



Utah State
Board of
Education

Teaching
and
Learning

Graduation Communications Credits Requirement

What? In the 2023 Legislative Session [HB 475 Communication Credits Requirements](#) was passed amending Utah's current graduation requirements. This change in legislation provides students with the opportunity to earn up to 0.5 credit of English Language Arts in grades 9-12 through a course or school sponsored activity that emphasizes verbal communication. To support implementation of this opportunity, USBE has amended [R277-700-6\(5\)\(e\)](#) to state, "A student may receive up to a half credit of the students four required Language Arts credits for a course or school sponsored activity emphasizing verbal communication during any year between grades 9 and 12 High School Requirements." Please note that this change does not require students to earn a verbal communications credit but allows schools to acknowledge eligible experiences to qualify for English Language Arts Credit.

Why? In looking at the most desired employability skills as evidenced by the [Utah Skills and Knowledge Based Projections for 2030](#), effective communication is a common attribute of the top five skills. The top five skills include critical thinking, active listening, and speaking, all requiring strong verbal communication skills.

Additionally, Utah's Portrait of a Graduate includes an emphasis on developing communication skills during the PreK-12 experience. Verbal communication plays a crucial role in human interaction and is essential for effective interpersonal relationships, as well as for transmitting information and expressing thoughts, ideas, and emotions.

How? To offer courses or school sponsored activities that yield English Language Arts graduation credit for experiences with emphasis on verbal communications, the learning must meet the following *four* competencies:

Competency 1: Participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations on topics, texts, and issues.

- a. Respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives in democratic discussions that involve decision-making and role-taking; synthesize comments, claims, and evidence; resolve claims and evidence.
- b. Participate in conversations by asking and responding to questions that examine reasoning and evidence, ensuring the opportunity to consider a range of perspectives, and clarify, verify, or challenge ideas and conclusions with evidence.
- c. Resolve contradictions when applicable, and determine if additional information or research is required to deepen the investigation or conversation.

Competency 2: Use appropriate language, grammar, organization, development, and delivery styles when speaking, attending to purpose and audience for formal or informal contexts.

- a. Convey a clear perspective by concisely presenting and citing information, findings, and supporting evidence so that listeners can follow the line of reasoning.
- b. Strategically use visual displays of data and digital media, to convey information and enhance understanding of presentations.

Competency 3: Demonstrate effective verbal communication skills and respect in interpersonal communication in speech and/or debate in:

- a. Speaking (e.g., framing questions, responding to questions, speaking extemporaneously, using appropriate language), including demonstrating the ability to give constructive criticism to self and peers.
- b. Listening (e.g., critical and attentive listening demonstrated by note taking, critiquing), including demonstrating the ability to give and receive constructive criticism to self and peers.
- c. Nonverbal communication (e.g., attire, eye contact, facial expressions, gestures, proximity)

Competency 4: Apply principles of ethical communication appropriate to context, attending to:

- Academic honesty
- Bias
- Communication responsibility
- Respect for diversity

Note: These competencies are a synthesis of related English Language Arts Standards (2023) and Speech and Debate Standards (2021).

Who? *Secondary licensed educators* offering a course or school sponsored activity that meet the verbal communications competencies are eligible to provide the credit if they have one of the following endorsements:

- English*
- English Language Arts
- English as a Second Language
- Speech and Debate*
- Social Studies Composite
- History
- Language Arts Historical*
- Political Science
- Social Studies Composite
- Speech*
- Speech/Drama*
- Business & Marketing
- Business Communications
- Business, Finance, and Marketing Essentials

*Note: These endorsements are no longer able to be earned, but an educator who possesses the endorsement is eligible to offer the credit.

How is credit awarded?

LEAs may record courses for credit in the student schedule as they would for any other course taken. For school sponsored activities, LEAs will need to add a credit and activity directly to the transcript.

What courses or school sponsored activities might be eligible for credit?

In order for up to 0.5 ELA credits to be earned, the course or school-sponsored activity must align with the verbal communications competencies outlined above.

What other considerations do we need to consider?

For students seeking NCAA eligibility, keep in mind that their requirements may not allow for school sponsored activities to count for credit

<https://www.ncsasports.org/ncaa-eligibility-center/eligibility-requirements>

Questions? Contact Cathy Gray at cathy.gray@schools.utah.gov