

Update on Maine's Proficiency-Based Diploma Policy

[Chris Sturgis](#)

To refresh your memory, Maine had originally set a policy that students would be expected to demonstrate proficiency in all eight domains to get a diploma. Under pressure of trying to get all students to reach proficiency in all eight domains, districts asked for more flexibility. The first ideas considered were much lower expectations of proficiency in math and ELA being used as a graduation requirement. The [final policy](#) sets a series of phases and also includes students being able to choose one or more of the domains they need to demonstrate proficiency.



Maine State House, Wikipedia

B-1. Phase in the following diploma requirements from the 2020-2021 school year to the 2024-2025 school year:

(1) For a student graduating in the graduating class of 2020-2021, certify that the student has demonstrated proficiency in meeting the state standards in the content areas of English language arts, mathematics, science and technology and social studies;

(2) For a student graduating in the graduating class of 2021-2022, certify that the student has demonstrated proficiency in meeting the state standards in the content areas of English language arts, mathematics, science and technology, social studies and at least one additional content

area of the student's choice;

(3) For a student graduating in the graduating class of 2022-2023, certify that the student has demonstrated proficiency in meeting the state standards in the content areas of English language arts, mathematics, science and technology, social studies and at least 2 additional content areas of the student's choice;

(4) For a student graduating in the graduating class of 2023-2024, certify that the student has demonstrated proficiency in meeting the state standards in the content areas of English language arts, mathematics, science and technology, social studies and at least 3 additional content areas of the student's choice; and

(5) For a student graduating in the graduating class of 2024-2025 and for each subsequent graduating class, certify that the student has demonstrated proficiency in meeting the state standards in all content areas.

I personally love, love, love the idea of students having some choice in the disciplines where they want to demonstrate proficiency. As other states begin to consider revising their graduation expectations, I think it is an idea that holds merit within the final version of a policy, not just as a stepping stone.

There are also some other changes regarding including certification of proficiency level in the content areas on transcripts and special education:

Transcripts: *In addition to maintaining a high school transcript for each student, a school administrative unit shall certify each student's content area proficiency and may award a certificate of content area proficiency to a student for each content area in the system of learning results established under section 6209 in which the student has demonstrated proficiency.*

Final language regarding students with disabilities: *A student who is a child with a disability, as defined in section 7001, subsection 1-B, may meet the requirements of subsection 1 and become eligible for a diploma by demonstrating proficiency in state standards established in the system of learning results through performance tasks and accommodations that maintain the integrity of the standards as specified in the student's individualized education program by the student's individualized education program team pursuant to the requirements of chapter 301.*

There are several other changes that were made that are worth considering. State policymakers will want to take the time to read through the changes as they provide insights into things other states will want to consider along the way.

I find the certification of proficiency to be very interesting and could lead to transcripts, as it is a very clear form of embedded accountability. Districts and schools are going to be held accountable for determining proficiency, not just that the student took the courses. If the student gets to college the next year and the college questions their college readiness, it is going to open up very interesting conversations with the higher education system, as they have yet to determine a consistent definition of college readiness themselves. It's time for higher education and K12 to have a much deeper conversation about competency education. Maine is certainly well positioned with [University of Maine at Presque Isle](#) converting to competency education.

See also:

- [Proficiency-Based High School Diploma Systems in Maine](#)
- [Maine: At the Forefront of Proficiency-Based Learning](#)
- [Northern Maine Education Collaborative: High Aspirations](#)