

Instruction

Distance Education

Online Courses

The Board of Education believes that education through virtual/online courses is an alternative and effective means of instruction for students. A virtual school is defined as an educational organization that offers courses at various grade levels through Internet or Web-based methods. Online learning has a distinct advantage in that it does not require students to be physically present in the same location as the instructor or other students. In addition to regular classroom-based instruction, students in the district may earn credit through distance education provided by online courses. The Board of Education recognizes students may benefit from online courses, on a limited basis and within available appropriations, to assist students in obtaining credits necessary to earn a diploma, to maintain academic standings or to provide enrichment for those who might require special courses.

In order to earn credits in meeting the requirements for high school graduation through the successful completion of on-line coursework, the Board, in compliance with C.G.S. 10-221a (17) shall ensure, at a minimum, that (a) the workload required by the on-line course is equivalent to that of a similar course taught in a traditional District classroom setting, (b) the content is rigorous and aligned with curriculum guidelines approved by the State Board of Education, where appropriate, (c) the course engages students and has interactive components, which may include, but are not limited to, required interactions between students and their teachers, participation in on-line demonstrations, discussion boards or virtual labs, (d) the program of instruction for such on-line coursework is planned, ongoing and systematic, and (e) the courses are (1) taught by teachers who are certified in the state or another state and have received training on teaching in an on-line environment, or (2) offered by institutions of higher education that are accredited by the Department of Higher Education or regionally accredited; or (3) toward meeting the high school graduation requirement upon the successful completion of the board examination series permitting students in grades 9 through 12 to substitute achievement of a passing score on a series of examinations approved by the State Board of Education for meeting credit requirements for graduation.

High school students, enrolled in the comprehensive high schools of the Bristol Schools, may earn a maximum of three (3) units of academic credit to be applied toward graduation requirements by completing online courses, unless the Principal waives that provision, in writing, stating the reasons why, citing whatever circumstances that has caused this waiver. Students, who are enrolled in the Bristol Alternative Education High School program, receiving homebound instruction, receiving education services as an expelled student or under an Individualized Education Program, may exceed the limit of three high school credits.

Each high school and the alternative high school, shall designate from among existing staff, an online site learning coordinator to administer and coordinate the online credit recovery program. The site-coordinator is responsible for monitoring student progress in an online course.

For courses in the BOE approved Program of Studies for the Bristol High School programs, the content of the online course must be reviewed by a content expert, such as the content supervisor or the content high school department head, for a match to the approved Bristol curriculum for the course. The content must be deemed a match for the course to be offered. For courses not in the BOE approved Program of Studies, the course content must be reviewed by a content expert for appropriateness and approved for offering by the program administrator. Approval of all online courses must be documented.

Credit from an online or virtual course may be earned only in the following circumstances:

1. Only students registered in a high school program of the Bristol Public Schools may enroll in an online course.
2. The course is not offered as part of the Bristol High School Program of Studies, a need for the online course by a student is documented, and the course is approved by the principal or program administrator.
3. The high school does offer the course, but the student is unable to take it due to an unavoidable scheduling conflict.
4. The course could serve as a supplement to extended homebound instruction.
5. The district has expelled the student from the regular school setting, but educational services are to be continued.
6. The Principal, with agreement from the student's teachers and parents/guardians, determines the student requires a differentiated or accelerated learning environment for a portion of his/her academic program.
7. A student has failed a course and wishes to recover credits in that course area. This can occur during the school year or during summer school. The online course for credit recovery must be deemed a match with the course content as the failed course. This is determined through the process described above.
8. The student's PPT or Section 504 Team has determined online course work to be an appropriate means of instruction.
9. When enrolled in an online course for credit, the student must maintain regular meetings with the site coordinator:

The tuition fee for an online course, taken during the academic year, shall be borne by the District, within available appropriations, for students enrolled in high school full-time during the academic year. For credit recovery courses taken as part of the secondary summer school program, the student must pay the established fee and adhere to program requirements for hours of instruction.

As determined by Board/school policy, students taking a virtual course will do the following:

- 1 Complete prerequisites and obtain teacher, or counselor, or administrator recommendations to confirm the student possesses the maturity level needed to function effectively in an online learning environment.
- 2 Adhere to the District code of conduct to include rules of behavior and consequences for violations.
- 3 Adhere to attendance requirements of the District.
- 4 Adhere to the District's Internet policy.
- 5 Adhere to the high school policy on withdrawing from a course.

The school must receive an official record of the final grade for the online course before awarding credit toward graduation. Only approved courses, as described in this policy, will be posted on the transcript as an online course.

(cf. [6141.321](#) - Computers: Acceptable Use of the Internet)

(cf. [6146](#) - Graduation Requirements)

Legal Reference: Connecticut General Statutes

[10-221](#) Boards of education to prescribe rules, policies and procedures.

[10-221a](#) High school graduation requirements. (as amended by P.A. 00-124, An Act Concerning High School Diplomas and Veterans of World War II, P.A. 00-156, An Act Requiring A Civics Course for High School Graduation and P.A. 08-138, An Act Concerning High School Credit for Private World Language Courses ,Other Subject Areas) and P.A. 10-111, An Act Concerning Education Reform in Connecticut

Policy Adopted: August 17, 2011