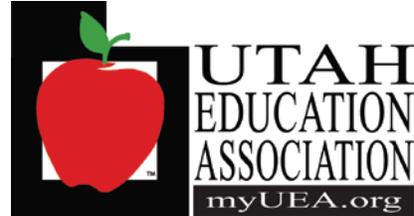


UEA Issue Brief

R277-700 The Elementary and Secondary School General Core



Eliminates the requirement for credit units in all courses for grades 7-8.

- Rather than completing 1.0 units for Grade 7 Language Arts, a student is now required to simply complete Grade 7 Language Arts. Presumably, students can accelerate, or remediate, as necessary to complete any course at their own pace with no relation to “seat-time.”
- No requirement is established defining any standard by which a student “completes” a course. The lack of a standard implies a student could complete a course on day one simply by taking a test.
- Requires that districts and charter schools “*ensure students master the Core Standards*” and “*provide remediation to middle school students who do not achieve mastery*” in language arts, math, science, US history and Utah history but fails to define “mastery” or how students demonstrate mastery.
- Without a clear and consistent statewide definition of “mastery” and absent a common framework of credit unit requirements, there is no assurance that competency-based learning will be implemented in comparable, effective or equitable ways across the state.

Limits required middle school courses to language arts, math, science, US history and Utah history.

- Asserts that “*a student in grades 7-8 is required to complete*” language arts, math, science, US history and Utah history “*to be properly prepared for instruction in grades 9-12.*”
- Narrows the curriculum by eliminating the requirement that students complete courses in music, art, health, college and career awareness, and PE to be “properly prepared” to succeed in high school and beyond.
- Allows districts and charter schools to decide whether previously required courses - music, art, health, college and career awareness and PE – become elective. The result may be that student access to a broad and rich curriculum varies widely across the state as the Board further emphasizes core subjects and schools face tough budget decisions.

Districts and charter schools must offer “*through the registration process*” courses in music, arts, health, PE and college and career awareness.

- If offered as elective courses, students may opt not to enroll. Without sufficient student enrollment, elective courses will not be taught even if they are technically offered by the district or charter school. This impacts not only student access to courses but the ability of a district or charter school to anticipate and maintain adequate staffing.
- School counselors play a critical role in guiding students and parents in the selection of elective coursework. This creates concerns about equity and access for students, since many schools struggle to meet the recommended school counselor-student ratio.
- Equity is also a concern since some families would be able to supplement a lack of middle school art or music classes with private classes, but many families would not.

High standards and equitable opportunities for every Utah student must be maintained.

- The Board has failed to articulate how these changes improve educational outcomes for students. The Board has also never stated any intent to measure the impact of these changes on student learning. This puts student learning at risk. To ensure student success and equity, the Board must first identify best practices for competency-based learning through the current pilot program and create a coherent framework to guide district and charter school implementation *before making these changes*.
- The Board must also clarify the decision to simply eliminate some required courses. Such a discussion about the value and importance of education standards and required courses should involve the community and education stakeholders.