district would like to be excused from following an administrative rule. Most commonly districts request to be excused from Administrative Rules 24:43:11:01 and 24:43:01:01. These rules state that high school credit can only be earned in grades 9-12, and also that a unit of credit is earned by 146 hours of seat time (Administrative Rule 24:43:01:01). Also, many districts like to offer high school credit to students before ninth grade for courses such as Algebra I. In this instance, a district would need to request a waiver from Administrative Rule 24:43:11:01.

## **Can a middle school student ‘test-out’ of a course?**

No, the administrative rules states that the waiver can only be applied to students in grades 9-12 who wish to ‘test-out’ of a high school level class for credit or that a student below 9<sup>th</sup> grade may earn a high school credit by actually taking the course from a qualified instructor and passing the course.

## **How does a district request a waiver?**

A school district can request a waiver by obtaining the applicable waiver application form as located on the Department of Education website and submitting it to the appropriate staff, as noted on the application.

Waiver for Credit Before Grade 9: <http://doe.sd.gov/oatq/documents/EOCAppbg9.doc>

Waiver for 9-12 Course Equivalency: <http://doe.sd.gov/oatq/documents/WaiverApp.doc>

## **How long is a waiver valid?**

A waiver is valid for five years.

## **In order to get high school credit for a course taken before ninth grade, students have to physically take the class. Why?**

State Administrative Rule clearly states that credit for high school must be earned in grades 9-12, so schools that wish to offer high school credit to students before ninth grade are requesting to be “excused” from a State Rule. This exception is what demands higher accountability.

**Can the school district see a copy of a state-created exam prior to deciding whether or not to utilize it for student testing?**

Because the state-created exams are considered to be “high stakes”, the exam is not released for viewing. However, a district may examine the standards covered and the exam item percentage from reviewing the exam blueprints, as located on the Department of Education website under documents <http://doe.sd.gov/oats/EOC.aspx> .

**Where are the state-created exams located?**

The state-created exams are housed in a program called SDAP. If you need assistance in scheduling a test please contact Chris Booth in the Office of Assessment ([Christina.Booth@state.sd.us](mailto:Christina.Booth@state.sd.us)) or 605.773.6156.

**Does the exam have to be taken on a computer?**

All state-created exams **must** be taken on a computer. However, district-created exams can be given in a pencil-and-paper format.

**Is there a specific window of time in the school year during which the district must administer a course equivalency exam?**

There is no specific time that districts must give a course equivalency exam. However, districts should consider school schedules in regard to other testing windows.

**Is there a specific amount of time that the student has to complete the exam?**

The district must provide enough time for the students to complete the exam in one sitting. If this is not possible, the district must complete a Testing Irregularity Form found within SDAP on the student login information page under Administration.

**Can students use calculators on the exam?**

Students can use calculators on the exams. An approved list of calculators can be found in the procedure manual and online at [http://doe.sd.gov/oats/documents/EOC\\_CalcU.pdf](http://doe.sd.gov/oats/documents/EOC_CalcU.pdf) . If testing online within the SDAP, the calculator tool is available so bringing a calculator is unnecessary.

**Are the students allowed to use formula sheets on the exam?**

Formula sheets for Science (periodic table) and Geometry are included online at [http://doe.sd.gov/oats/documents/EOC\\_PrdcT.pdf](http://doe.sd.gov/oats/documents/EOC_PrdcT.pdf) .

**When a student takes a course before ninth grade and intends to earn high school credit, what letter grade/percentage and what grade level is recorded on the transcript?**

The transcription of grades is a local district decision. The State requires that a student pass the course. The updated Administrative Rule is listed below:

**24:43:08:12. Adding waived course credits to high school transcripts.** If the department has approved a waiver that allows a school district to teach a high school-level course to students below grade nine, credit for the course shall appear on each student's high school transcript with the unit of credit and a letter grade upon meeting the criteria for passage applied to the high school level. The unit of credit must be included in the credits required for high school graduation and the letter grade must be calculated in the high school cumulative grade point average.

**Source:** 32 SDR 196, effective May 28, 2006; 33 SDR 236, effective July 5, 2007; 42 SDR 98, effective January 7, 2016.

**General Authority:** SDCL [1-45-13](#), [13-3-47](#), [13-5-34](#).

**Law Implemented:** SDCL [13-5-34](#).

**How many times can a Course Equivalency exam be administered?**

The course equivalency exam (testing out for credit) may be taken only one time with 85% proficiency required to earn credit.

**If a student took, and passed, a course for high school credit before grade nine in a school district that held an approved waiver, can that credit transfer to a district that does not hold such a waiver?**

Yes, credit can be transferred if the student passed the course.

**If a student does not pass the course in order to earn high school credit before grade nine for Algebra I, can the student still go on to the next math course in his/her district?**

This is a local district decision. If the student does not pass the course, it simply means that no credit will be given. It does not prevent the student from going on to the next course or even from taking the same course again in high school to receive the credit.

**Are there certain deadlines that must be met in order to offer Credit Before Grade 9 or to give a course equivalency exam?**

Yes. The deadline to submit a waiver to be eligible to offer either High School Credit Before the 9<sup>th</sup> Grade or Course Equivalency for students in grades 9-12 is **at least 60 days prior to the start of a new school fiscal year on July 1**. Waiver renewals are due by **March 1** of the year they expire.