

HIGH SCHOOL+ CURRICULUM UPDATE FAQ

High School+ (HS+) is a competency-based high school completion program designed for students who are at least 18 years old and need a high school diploma. Upon entering the program, each student works with an advisor to assess what the student has already learned through life, work, school, or military experience. Together, they determine a plan to complete the rest of what the student needs in order to earn a high school diploma.

The student can complete their diploma by taking basic education courses or by substituting college classes for their remaining requirements. When they finish their requirements, community and technical colleges grant students their high school diploma from the student's college.

How is the updated HS+ curriculum different?

Updating the High School+ curriculum started with the idea that courses should reflect students, rather than expecting students to reflect their courses. A culturally responsive curriculum respects the student, connecting their cultural backgrounds and life experience with what's taught. That is critical to helping students complete their courses and, ultimately, earn a credential. Students who feel connected to their instructors, classes, and institutions are more likely to complete their courses and earn a higher grade than students who do not feel that connection.

The seven updated HS+ courses are:

- [English Portfolio](#)
- [English, Environmental Science, and Current World Problems](#)
- [English and Life Science](#)
- [English, Health, and Fitness](#)
- [English and Occupational Education](#)
- [English, Arts, and Washington State History](#)
- [English, Arts, and U.S. History](#)

Where do I find the updated curriculum?

The updated HS+ courses are available for download at:

- [OER Commons](#)
- [Canvas Commons](#)

You can also find links to all locations where the courses may be found from the [State Board's High School+ webpage](#).

CONTACT INFORMATION

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How can I incorporate the updated curriculum into my classroom?

The updated HS+ curriculum is designed for flexibility. That means faculty can use the curriculum in the way that best suits their teaching. They can use the course in its entirety as it is or adapt pieces to meet established outcomes.

Each course carries an Open Educational Resources designation, so faculty can adopt and adapt the curriculum in a way that makes sense to them and their classroom.

Why was the curriculum updated?

Students come to Washington’s community and technical colleges to achieve their educational goals — whether it be to train for a career, learn a trade, earn an industry certificate or apprenticeship, transfer to a university, or to earn their high school diploma or equivalent. Research tells us, however, that our state’s community and technical college students of color earn credentials at a slower rate than white students. It is a moral and practical imperative for our colleges to improve completion rates for all students, especially for students of color.

To focus its efforts to close equity gaps, the Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges in 2019 adopted its vision statement:

“Leading with racial equity, our colleges maximize student potential and transform lives within a culture of belonging that advances racial, social, and economic justice in service to our diverse communities.”

Ten percent of the students served by Washington’s community and technical colleges are enrolled in Basic Education for Adults programs, of which High School+ is one. A 2018 study of High School 21+¹ showed students served by that program closely mirrored the state’s population who lacked a high school diploma². The study noted that the program “is serving a higher percentage of certain in-need populations, which will ultimately contribute to equity and inclusion efforts in education.”³

Basic Education for Adults programs like High School+ seek to provide access and empower adult learners, especially historically underrepresented and disadvantaged students. By embracing the community and technical college system’s vision statement and “leading with racial equity,” the updated HS+ curriculum aims to affirm students’ histories, cultures, and identities, thereby creating a learning environment that embraces students for who they are and what they can contribute to their education.

¹ High School 21+, which served students aged 21 and over without a high school diploma or equivalent, expanded its mission in fall 2019 to begin serving students aged 18 and over without a high school diploma or equivalent. To more accurately reflect its mission, the program changed its name to High School+.

² Dulany, T. (2018). *High School 21+ Outcomes*. Olympia: Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges. Retrieved from <https://www.sbctc.edu/resources/documents/colleges-staff/research/pre-college-research/18-5-high-school-21plus-outcomes.pdf>

³ Ibid.

How was the updated curriculum designed?

A group of seven faculty and one instructional designer from the college system worked over the course of eight months beginning in January 2020 to update seven of 10 HS+ course packages to be more culturally responsive, intentionally including diversity, equity and inclusion. To do so, the work group went through a review and revision process.

Review process

Pairs worked collaboratively to review the existing HS+ curriculum using the [Culturally Responsive Scorecard](#) developed by New York University Steinhardt School of Culture, Education, and Human Development, determined by the work group to be the most comprehensive method to assess curriculum. That scorecard determined the level of revision the curriculum needed to be culturally responsive. The scorecard defines “culturally responsive education” as:

“the combination of teaching, pedagogy, curriculum, theories, attitudes, practices, and instructional materials that center students’ culture, identities, and contexts throughout educational systems.”

Revision process

Once the review process was complete, the group members then chose specific courses to revise. To help them as they updated the curriculum, group members received training and information on working with Open Educational Resources (OER) materials, accessibility and Universal Design for Learning (UDL), Transparency in Learning and Teaching (TILT), and the College and Career Readiness Standards, while continuing to use the Culturally Responsive Scorecard. These principles are considered best practices or requirements for Basic Education for Adults curriculum. All Basic Education for Adults coursework must be aligned to college and career readiness standards with the goal of preparing students for college-level coursework and the workplace.

Who was involved in updating the curriculum?

The following people comprised the HS+ curriculum update work group:

- Course Review and Developers
 - Morgan Frankland, Seattle Central College, English/Health/Fitness
 - Carol Follett, Bellingham Technical College, English and Science
 - Jacob Galfano, Skagit Valley College, English/Washington State History/Fine Arts
 - Guava Jordan, Whatcom Community College, English/Current World Issues/Science
 - La Shonda Lipscomb, Seattle Central College, English and Occupational Education
 - Tsega Gaim, Green River College, English/US History/Fine Arts
 - Oliva Hernandez, Yakima Valley College, Portfolio English
 - Susan Pittman, Edmonds College (reviewer)
- Instructional Designer
 - Geoffrey Cain, Instructional Designer
- SBCTC Staff

- Jon Kerr, Basic Education for Adults Director (retired)
- Ha Nguyen, Student Services Policy Associate
- MarcusAntonio Gunn, Basic Education for Adults Program Administrator
- Monica Wilson, Basic Education for Adults Policy Associate
- Troy Goracke, Basic Education for Adults Policy Associate

How do I find out more?

Basic Education for Adults staff at the State Board are hosting two information sessions on the updated HS+ curriculum. This is a chance for HS+ faculty to learn more about the curriculum and its development, how to incorporate it into their classes, and ask questions.

The sessions, which will be held via Zoom, are:

- [Friday, Oct. 16 from 12 p.m. to 2 p.m.](#) Registration closes Friday, Oct. 9 or when seats are full.
- [Friday, Nov. 6 from 12 p.m. to 2 p.m.](#) Registration closes Friday, Oct. 30 or when seats are full.

The State Board's Basic Education for Adults department is sponsoring these information sessions with Leadership Block Grant funding. College deans and directors may request additional training funding by contacting Troy Goracke, policy associate with Basic Education for Adults, at tgoracke@sbctc.edu.

For more information about the updated HS+ curriculum, contact:

- Troy Goracke, the High School+ policy associate with Basic Education for Adults, at 360-704-4361 or tgoracke@sbctc.edu.
- MarcusAntonio Gunn, the High School+ program administrator with Basic Education for Adults, at 360-704-4362 or magunn@sbctc.edu.



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