

Changes to the English Curriculum FAQ

At our four community presentations regarding CBE English this fall, we collected questions on index cards from community members. We take the involvement of our community seriously and appreciate the opportunity to answer the thoughtful questions provided to us. We have compiled answers to the common themes of inquiry below. The first set of questions have been asked most frequently and are purposely brief. Many broad-ranging questions were asked. In an attempt to answer them fully, please click [here](#) to access our more in-depth responses. You can click on "MORE" after each question if you would like to read more about any one specific question.

Why does D207 feel the need to update the curriculum? [MORE](#)

We continually review our curriculum to ensure it is meeting the needs of all students. Our current curriculum, which is of high academic quality, reflects a time when the mission of public schools was to sort and separate students - this is no longer our mission. We now understand that sorting and separating students does not advance our mission of making sure all students are college and career ready. Key elements needed for success in the world of work have long been missing from our curriculum and we are systematically addressing those needs to ensure that our students are prepared not just for academic success, but for life success.

Will the new curriculum sequence provide enough challenge for my student? [MORE](#)

Yes, it is designed to do just that. Using our performance rubrics, students will be provided with readings and assignments that extend and stretch their learning. Rather than have students do what could be seen as "extra" work because of their reading and writing abilities, they will receive more complex and individualized work at their advanced level and vice versa for a student who needs a bit more support. So students in the same class could be reading different texts or different versions of texts depending upon their skill level, but engaging in the same conversations around themes and genres bringing their individual insights and life experiences to the "common table".

Will there be access to weighted classes? [MORE](#)

Yes. While our English 1 and English 2 classes will not be weighted, all AP and dual-credit/dual enrollment courses will still be weighted as they are widely recognized college-level courses. Additionally, beyond English, there are a number of AP offerings and dual-credit/dual enrollment courses open to 9th and 10th graders.

How will the lack of weighting at the 9th and 10th grade level impact my student and college admissions? [MORE](#)

Lack of weighting, particularly at the 9th and 10th grade level, should not impact the college admissions process as the [colleges and universities](#) we spoke with unweight applicants' GPAs for the purposes of admission. All of the admissions directors we spoke with indicated this was routine practice at postsecondary institutions. All GPAs that are weighted are reweighted on a 4.0 scale. As stated above, we will continue to weight AP and dual credit/dual enrollment courses, so a student who enrolls in those courses will have a weighted GPA for whatever purposes they feel it is needed. There may be cases in which your student is asked to provide a weighted GPA. This request is more common when your student is applying for a scholarship or direct admittance to a specific school within a college or university (school of business, engineering, etc.). In cases such as these, we will produce a transcript that indicates what a student's GPA would be with courses that we would traditionally weight.

What is meant by "all-in"?

"All-in" is a term we are using to communicate that high-level coursework is important for all students to have an opportunity to access, not just those students who perform well on standardized tests. Although some students with identified needs will still be placed in specialized settings, the all-in concept represents greater access to challenging coursework for a greater number of students.

How will teachers be able to differentiate for a heterogeneous group of students? [MORE](#) & [MORE](#)

More than not, it is student grouping within the classroom around particular needs that teachers will be facilitating, not one-on-one instruction. Data supports that about 80 to 85% of students will mostly need the same thing with intervals of needing individual attention. About 10 to 15% of students will need additional support to ensure they are fully accessing the curriculum. This additional support will be provided outside of the classroom as it currently is provided.. Lastly, about 5% will need an intensive intervention and those students will most likely spend most, if

not all, of their time in specialized instruction - not in the heterogeneously grouped classroom. The statement "individualizing instruction" feels overwhelming, but many of our teachers are providing individualized instruction now and we have been providing professional development in differentiating instruction since 2018 so the support for teachers in this area has been, and will continue to be, on-going.

If you have additional questions, please reach out to your respective Department Chair or to the Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Innovation.

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In-depth Answers to Community Inquiries About our Curriculum Changes.

1. Why are we making this change and launching CBE English? How does it fit into the District 207 vision of education, and what do we believe we will improve for our learners? What have we learned about CBE English that has led us to make this programmatic change? Is this change and timeline finalized?

The move to competency-based English with the related shift to differentiated instruction within detracked classrooms seeks to fulfill our district's [5 areas of focus](#) that were instituted in the Spring of 2019. We are refining our plans based on student and stakeholder input, but the rubrics, four-year sequence, and skills lists have all been developed over the past three years and represent that achievement and collaboration. We are committed to proceeding with this plan beginning in the fall of 2023.

Competency-based Education

The district, as a whole, has named Competency-Based Education (CBE) as one of our instructional pillars. This decision was based on the "[Vision of Learning](#)" that was built with a wide spectrum of stakeholders in 2017 including students, families, teachers, and community business partners. Among the items captured in that work are the ideas that the learning is personal and relevant and that learning environments are flexible. This also means that students will be challenged to continue to grow and stretch themselves. CBE is a framework to deliver the best pedagogical practices and create the learner, the type of learning, and the learning environment that supports school success in the modern era. CBE was selected as a vehicle over a 2 year period of intensive research and collaboration.

High Impact Instruction

To deliver on the promise of CBE, we are building on a foundation of instructional excellence through training and support for differentiated instruction as well as other educational best practices. Professional development within the differentiated instruction approach has been mandated for all new teachers since 2018 and has also been available for tenured staff since that time. District 207 has extensive [adult learning](#) opportunities to ensure teachers have access to the

training and support they need to personalize education for each student. In addition, the English departments have provided their own resources and training to leverage differentiation to meet the specific needs of a CBE classroom. Differentiated strategies allow all students to receive timely, targeted feedback on clear and transparent learning goals. As a high-impact methodology, it uses different scaffolds and supports to respond to student needs which maximizes achievement.

Integrated Career Services

The move to competency-based English supports an integrated approach to career services and learning pathways. The purpose of English 1 and 2 is to build a strong academic foundation for students who will then choose the best pathway for their learning in 11th and 12th grade, whether that is Dual Credit, AP, or English electives. These decisions will now be guided by comprehensive rubrics of student skills and conversation about post-secondary plans.

Social Emotional Learning

As 9th graders enter our buildings next year, our CBE English courses will be ready to support students' social emotional health and well being. By creating a "common table" for all students, we will increase feelings of belonging and self-efficacy, both of which are instrumental to student success. The goals of our social emotional learning and behavior programming are based on the [CASEL](#) standards and are foundational elements that our business partners tell us today's workforce requires. Our approach to instruction shows students that they are each capable of doing hard things. In addition to changes in scope and sequence, the newly designed curriculum supports SEL by engaging students in relevant topics as readers, writers, and thinkers.

Equity

The District 207 equity statement reads as follows: “We recognize, embrace, and defend the identities, abilities, and voices of our diverse community. We value these multiple and unique identities, abilities, and voices as assets. We commit to an equitable and inclusive learning environment.” Our move to create an “all in” English 1 and 2 experience is in keeping with this statement of values and is backed by empirical research. In addition, the professional organization for English instruction, The National Council of Teachers of English, has demanded detracking since **1991**. We are using the move towards competency-based English as a moment to emphatically pursue critical skills and move away from sorting and separating.

The English Departments at the three schools have noted the need for a vertical sequence of learning descriptions, moving from grade 9 to grade 12. As we have developed our vision for competency-based English, together with our English teachers we have identified four key competencies and nine corresponding Performance Indicators that are our graduation promises for all students. We plan to pursue these nine Performance Indicators over four years with all students with the depth and complexity of expectations increasing each year. Furthermore, we believe that the shift to an all-in setting will foster student achievement: the wide body of socio-cultural literacy research over the past 40 years indicates that students learn best when participating in an inclusive environment stressing belonging; additional research specific to de-tracking indicates growth in learning by a larger percentage of students with no negative academic impact to students who typically learn at a faster pace.

2. What English courses are open to 9th and 10th graders? How will students determine what courses they will take in 11th and 12th grade?

In 9th grade, all students will be enrolled in English 1 (beginning in 2023-24) and all 10th graders will enroll in English 2 (beginning in 2024-25). Both of these courses will be differentiated to meet the unique needs of each learner. Students who need additional support in particular areas will have scaffolds built into the course, and those who are already demonstrating proficiency will be provided with assignments that stretch them to advanced levels of mastery.

Beginning with the class of 2027, our dual-credit courses (Composition 1 and 2, College Speech, and English 125) will be available to 11th graders in addition to 12th graders who feel ready to take on college-level work. The courses will be open-enrollment. However, the rubrics will provide a tool for counselors, teachers, students, and caregivers to use to decide if and when advanced coursework such as AP or dual-credit English fit with a student's plans. Students can choose to take English 3 as an 11th grader and electives in their 12th grade year as well which has been the traditional model. Electives in the English Department range from Creative Writing and Journalism to Rhetoric of the American Song and Sports in Literature. Each year students can see elective choices in their buildings in [SchoolLinks](#).

Here are some definitions and things to consider when making plans for 11-12th grade course selection:

1. Advanced Placement (AP): These courses are designed to simulate college level courses. Students complete a rigorous learning experience with a D207 teacher who has received training from the College Board which oversees all AP courses nation-wide. In the Spring, students sit for a high-stakes exam. A passing score is a 3 on a 5-point scale though not all schools accept a 3 for credit. Credit for passing AP exams is at the sole discretion of the college or university to which your student is applying. Whether a student earns college credit or not, taking AP classes (and earning good grades in them) can help build a strong "resume" for applying to colleges, especially those that are considered more selective, and provides a college-level experience with the extra support a high school setting provides.

2. Dual Credit: These courses are college level courses. Students complete a rigorous learning experience with a D207 teacher who has been interviewed and approved by a partner college to be an adjunct professor. If the student completes the course with a C or higher, the student is awarded credit from the partner college. This credit appears on both the D207 transcript and a college transcript that is produced for the student by our partner college or university.

3. What is different about the course? What will my student's day-to-day experience look like in competency-based English? How will the experience of competency-based English impact student motivation?

Much of what we expect in our current English classes will remain the same. In our 9th grade competency-based English course, students study the key competencies of writing, reading literature, information literacy, and communication & collaboration. Students use writing in increasingly sophisticated ways to express their ideas and experiences, construct arguments, and present critical examinations of sources. Students read widely and deeply from a diverse range of texts and for multiple purposes. This course creates the opportunity for all students to access the most rigorous curriculum, skill and strategy practice, as well as discourse with one another. English 1 provides the foundation for a successful career at Maine Township High Schools and beyond in post-secondary settings and the world of work.

So what is different? We are building on our strengths and increasing and expanding our use of strategies that we know support student success: differentiation, inquiry, student choice, self-assessment, and rubric-based feedback. By centering these concepts, students will experience a curriculum that is even more relevant and engaging. Their instructors will use rubrics and opportunities for student choice to get to know their interests and needs more deeply. As learners they will feel an increased sense of belonging, an increased sense of clarity about their strengths and needs, and a greater sense of ownership over their education. They will receive specific and targeted feedback to reach their full potential.

4. How will competency-based English meet the needs of diverse learners? What will your measures of success be?

Competency-based English, and our focus on differentiated instruction, will help us best meet the needs of diverse learners. By using CBE rubrics, all stakeholders: students, teachers, counselors, and caregivers will have a clear picture of a student's abilities. In each of our nine Performance Indicators, we will be able to identify a student's current level of achievement and what specific steps need to be taken to move to the next level. The rubrics-based approach of CBE is a terrific asset in differentiating instruction.

In addition, we have been preparing for CBE with a broad range of experts across our four buildings. English teachers who have traditionally taught general education or accelerated

courses are coming together to shape our new curriculum and have been continuously consulting with Special Education and Multilingual educators along the way to make sure that students with specific needs (such as recently exiting the ELL program or having an IEP or 504) will be able to access the curriculum successfully. Differentiated instructional practices will ensure that the enrichment and support students may need are being baked right in. And as always, teachers will also be creating adaptations and modifications as new needs emerge. Utilizing this broad range of expertise has given us the ability to craft learning goals and learning experiences that push students to the highest levels of rigorous reading, writing, speaking, and listening.

The district will consult multiple measures to determine the efficacy of our program. This will include student feedback utilizing surveys (Panorama) and other qualitative tools, grade data, enrollment and achievement in AP and Dual Credit courses, performance on standardized measures, and post-secondary outcomes.

5. How will teachers be able to successfully implement CBE and differentiate instruction to meet the needs of diverse learners? What support will teachers be given in accomplishing these two aims?

D207 is equipped with teams of highly educated, highly qualified, and highly passionate educators. Our veteran staff adopts a growth mindset and learning new skills is an important part of the job. D207 provides a robust [professional development program](#) with specific strands in differentiation, cooperative learning, and assessment literacy—all of which are beneficial in a CBE classroom. Each teacher in the district is also partnered with an Instructional Coach for one-on-one support and mentoring every year. All teachers have weekly team time to process their current and future work as well. Teacher feedback will be utilized to ensure we are providing the support needed for students to be successful at the highest levels.

In regards to CBE, teacher teams have been meeting to design the larger CBE structures for the past four years. This building process has incorporated numerous professional learning opportunities. The staff at large is regularly updated on the progress and deliverables of this working group. Teachers of next year's English 1 course are participating in a series of seven

breakout planning days this year, summer projects (in both 2022 and 2023), and in training opportunities in differentiation and assessment.

6. How will student grades be reported and will parents be able to track and follow their progress?

Just as parents have access to grades into the Infinite Campus portal now, they will continue to have that access to monitor progress. We understand the importance of analyzing students' growth as learners and grades. D207 is committed to providing timely updates through this portal with families. Switching to CBE allows caregivers a more detailed picture of student learning. Instead of being limited to seeing only a letter grade, viewers will be able to see the achievement level of a student in each of the nine Performance Indicators. By clicking on specific assignments, viewers will also be able to see a pop up window with the rubrics used for that assignment. While these Performance Indicators are still averaged into an overall grade for transcript purposes, we are excited about the detailed level of information provided in Infinite Campus next year. Beginning in the fall semester of 2023, 9th grade students and caregivers will have access to orientation and videos about how to read and interpret their new competency-based English grades.

7. What is the impact of removing weighted credit for English 1 and 2 on the college admissions and scholarship process?

Colleges unweight the high school weighted transcript for general admissions, so an unweighted English class, particularly at the 9th and 10th grade level, should not have any impact on admissions. When you go to the websites of universities, you will find mention of weighted credit regarding scholarship application and direct admission to certain programs (school of business, engineering, etc.). One that has been referenced is the Kelly School of Business at the University of Indiana. The statement for GPA requirements for consideration for the program reads, "Earned a cumulative GPA of 3.8 on a 4.0 scale in high school. We will use the highest GPA that is sent to IU Admissions from your official high school transcript. In most cases this is the weighted GPA." So how would our changes be seen by the Kelly School?

- Note the reference to the 4.0 scale - this is unweighted. What this is indicating is that the minimum GPA for acceptance to the program is a 3.8 on a 4.0 (this is unweighted) scale. It is acknowledging that not all high schools have a weighted grade scale. In this case, if the student applying to the Kelley School of Business had the equivalent on our scale of a 3.8 or higher we would ensure that this qualifying fact is communicated to the admissions department at the student's request.
- The statement, "We will use the highest GPA that is sent to IU Admissions from your official high school transcript. In most case this is the weighted GPA." What this is indicating is that many schools have weighting, so share the weighted GPA with the school and they will determine how that factors into admissions to the program.

Here are important facts to know regarding weighted grades: 1) AP and dual credit classes are still weighted as they reflect widely acknowledged college level coursework so all students who take an AP or dual credit course will still have a weighted GPA; 2) Colleges rely heavily on our school profile which would describe how we calculate GPA so as not to put our students at a competitive disadvantage; 3) We can reproduce a GPA to reflect what the GPA would be had certain classes been weighted if needed for scholarship or placement, again to ensure our students are not put at a competitive disadvantage .

8. How does this change at D207 impact or inform the practices of our partner schools?

The shift to competency in English does not require partner districts to change anything they are currently doing. In English, the teachers in our partner districts should continue to challenge our students just as they have in the past. We have found that in partner districts where standards-based grading is being utilized this shift at the high school feels less dramatic as it reflects what they have been seeing for years in their districts in terms of rubrics and descriptions of performance. We will constantly engage in a cycle of improvement within our departments as we roll this out as well as within our communication among districts. If you have questions regarding the curriculum at D62, D63, D79, or D64 you should contact that specific building's principal.