

Just the **FACTS:** An NEA-NH Factsheet

What the Proposed Changes to New Hampshire's Minimum Standards Mean to Educators

I'm hearing a lot about 306's lately. What are they?	The minimum standards for public school approval in New Hampshire are known as the "306's" because this is the chapter number of the school regulations that addresses minimum standards.
What do 306's do?	<p>The "306's" articulate what New Hampshire public schools must do to be an approved school.</p> <p>The current regulations are over seventy pages long and cover all the areas with which public schools must comply to receive approval.</p>
Why are we hearing so much about them now?	Every ten years, the New Hampshire Department of Education is required to review and recommend changes to these standards. A committee appointed by Commissioner Edelblut has begun that process and has produced a draft of recommended changes to the Ed 306 standards.

There are many proposed changes in the revised Ed 306 document that will have a direct impact on:

- Assessment
- Competency-based learning
- Definitions
- Personal learning plans
- Required competencies in subject areas
- School climate and culture

On the pages that follow are *just a few* of the proposed changes about which NEA-New Hampshire feels you should be aware. They provide a side-by-side comparison of some of the proposed changes which will affect your students and your working conditions along with questions that need to be addressed.

You can ask these, and the other questions that appear at the end of the document, at upcoming listening sessions being held by the committee tasked with creating the new draft proposal.

Issue: Proposed Changes for Personalized Learning Plans

When planning units and lessons, educators consider their students’ interests, talents, passions, and aspirations while simultaneously considering the knowledge and skills students need to learn. The required knowledge and skills students must learn do not always align with students’ interests or passions. The proposed regulations add that personalized learning should encourage student curiosity, although a definition of curiosity and how it might be assessed is not defined. The proposed regulations also allude to a “personalized learning plan” that would connect a student’s interests, talents, passions, and aspirations and would also require the student actively participate in developing a plan. While it is beneficial for students to have some voice and choice in their own learning, it is unclear when students would be involved actively in developing a learning plan. Additionally, there is currently no enabling legislation in New Hampshire that defines when a personalized learning plan should be implemented, and there are no resources to provide educators with professional development about how to work with students to craft such a plan.

The left-hand column below includes the wording from the current regulations. The right-hand column includes the proposed regulations with the *changes in bold print*.

Current Regulations	Committee Proposed Regulations
<p>306.02 (p) “Personalized learning” means a process which connects learning with learner’s interests, talents, passions, and aspirations including actively participating in the design and implementation of their learning</p>	<p>306.04 (m) “Personalized learning” means a process which encourages student curiosity by connecting learning with learner’s interests, talents, passions, and aspirations including actively participating in the design and implementation of their learning.</p> <p><i>(n) “Personalized learning plan” means a learner-centered plan, which employs strategies to connect learning with the interests, talents, passions, and aspirations of the learner, including the active participation in the design and implementation of the plan by the learner.</i></p>
<p>Questions Raised by the New Proposal</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · When would student learning plans be implemented? · Rather than “encourage student curiosity,” are there research-based strategies which will “connect learning with the interests, talents, passions, and aspirations of the learner, including the active participation in the design and implementation of the plan by the learner?” · What if the topic(s) about which a student wants to learn is considered to be a divisive concept? · What if a student wants to learn about something which the student’s parents find objectionable? · If a course required certain learning outcomes and the student didn’t want those outcomes in their personalized learning plan, which should prevail? 	

Issue: Sound Assessment Practices

As New Hampshire educators made the transition to competency-based practices and more authentic assessment, many engaged in professional learning regarding performance-based assessments that provided summative and formative data on student progress, then implemented what they learned in their classrooms. New Hampshire was one of the first states to work on performance assessment through initiatives such as the Performance Assessment of Competency Education (PACE) and the current Performance Learning and Assessment Consortium for Educators (PLACE) being led by the New Hampshire Learning Initiative and NEA-New Hampshire.

While the current regulations do not address competency-based assessment, the definition in the proposed regulations would not preclude using a multiple-choice assessment to measure a competency being assessed through a performance-based assessment.

The left-hand column below includes the wording from the current regulations.
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Current Regulations	Committee Proposed Regulations
None.	<p>306.02 Definitions (d) Competency-based assessment “means an assessment of student proficiency with regard to one or more competencies.”</p> <p>306.22 (b) Competency-based assessment shall be used as a component of the assessment program, and shall include the following characteristics:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Competencies are clearly stated and measurable; 2. Students advance upon mastery; 3. Include varied, authentic, meaningful, and transferable assessment practices; 4. Timely intervention strategies; and, 5. Emphasis on important learning skills and dispositions.
Questions Raised by the New Proposal	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Are the characteristics in 306.22 (b) all characteristics of competency-based assessment or are some of them (1,2,4,5) characteristics of a quality competency-based education program? · Should the characteristics include things like alignment of the assessment to the competencies being assessed? · What kind of support will educators need to develop and implement such assessments? 	

Issue: Eliminating References to Equity in Discipline Codes

New Hampshire educators are aware of the importance of equality AND equity when working with students. There are some elements of education that should be equal for all students. For example, every student needs equal access to textbooks and learning materials. Because of the variability in students, equity in education is also important. Author Elena Aguilar provides the following helpful definition of educational equity, “*Educational equity means that every child receives whatever she/he/they need to develop to her/his/their full academic and social potential and to thrive, every day. By “thrive,” I mean academically as well as social-emotionally. Every child has a right to feel loved and cared for and to feel that they belong to a community. Emotional well-being is as important as academic success in this definition of educational equity. Educational equity means there is no predictability of success or failure that correlates with any social or cultural factor—a child’s educational experience or outcomes is not predictable because of their race, ethnicity, linguistic background, economic class, religion, gender, sexual orientation, physical and cognitive ability, or any other socio-political identity marker.*”

To ensure educational equity, New Hampshire educators are aware of students’ academic and emotional needs and work to ensure these needs are appropriately addressed.

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Current Regulations	Committee Proposed Regulations
<p>306.06 Culture and Climate</p> <p>(b) The school administration and staff shall:</p> <p>(1) Review ways in which equity gaps in achievement can be reduced and barriers to learning can be eliminated; and</p> <p>(2) Work together to establish a fair and equitable code of discipline that is fairly and consistently implemented which supports students’ understanding of the importance of norms, rules, and expectations for behavior.</p>	<p>306.06 Culture and Climate</p> <p>(b) The school administration and staff shall develop a plan to address academic under- performance of individual students and the elimination of barriers to learning</p>
<p>Questions Raised by the New Proposal</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If there are some populations of students who are underserved by the current structures of schooling, would only looking at the underperformance of individuals reveal systemic equity gaps? • Can “a plan” address the underperformance of all individual students? What if students underperform for different reasons? • While addressing academic under-performance is important, should schools also work to ensure that the codes of discipline are also implemented fairly and equitably? 	

Issue: Assessment of Student Competence for Graduation

Since the New Hampshire minimum standards required high schools in the state to be competency-based in 2011, New Hampshire educators have worked to implement competency-based education that required students to demonstrate their mastery of graduation requirements in order to graduate. Additionally, student mastery of competence needed to be assessed by certified educators.

The proposed regulations reduce the level of proficiency for graduation from mastery to proficient and no longer require assessment by a certified educator.

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Current Regulations	Committee Proposed Regulations
<p>306.27 (g) The local school board shall require that graduation be based on mastery of required graduation competencies as demonstrated through the accumulation of credits as outlined in Table 306- 3 and by a <u>certified educator</u>. Each high school shall determine how completion of a classroom course, career and technical education courses, independent study, distance learning course, or extended learning opportunity can support student achievement and demonstration of district or graduation competencies.</p>	<p>306.25 (g) The school board shall require that graduation be based on acknowledgment of competencies at a proficient level as demonstrated through the accumulation of credits as outlined in Table 306-3. Each high school shall ensure that completion of a classroom course, career and technical education courses, independent study, distance learning course, or extended learning opportunity can support student achievement and demonstration of competencies.</p>
Questions Raised by the New Proposal	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Can anyone assess students' proficiency in the competencies and acknowledge proficiency as required by a school for graduation? · Why was the requirement for a certified educator removed from the regulations? · What is the difference between the current requirement for "mastery of required graduation competencies" and "acknowledgement of competencies at a proficient level?" · In how many learning opportunities outside of a high school could a student participate and still get a diploma from a high school? 	

Issue: Change of Curriculum Requirements from Mandatory to Permissive

The current regulations outline the required subject areas and outline the knowledge and skills that should be included in each curriculum area. The proposed regulations change the language from mandatory language, *shall*, to permissive language, *may*. **If this permissive language is adopted, the elements for each curriculum area will become suggestions and not required.** This might result in great variability in what is taught in the various high schools for each curriculum area.

The illustration below is for only one section of Mathematics. All of the curricular areas are formatted in a similar fashion.

The left-hand column below includes the wording from the current regulations.
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Current Regulations	Committee Proposed Regulations
<p>(c) Pursuant to Ed 306.27, the local school board shall require that a mathematics program in each high school provides:</p> <p>(1) Opportunities for all students to solve problems by:</p> <p>a. Using multiple strategies;</p> <p>b. Reading and interpreting mathematics;</p> <p>c. Communicating mathematical ideas through speaking and writing; and</p> <p>d. Making connections within and among mathematical ideas and across disciplines;</p> <p>[NOTE: THERE ARE ADDITIONAL OUTCOMES IN THE CURRENT REGULATIONS OMITTED FOR BREVITY.]</p>	<p>Pursuant to Ed 306.38, school board shall provide a mathematics program in each high school consistent with the course competencies determined pursuant to Ed 306.25, which may include:</p> <p>(1) Opportunities for all students to solve problems by:</p> <p>a. Using multiple strategies;</p> <p>b. Reading and interpreting mathematics;</p> <p>c. Communicating mathematical ideas through speaking and writing; and</p> <p>d. Making connections within and among mathematical ideas and across disciplines;</p> <p>[NOTE: THERE ARE ADDITIONAL OUTCOMES IN THE PROPOSED REGULATIONS OMITTED FOR BREVITY.]</p>

Questions Raised by the New Proposal
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · If the minimum standards change from what each curriculum <i>shall</i> include to more permissive language, <i>may</i>, what will prevent a school district from paring the curriculum down to one or two elements and then arguing the contents and skills that were left out were optional? · Would poorer districts be at a disadvantage because community members could argue that the curriculum elements were optional and therefore local funds did not need to be raised to support optional elements?

Suggested Questions For Committee Listening Sessions

The committee tasked by the board of education to propose Ed 306 changes is chaired by Fred Bramante. Mr. Bramante will be conducting a series of listening tours across this state. Along with the questions already posed in this document, here are a few more to ask should you attend a session.

New Hampshire diplomas carry significant value at post-secondary schools and in the employment market. Section 306.37 (g) of the current standards requires a certified educator be part of granting graduation credit. That requirement is removed in the proposed section 306.25 (g). How does this change not devalue New Hampshire diplomas?

Your committee has many members on it from various fields and backgrounds. It's my understanding that no professional public school educators were included on the original committee that created this draft. Why was that? At what point in the process did you extend an invitation to the lone educator from SAU 29 on the committee? The current draft was already completed at this point, correct?

Why did the committee replace "instruction" with open-ended definitions like "opportunities?" Doesn't that significantly lower the bar for what constitutes a course or credit?

The committee removed the role of certified educators in making sure that courses and credits meet the criteria and have the same level of academic rigor as required by the state and school district. As a certified educator, this change tells me the Department of Education places no value on my education, experience, certifications or qualifications. This is insulting to me and my fellow educators. Is the committee suggesting that anyone can define graduation credits now and will you be removing the requirement that I be certified to teach in a public school and need to be recertified every three years?

HB 371, now tabled, would have established a commission to evaluate and recommend standards for public schools. That commission would have included, among others; two members of the House of Representatives, one member of the Senate, one member appointed by the governor, one high school teacher, one middle school teacher, one elementary school teacher, one early childhood education expert, all appointed by the governor. It also would have one district administrator, one school curriculum coordinator, one certified behavioral health practitioner, one certified school counselor, one school nurse, one school nutrition director, one school principal, and one career and technical education representative. Wouldn't this committee be better able and qualified to make improvements to such important education standards?

How can we stop this from happening? What can we do to be sure these dangerous changes do not occur as currently proposed?

