



Washington Office of Superintendent of
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

REPORT TO THE LEGISLATURE

UPDATE: Career & Technical Education Course Equivalencies

2024

Authorizing Legislation: [RCW 28A.300.236](#)

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Career and Technical Education (CTE) course equivalencies provide students with the opportunity to meet the learning standards for a specific core subject while simultaneously earning credit for the aligned CTE course within a single CTE class. Each year, according to [Revised Code of Washington \(RCW\) 28A.300.236](#), the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) must report on the following:

- The annual number of students participating in state-approved equivalency courses.
- The annual number of state-approved equivalency credit courses offered in school districts and skill centers.
- The list of equivalent CTE equivalency courses and their curriculum frameworks that OSPI has approved under [RCW 28A.700.070](#).

This report reflects the CTE equivalency course data collected during the 2023–24 school year. All data should be considered baseline and preliminary. The number of offered state and local equivalency courses and the number of students enrolled in approved high school equivalency courses continued to increase during the 2023–24 school year. To expand further in the future, OSPI should identify further CTE course alignment goals with partners in higher education, industry, and the K–12 education system. By shifting existing CTE courses into statewide equivalencies, student access to equivalences is likely to increase in the coming years.

However, inconsistency in completion of submitted equivalency course data suggests school districts and skills centers need additional technical assistance to aid in accurate reporting. School districts correct and adjust submitted data on a regular basis throughout the year. To improve data accuracy, the CTE Course Equivalency Program Supervisor has requested a bi-annual data compilation to provide school districts an additional opportunity to correct and adjust submitted data. OSPI staff review and evaluate the new data reported to improve data quality and use the information to advise policy and practice recommendations.

INTRODUCTION

For more than 20 years, school districts have been able to locally adopt CTE equivalencies in all course areas required for graduation. Statewide equivalencies were first available during the 2015–16 school year. OSPI supports school district efforts to develop and adopt course equivalencies for CTE courses. The use of CTE equivalencies to complete courses required for graduation supports students' flexibility and choice on their path to obtain a diploma. OSPI has implemented a development process for statewide equivalencies that invites education and industry stakeholders to suggest new course frameworks needed to meet students' interests and local economic and workforce needs. These same partners also participate in the development of new course frameworks and ensure alignment between content and industry standards.

Development and Approval Process

Industry and education partners can access the [State CTE Course Equivalency Frameworks Request Form](#) online. Any CTE course may be requested for consideration of equivalency development. The technical work groups that develop the frameworks typically include experts in the academic content area, CTE teachers, and industry-occupation aligned partners. Participants in the equivalency development process will vary somewhat depending upon content and needed expertise. Together they develop new frameworks and/or review existing course frameworks to develop a new statewide CTE equivalency course. Draft frameworks are shared broadly for feedback and review and posted on the OSPI website for public comment before being considered for final approval. Once approved by OSPI, the statewide CTE equivalency framework is posted on the OSPI website.

It is noteworthy that the authority to approve statewide equivalencies moved from the State Board of Education (SBE) to OSPI in 2018. Prior to that shift, the SBE approved 40 of the statewide equivalency framework options reflected in this report. In the six years since, OSPI has approved a total of 28 equivalency framework courses, which includes 27 new frameworks and one framework for a previously approved equivalency course that was updated to improve alignment to new standards.

Statewide equivalency courses require submission through OSPI's course approval process, consistent with all CTE courses, before they are approved at the local district level.

This process requires school districts to:

- Confirm the course's mandatory extended leadership via the inclusion of either a Career and Technical Student Organization (CTSO) or equivalency program of work.
- Document the skills gap through employment demand data and approval of the course by the local advisory committee.
- Provide course information, program level information, and the curriculum framework for each course.

Data Reporting Methodology

School districts are required to submit course equivalency data monthly and can update data daily within their Student Information Systems (SIS). This information is shown in the Comprehensive Education Data and Research System (CEDARS) and reflects what has been reported by districts. The equivalency data report for the 2023–24 school year, which was collected in September 2024, would contain complete Course Catalog courses for 2023–24. The CEDARS manual may be found in [Appendix B](#), which includes the data descriptors related to CTE Equivalency (Elements D12/D13).

UPDATE STATUS

OSPI continued to review and update previously approved statewide equivalencies to ensure compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), to reflect updated industry standard alignment, and to align correctly to updated academic standards, when applicable. Selection and development of the newly developed course frameworks and in-process frameworks has been an intentional process aimed to:

- Ensure more options for both comprehensive high schools and skills centers across the six CTE programs areas.
- Provide equivalency course options for all content area credits required for graduation.

The newest approved frameworks included CTE courses with the following Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP) codes:

- CIP 030506: Introduction to Forest Management
- CIP 030501: Advanced Forest Management
- CIP 030101: Introduction to Restoration Ecology
- CIP 030201: Advanced Restoration Ecology
- CIP 130101: Introduction to Education through Outdoor Learning
- CIP 130101: Advanced Education through Outdoor Learning

These frameworks were developed with content and CTE educator experts, as well as key industry and postsecondary partners. State Superintendent Chris Reykdal approved these six courses on October 8, 2024.

Legislative Changes

The 2019 Legislature required school districts to provide access to a statewide equivalency from a list of approved courses and to transcribe those courses as meeting academic credit and fulfilling the corresponding credit requirement for graduation. Until September 1, 2021, districts were required to provide high school students with the opportunity to access at least one CTE course that is considered a statewide equivalency course. Starting September 2021, any statewide equivalency course offered by the district or assessed at a skills center must be offered for the corresponding academic credit and count toward a student's credit requirements for graduation. OSPI will continue to review data to explore opportunities to support district implementation of these adoption requirements.

CTE Equivalency Courses and Curriculum Frameworks

Table 1 lists the number of statewide frameworks available in math, science, English language arts, health, and physical education. Table 2 identifies the number of frameworks available by CTE program area, as administered and defined by OSPI. Numbers highlighted in gold indicate where the new course frameworks have been added to the list.

Table 1: Statewide Equivalency Frameworks Available by Credit Type in 2023–24

Type of Equivalency Credit	Number of Frameworks
Math	
Algebra 1	4
Algebra 2	1
Geometry	4
Credit Beyond Geometry	1
Statistics	1
3rd Year Math	2
Science	
Biology or Lab Science	5
Lab Science	24
Life Science or Lab Science	3
Physics or Lab Science	1
Science	4
English Language Arts	
English	5
Health	
Health	2
Art	
Art	3
Combination	
3rd Year Math and Science	1
English and Math	1
English and Science	1
English, 3rd Year Math and Science	4
Lab Science and Physical Education	1
TOTAL	68

Source: [CTE Statewide Course Equivalencies](#) (updated May 2024).

Table 2: Number of Frameworks Available by CTE Program Area in 2023–24

Program Area	Number of Frameworks
Agriculture Education	20
Business & Marketing	6
Family & Consumer Sciences	9
Health Sciences	8
Skilled & Technical Sciences	17
Science, Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM)	8
TOTAL	68

Source: [CTE Statewide Course Equivalencies](#) (updated May 2024).

Course Offerings and Student Participation

Table 3 summarizes the current statewide equivalency course data as reported by school districts in the CEDARS system. There was an increase in the reported number of state equivalency courses offered by high schools and skills centers along with an increase of the number of students who received the option of equivalency credits.

Table 3: Statewide Equivalency Course Data Reported by School Districts

School Year	High School Courses Offered	Skill Center Courses Offered	Number of Students
2016–17	1,689	125	30,658
2017–18	1,347	104	30,422
2018–19	1,601	67	36,742
2019–20	1,734	55	37,001
2020–21	1,863	78	39,555
2021–22	2,059	79	44,764
2022–23	2,170	84	49,992
2023–24	2,752	124	54,163

Data Note: Course and student counts differ from previous reports due to changes in data collection methodology, now using "Most Recent Records" from CEDARS files instead of "All Records."

Data Limitations

This report reflects the seventh year of available data, and there is an expected margin of error in reporting data elements, which have expanded to differentiate between state and local equivalency courses. OSPI again identified a few skills centers and districts that did not report statewide equivalencies in the CEDARS system. As described by districts, reasons for the gap in data reporting include district or building staff turnover, updates to student information systems (SIS) software, or capacity limitations due to continued recovery impacts from the COVID-19 pandemic. OSPI's CTE and Student Information departments are committed to providing targeted technical assistance to address data quality.

CONCLUSION & NEXT STEPS

As students' learning recovery and staff capacity continues to improve following the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been a resulting increase in the number of statewide frameworks being developed, equivalency courses being offered, and the overall number of students enrolled in those courses. These improvements can also be attributed to the policy change requiring that districts must provide high school students with the opportunity to access at least one CTE course that is considered a statewide equivalency course with a corresponding academic subject area. The increase of additional state equivalency course options should continue to support growth in enrollment and course offerings and provide students with more course options that both complete specific credits required for graduation and align with their postsecondary goals as outlined in their High School and Beyond Plan.

In addition to developing new statewide frameworks as requested by education and industry partners, OSPI will continue to revise approved frameworks to align with updated academic and industry standards and better support local implementation of the Washington State Learning Standards. OSPI will also continue to provide professional learning connected to the instruction of equivalent courses and provide resources to staff that support messaging to students and families about the benefits for students of increasing available course equivalencies. OSPI also remains steadfast in our commitment to improving data quality in partnership with local school districts, administrators, teachers, and industry partners.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Current Statewide Equivalency Frameworks

A full list of the statewide [CTE frameworks](#) and associated equivalency credits is available for districts seeking to explore and/or adopt the frameworks currently developed.

Appendix B: CEDARS Manual

The current [CEDARS Manual](#), including data element descriptors, is available to support further expansion of CTE course equivalencies (CTE Equivalency [Elements D12/D13]).

Appendix C: CTE Course Equivalencies Frameworks Request Form

The current form to request consideration of statewide equivalency development is available on the OSPI [Statewide Course Equivalencies webpage](#).

Appendix D: CTE Course Equivalency Waiver

The current [form to request consideration of a waiver](#) from the provisions of RCW 28A.230.015, requiring districts to provide high school students the opportunity to access statewide course equivalency courses.

Appendix E: CTE Course Equivalency Certificate Templates

The current CTE Course Equivalency Certificate and State Equivalency Certificate templates support the provisions of RCW 28A.230.097, which states, "the high school or school district shall also issue and keep record of course completion certificates that demonstrate that the career and technical courses were successfully completed as needed for industry certification, college credit, or pre-apprenticeship, as applicable." The certificate shall be part of the student's High School and Beyond Plan and both templates are available on the OSPI [Statewide Course Equivalencies webpage](#).

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