

TO: School Committee

FROM: Tim Piwowar, Superintendent

DATE: October 9, 2025

RE: Proposed Policy IKFE: Competency Determination

In addition to local graduation requirements, Massachusetts state law requires students to satisfy the requirements of the Competency Determination (CD) to graduate from high school. Although MCAS had been used as the primary measure for students to achieve the CD, when Massachusetts voters approved Ballot Question 2 in November 2024, MCAS was no longer able to be used as the sole basis for students to meet the competency determination requirement.

In May 2025, the state Board of Elementary and Secondary Education voted to amend [its regulations](#) on the Competency Determination, and in doing so, required districts to adopt a competency determination policy. To support this policy development, DESE released [guidance in July 2025](#) and the Massachusetts Association of School Committees released [their policy template](#) in August 2025.

The new competency determination regulations require that students must show two things: a mastery of skills in English Language Arts, Mathematics, and Science; and the satisfactory completion of relevant coursework aligned to the standards in those areas. For students in the Class of 2027 and beyond, the regulations also extend to mastery and coursework in United States History.

Our proposed policy addresses the CD by requirement by identifying which courses in the Westwood High School Program of Studies meet the coursework requirements, and by articulating our process for students demonstrating mastery through their performance on summative assessments in each content area. As it was important to provide multiple pathways for students to demonstrate mastery, the proposed policy also includes a provision for a portfolio review of student assessments in lieu of a purely mathematical average of scores.

Please see the full text of the proposed policy on the next page.

I want to sincerely thank the high school administrative team for their efforts in developing this proposed policy, and for their role in ensuring continued alignment between state requirements and our curriculum and assessment practices.

I look forward to speaking with you more about this on October 14.

POLICY IKFE - COMPETENCY DETERMINATION

One of the requirements for graduation in Massachusetts is a determination of competency in subjects previously covered by the MCAS. In addition to other requirements for graduation, students must have been determined by the district to have achieved mastery of the common core of skills, competency, and knowledge in said areas, and satisfactorily completed coursework that has been certified by the student's district as showing mastery of the skills, competencies, and knowledge contained in the state academic standards and curriculum frameworks.

Competency Determination Requirements

A determination of competency shall include:

- Demonstrating a mastery of skills in English Language Arts, Mathematics, and Science; and the satisfactory completion of relevant coursework aligned to the standards measured by the high school English Language Arts, Mathematics, and Science MCAS assessments administered in 2023.
- An additional requirement for mastery in US History will apply to the graduating Class of 2027, and beyond.

To show mastery, a student must successfully complete, in accordance with the district's grading policy or by any other appropriate methodology as may be determined by the School Committee:

1. The final assessment for a course; or
2. A capstone or portfolio project; or
3. An equivalent measure identified in the district's CD policy.

A student enrolled in the Westwood Public Schools will be determined to have satisfactorily completed coursework and earned full credit in accordance with the district's grading policy and the requirements outlined below:

	Coursework Requirements	Mastery of Skills through Final Assessment, Capstone/Portfolio, and Equivalent Measures
English Language Arts	• The equivalent of two years of high school English Language Arts courses	• Students may have demonstrated mastery in ELA by passing the ELA MCAS prior to January 3, 2025. • If a student did not pass the MCAS prior to January 3, 2025, they are required to earn an average passing grade on summative assessments in English 9 and

		English 10 or equivalent courses demonstrating aligned coursework and mastery measures. • If a student earns an average failing grade on summative assessments in English 9 and English 10 or their equivalents, a student may participate in a portfolio review of prior assessment data to determine if they have met 60% of the frameworks included in the summative assessment/portfolio or equivalent measure.
Math	• The equivalent of two years of high school math courses (Algebra and Geometry)	• Students may have demonstrated mastery in Math by passing the Math MCAS prior to January 3, 2025. • If the student did not pass the MCAS prior to January 3, 2025, they are required to earn an average passing grade on summative assessments in Algebra and Geometry or equivalent courses demonstrating aligned coursework and mastery measures. • If a student earns an average failing grade on summative assessments in Algebra and Geometry or their equivalents, a student may participate in a portfolio review of prior assessment data to determine if they have met 60% of the frameworks included in the summative assessment/portfolio or equivalent measure.
Science	• The equivalent of one year of any one of the following high school science courses: Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Technology, or Engineering	• Students may have demonstrated mastery in Science by passing the Biology or Physics MCAS prior to January 3, 2025. • If a student did not pass the MCAS prior to January 3, 2025, they are required to earn an average passing grade on summative assessments in Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Technology, Engineering, or equivalent courses demonstrating aligned coursework and mastery measures. • If a student earns an average failing grade on summative assessments in Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Technology, Engineering, or their equivalents, a student may participate in a portfolio review of prior assessment data to determine if they have met 60% of the frameworks included in the summative assessment/portfolio or equivalent measure.

History (Beginning with the Class of 2027)	• The equivalent of one year of United States History	• Students may demonstrate mastery in United States History by earning an average passing grade on summative assessments in one year of United States History or equivalent courses demonstrating aligned coursework and mastery measures. • If a student earns an average failing grade on summative assessments in one year of United States History or its equivalent, a student may participate in a portfolio review of prior assessment data to determine if they have met 60% of the frameworks included in the summative assessment/portfolio or equivalent measure.
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Aligned Coursework:

As of the 2025-2026 school year, the following courses offered in the Westwood High School Program of Studies align with the state curriculum frameworks that meet the above requirements. Any future revisions to this list will be identified in subsequent versions of the Westwood High School Program of Studies.

English Language Arts	9th/10th Grade Literature & Composition American Literature & Composition/AP Literature & Composition 12th Grade ELA/AP Language & Composition Survey of English I/II/III/IV*
Mathematics	Algebra I Geometry Algebra II Precalculus Calculus/AP Calculus AB/AP Calculus BC Multivariable Calculus & Applied Math Probability & Statistics/AP Statistics Conceptual Math Functional Math* Survey of Math I/II/III/IV*
Science	Biology/AP Biology Biology Concepts* Chemistry/AP Chemistry Physics/AP Physics I/II Engineering Design Computer Science Principles/AP Computer Science Principles Computer Science A/AP Computer Science A
History	United States History I

	United States History II/AP United States History Survey of History I
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**Course only permitted per special education TEAM determination.*

Additional Considerations

Students with Disabilities

The Westwood Public Schools must both provide a Free and Appropriate Public Education to students with disabilities and must also determine that the student has met the competency determination and local graduation requirements prior to graduating that student. Students with disabilities who have been placed in out-of-district placements must meet the requirements of the competency determination policy of the placing school district. Discussion of the competency determination must be part of the IEP Team's transition planning.

English Language Learners

The Westwood Public School District shall, on a case-by-case basis, determine appropriate courses necessary for English Language Learners to both achieve language proficiency and meet the competency determination requirements.

Late-Enrolling Students

Students who enroll in a Massachusetts public high school after their ninth-grade year may be granted a determination of competency by the Westwood Public Schools in one or more of the following ways:

- Transcript Review by School Counselor and Building Administrator
- Additional course requirements as determined by School Counselor and Building Administrator
- Meeting the standard for a substituted equivalent that the district certifies satisfies the same academic standards
- In cases where WPS is unable to verify a student's prior coursework through transcripts or internal records, a qualifying MCAS score in the relevant subject may be used to meet the CD requirement. This will be used only in exceptional circumstances and will be subject to internal review.

Current or Former Students not earning their competency determination may participate in the following Appeals Process:

- Students enrolled in the Westwood Public Schools in the Classes of 2003 through 2024 who did not earn a diploma due to not passing the MCAS may appeal the decision and request a transcript review to determine if they have met the competency determination requirement.

- Students enrolled in the Westwood Public Schools in the Class of 2025 and beyond may appeal the competency determination by participating in a transcript and portfolio review to determine if they have met the competency determination requirement.