

**Graduation Requirements/Mastery-Based Learning**

Mastery-Based Learning is an educational option which local or regional boards of education may choose to adopt to grant students credit for grade-level academic achievement that meets articulated levels of mastery for a class or grade as stated in Public Act 13-108, "*...a credit shall consist of not less than the equivalent of a forty-minute class period for each school day of a school year except for a credit or part of a credit toward high school graduation earned...or (3) through a demonstration of mastery base on competency and performance standards, in accordance with guidelines adopted by the State Board of Education.*"

Mastery-Based Learning (MBL) offers schools the ability to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse student population with a wide range of academic and language needs. Mastery-Based Learning is student-centered. This approach allows students both voice and choice in owning their own learning and holds promise for increasing student engagement. Students are offered multiple pathways in which to gain and demonstrate their knowledge of critical content and skills.

**Policy on Academic Acceleration:**

In accordance with the belief that all students are entitled to an education commensurate with their particular needs, students who can demonstrate that they have mastered the learning expectations (essential skills and content denoted in curriculum standards) for a particular class must be afforded the opportunity and be encouraged to do so.

The North Canaan Board of Education believes that such students often require access to alternative curriculum and/or learning experiences in order to realize their potential contribution to themselves and society.

All students learn and experience success given time and opportunity, but the degree to which academic content standards are met and the time it takes to reach the standards will vary from student to student. The North Canaan Board of Education believes that all students should be challenged and supported to reach their full potential. For many, this can best be achieved by affording them access to curriculum, learning environments (e.g. online and blended learning experiences and independent study projects), and instructional interventions that may exist beyond their class and/or grade level.

This policy describes the process that shall be used for evaluating students for possible alternative placement and identifying students who should be accommodated in one or more individual subject areas, promoted to a higher grade level than their same-age peers, and/or granted early completion status from the eighth grade academic programming.

## 1) Referrals and Evaluation

- a. Any student residing in the district may be referred by a teacher, administrator, Pupil Services instructor, guidance counselor, school psychologist, or a parent or legal guardian of the student to the principal (or his or her designee) of his or her school for evaluation for possible mastery-based placement. A student may refer himself or herself or a peer through a district staff member who has knowledge of the referred student's abilities.
- b. Copies of this policy and referral forms for evaluation for possible, whole-grade movement, individual subject movement, and early middle school program completion shall be made available to district staff and parents. The principal shall solicit referrals of students for evaluation for possible alternative placement annually, and ensure that all staff s/he supervises is aware of procedures for referring students for evaluation for possible mastery-based placement.
- c. The principal (or his or her designee) of the referred student's school shall obtain written permission from the student's parent(s) or legal guardian(s) to evaluate the student for possible mastery-based placement based on evidence of skill and content-based mastery. The district shall evaluate all students who are referred for evaluation and whose parent(s) or legal guardian(s) have granted permission to evaluate the student for possible alternative placement.
- d. In the event that the student recommended for alternative mastery-based placement has been evaluated as "gifted or talented" per Conn, Gen. Stat. 10-76a for evaluation by an individual eligible to make referrals as described in this policy.

**2) Mastery-Based Evaluation Committee** - The referred student's principal (or his or her designee) shall convene an evaluation committee to determine the most appropriate available learning environment for the referred student.

- a. This committee shall be comprised of the following:
  - i. The principal;
  - ii. A current teacher of the referred student;
  - iii. A teacher at the grade level to which the student may be accelerated (with the exception of students referred for possible early graduation from middle school);
  - iv. A parent or legal guardian of the referred student or a representative designated by a parent or legal guardian of the referred student;
  - v. The Pupil Services Supervisor for North Canaan Elementary School;

vi. The school psychologist or guidance counselor.

b. This committee shall be charged with the following responsibilities:

i. The Mastery-Based Evaluation Committee shall conduct a fair and thorough evaluation of the student.

ii. Any student considered for whole-grade acceleration in grades K-8 shall be evaluated using agreed-upon standardized cognitive assessment and/or Smarter Balanced Test results. Additional considerations include the student's current grade level performance, with regard to skill and content mastery, as well as the committee's consideration of the student's maturity and desire for mastery-based placement. The committee shall also consider the student's own thoughts on possible alternative placement in its deliberations.

iii. Students considered for individual subject placement shall be evaluated using a variety of data sources, including measures of achievement based on district and state academic content standards and consideration of the student's maturity and desire for accelerated placement. The committee shall consider the student's own thoughts on possible mastery-based placement in its deliberations.

iv. Students referred for possible early middle school graduation shall be evaluated based on past academic performance, measures of achievement based on state academic content standards, and successful completion of state and school mandated program completion requirements. The committee shall consider the student's own thoughts on possible alternative placement in its deliberations.

c. The Mastery-Based Evaluation Committee shall issue a written decision to the principal and the student's parent or legal guardian based on the outcome of the evaluation process. If the committee cannot reach a consensus recommendation, a decision regarding whether or not to change programming for the student will be determined by a majority vote of the committee membership.

d. The Mastery-Based Evaluation Committee shall develop a written mastery-based learning plan for students who will move up by a whole-grade, or in one or more individual subject areas. The parent(s) or legal guardian(s) of the student shall be provided with a copy of the written learning plan. This plan shall specify:

i. placement of the student in a mastery-based setting;

- ii. strategies to support a successful transition to the alternative setting;
  - iii.. requirements and procedures for earning high school credit prior to entering high school (if applicable); and,
  - iv. an appropriate transition period for grade-level accelerated students, and students who move forward in individual content areas.
- e. For students the Mastery-Based Evaluation Committee recommends for early middle school program completion, the committee shall develop a written learning plan designed to allow the student to complete middle school requirements as they are mastered and completed.
- f. The Mastery-Based Evaluation Committee shall designate the school guidance counselor to ensure successful implementation of the written learning plan and to monitor the adjustment of the student to the accelerated setting.
- g. Course selection will include:
- i. Participation in current in-school course offerings that are beyond the student's current grade level;
  - ii. Participation in either school designated on-line course offerings that allow for the student to continue to learn and master skills and content that are aligned with the Connecticut Core Standards; and/or
  - iii. Participation in alternative online programming not offered by North Canaan Elementary School. The Mastery-Based Evaluation Committee must approve these programs to ensure that they are aligned with curriculum standards for skill and content mastery. However, North Canaan Elementary School cannot be responsible for paying tuition in support of student participation in programs that are not within its course offerings.

### **3) Mastery-Based Placement**

- a. The Mastery-Based Evaluation Committee shall specify an appropriate transition period for whole grade-level mastery students and students who are advancing in individual subject areas.
- b. At any time during the transition period, a parent or legal guardian of the student may request in writing that the student be withdrawn from the new placement. In such cases, the principal shall remove the student without repercussions from the classroom teacher(s).

c. At the end of the transition period, the mastery-based placement shall become permanent. The student's records shall be modified accordingly, and the program implementation plan shall become part of the student's permanent record to facilitate continuous progress through the curriculum.

(cf. 5121 – Examination/Grading/Rating)

(cf. 6111 – School Calendar)

(cf. 6146.2 – Statewide Proficiency/Mastery Examinations)

(cf. 6172.6 – Virtual/On-line Courses)

Legal Reference: Connecticut General Statutes

10-5c Board examination series pilot program. Issuance of certificate (as amended by P.A. 13-247 and P.A. 15-215)

10-14n State-wide mastery examination. Conditions for reexamination. Limitation on use of test results. (as amended by Section 115 of PA 14-217)

10-16(l) Graduation exercises. (as amended by P.A. 96-108, An Act Concerning Student Use of Telecommunication Devices and the Establishment of Graduation Dates)

10-233(a) Promotion and graduation policies. (as amended by PA 01-166)

P.A. 13-108, An Act Unleashing Innovation in Connecticut Schools.

P.A. 13-247, An Act Implementing Provisions of the State Budget.

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NORTH CANAAN BOARD OF EDUCATION

North Canaan, Connecticut