



## **Boston Public Schools**

### **Competency Determination Policy for Classes of 2026 and 2027**

#### **Background**

As a result of the passage of Ballot Initiative #2, the MCAS was eliminated as the mechanism for students to meet the Competency Determination (CD). In January 2025 and again in June 2025, the Boston School Committee approved a Competency Determination Policy that provided a process for students to gain their CD as one of two major components for graduation. The CD policy for the Class of 2025 required students to earn a passing grade (D- or higher) in a set of approved courses in ELA, Mathematics, and Science. Each transcript for students in the Class of 2025 was reviewed by schools and the internal CD taskforce (Appendix A) to ensure that students who were awarded a CD met this condition. Through this review process, students who took alternative courses due to special circumstances were approved based on transcript reviews, course audits, and performance considerations.

#### **Purpose**

The purpose of the revised Competency Determination (CD) Policy for the Classes of 2026 and 2027 is to ensure that all students in the Classes of 2026 and 2027 demonstrate mastery of core academic content and skills necessary for graduation and postsecondary readiness. In alignment with state graduation requirements, our district affirms a commitment to equitable, rigorous, and transparent pathways for students to meet the CD in each required content area: English Language Arts (ELA), Mathematics, Science, and, beginning in 2027, U.S. History.

This policy outlines how students earn full credit and demonstrate content mastery for each subject area through coursework, including the intentional considerations for English Learners and students with disabilities.

#### **Coursework Requirements**

The coursework required for Competency Determination can be found in the linked documents. Students must earn a passing grade (D- or higher) in the following number of courses per subject.

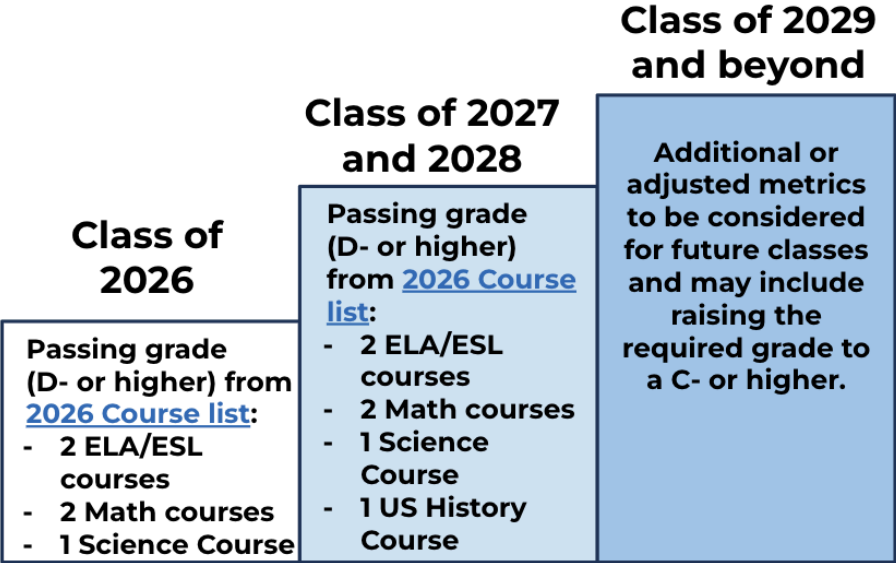
<b>Subject Area</b>	<b>Course Requirement</b>	<b>Year of Graduation</b>
English Language Arts < <a href="#">Link to course list</a> >	Equivalent of two (2) years of high school coursework in ELA or ESL courses aligned to the 9th and 10th grade MA ELA course standards and practices.	Class of 2025+
Mathematics < <a href="#">Link to course list</a> >	Option 1: Equivalent of one (1) year of high school level Algebra I AND one (1) year of Geometry, aligned to the MA Math course standards and practices.  Option 2: Equivalent of one (1) year of Integrated Math I	Class of 2025+

	and one (1) year of Integrated Math II in alignment with MA course standards and practices.	
Science < <a href="#">Link to course list</a> >	The equivalent of one (1) year of any one of the following disciplines: Biology, Physics, Chemistry, or Technology/Engineering, in alignment with MA course standards and practices.	Class of 2025+
U.S. History <course list to be determined>	The equivalent of one (1) year of a United States history course in alignment with MA course standards and practices.	Class of 2027+

**Mastery Definition**

Students in the Classes of 2026 and 2027 will demonstrate mastery in English Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, and U.S. History through the successful completion of the courses included in the document of approved courses linked [here](#). Successful completion is defined as earning a passing grade of D- or higher. Additional and adjusted measures of mastery will be added for future graduation classes in accordance with the progression chart below. Additional and adjusted metrics may include a different course grade that demonstrates mastery (for example raising the required grade to a C- or higher) as well as the consideration of course assessments, portfolios, and capstone projects as options for mastery. These decisions will be made in coordination with the state regulations related to CD as determined by the MA Graduation Council.

**Mastery Expectations Progression for Class of 2026+**



**Special Considerations**

Students with Disabilities

The needs of students with disabilities have been taken into consideration when developing this policy. As such, the extensive list of approved courses is representative of the broad range of Massachusetts standards-aligned ELA, mathematics, science, and U.S. History courses offered across BPS programs. It

is an explicit expectation that educators will adhere to the modifications and accommodations outlined in each student's 504 plan or IEP to make grade-level content accessible to students with disabilities.

Beyond the inclusive course list, special considerations have been made to ensure that students can earn their Competency Determination, meet their local requirements, and receive the necessary IEP services for end-of-program transitions in accordance with Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE). Students with disabilities are eligible to complete their CD and local graduation requirements at any time before age 22. In accordance with state and federal regulations, after a student reaches the age of 14, the IEP team, including the student, will review the student's transition plan annually and determine the projected date to end IEP services and issue a diploma, certificate of attainment, or other such documents signifying the completion of their program of study in BPS.

### Multilingual Learners

As a district committed to equitable access to high-quality instruction for all students, including English Learners (ELs), we certify that certain ESL courses meet the English Language Arts (ELA) coursework requirement of the CD. This determination is based on a thorough alignment of these ESL courses with grade-level curriculum that is grounded in both the grade-level ELA standards and WIDA 2020 language standards. This intentional instructional design supports both language acquisition development and academic achievement.

It is an explicit expectation that all BPS educators linguistically scaffold Tier 1 content instruction for English Learners, intentionally differentiating instruction in alignment with students' English proficiency levels. By embedding language support within rigorous content, educators play a crucial role in ensuring that all English learners are provided with equitable opportunities to meet graduation requirements and fully demonstrate their academic potential.

In alignment with our commitment to educational equity and access, our BPS CD policy includes multiple linguistically responsive pathways for English Learners (ELs) to demonstrate mastery in core academic subjects. Recognizing the diverse educational experiences of our EL students, including those with interrupted or limited formal education (SLIFE), formerly known as High Intensity Language Training (HILT) programs, as well as those who are participating in Inclusive classrooms, the district allows ESL courses—beyond traditional ELA courses—to be reviewed and approved for CD credit where appropriate. SLIFE- (formerly HILT-specific coursework) may also serve as valid substitutes for standard ELA coursework when aligned with grade-level standards and instructional goals. International transcript review is also a formal part of our CD process, ensuring prior academic achievement in students' home countries is recognized and applied toward graduation requirements.

### Late-Enrolling Students

Considerations are made for late-enrolling students. The approved coursework list should accommodate the myriad of courses that may be received on a student's transcript. The CD Taskforce has also developed a cross-functional team to review external transcripts, ensuring alignment between courses taken outside of BPS and the list of approved courses for CD.

### Use of MCAS

In the limited circumstance where Boston Public Schools is unable to document a student's prior coursework, the district may consider the use of a student's MCAS performance for Competency Determination through: (i) a qualifying score of at least "Meeting Expectations" or "Exceeding

Expectations” achievement levels on the relevant high school MCAS assessment; or (ii) meeting the standard for a substituted equivalent that the district certifies satisfies the same academic standards.

### Appeals

Students, families, and school staff will be able to submit a CD appeal application via Google Form to the Office of College, Career, and Life Readiness along with evidence submitted that demonstrates the successful mastery of the grade 10 curriculum standards identified by DESE in ELA, Mathematics, Science, or U.S. History. The cross-functional CD Taskforce will convene quarterly to review documents submitted as an appeal to the ongoing CD review process, to review the CD appeal application(s), and issue the determination.

### Former Students

Former students may request a transcript review through the central office CD Committee. The committee will review students' external and BPS transcripts to determine whether they meet the requirements of the CD policy. For former students whose last year of enrollment was in or before school year 2024-2025, the review process will align with the competency determination for the class of 2025.