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# BEST PRACTICES for Developing a District System to Consistently Issue and Accept Partial Credits

## STEP 1

### Develop a Partial Credit Calculation Formula

The Network recommends adoption of California's **Partial Credit Model Policy**. Alternatively, coordinate with districts in your county to adopt consistent calculation formulas to ensure ease of calculating partial credits owed when youth in foster care move between districts. Ensure your calculation formula accounts for different calculations if your district has **semesters of unequal length** (e.g., semester 1 is 80 days and semester 2 is 100 days) or utilizes block periods. The Network recommends districts put their partial credit calculation formula and their process for issuing partial credits on their website, in a Board Policy, and/or in an Administrative Regulation to ensure that youth in foster care, their education rights holders, and other districts can easily access it. Districts should also make publicly available their credit accumulation policies for their alternative schools.

## STEP 2

### Determine How to Identify When Youth in Foster Care Have Left the District

**Disenrollment** — The easiest way to ensure credits are issued is to create a system to identify and issue partial credits at disenrollment. This can be done by setting up a system for front desk staff to notify teachers and/or counselors upon disenrollment or through an automatic notification through the student information system. Unfortunately, this will not catch all youth in foster care leaving the district since many youth are not formally disenrolled from school but rather just stop attending. The Network recommends creating a system utilizing multiple methods of identifying when youth in foster care leave the district.

### Child Welfare/Probation Notice of School Change

— Assuming your district is receiving consistent and timely notification from your county child welfare and/or probation agency when youth are moving homes, this can be another way to trigger the disenrollment process.

### Receiving a Records Request from a New School

— Additionally, assuming districts in your county are regularly and timely (within 2 days of enrollment) sending records requests to the prior school when a new youth enrolls, this is another way to quickly identify when youth have left your district.

### Automatic Trigger After 3 Days of Absence

— In many districts and counties, the above methods for identifying when a youth has left a school are not being consistently implemented. The Network recommends that districts also create a system that automatically triggers a search for youth in foster care after they have been absent from school for 3 days in a row. This system should include an automatic notification or email to an attendance clerk, academic counselor, or AB 490 Foster Youth Liaison (as determined appropriate by the district) to contact the home placement, the youth's education rights holder, and/or social worker/probation officer for a youth in care to inquire about a youth's residence status. Many Network districts recommend not disenrolling the youth from the school until after it has been confirmed that they have moved and what their new school is.

### STEP 3

## Ensure Exit Grades are Issued by Teachers

Teachers are required to issue check out grades ✦ when a youth in foster care leaves a school in the middle of a grading period. ◀▶ This is often done on a **Disenrollment Form** which can either be facilitated by an adult on campus or can be given to a youth to take around to all their teachers at disenrollment, assuming that it is age and developmentally appropriate for each individual youth. Unfortunately, if a youth does not formally disenroll, this process is not triggered. The Network recommends that districts create an additional step in this process for youth in foster care who do not formally disenroll. Once an attendance clerk/counselor or AB 490 Foster Youth Liaison determines that the home placement of a youth in foster care has changed and they will not be returning, they can trigger an email or notification within the SIS to the youth's teachers requesting that check out grades be issued. + The Network also recommends training/guidance for counselors and front office staff so they know the requirements around issuing check out grades and partial credits so they can inform teachers to ensure that assignment and test results are regularly input into online grading systems (e.g., daily or weekly) to ensure that issuing check out grades can occur quickly once the need is identified. \* Develop a process to ensure that No Marks or Incompletes are never issued for these youth if they have attended the minimum seat time (e.g., 7 days) required to earn partial credits and were receiving a passing grade.

★ **EQUITY CONSIDERATION |** A youth in foster care cannot have their grade lowered due to court attendance or absences caused by court ordered activities. It is important to ensure proper training so that teachers know to excuse those assignments from the calculation of a youth's check out grade. This creates equity because youth in foster care have no control over the requirement that they attend court and court ordered activities and thus should not be punished for it, compared to typical students who do not have to participate in these activities.

◆ **PRACTICE TIP |** A similar situation also arises when a youth in foster care's class schedule is changed in the middle of a semester. For example, if a youth attends only 50 (out of a total of 90) days in a semester and is in Algebra for 20 days and Geometry for 30 days. It is essential to set up a system to also issue partial credits in this situation including ensuring teachers issue check out grades for each course and issuing credits for the correct amount of days in each course, pursuant to the district's partial credit calculation formula. This is further complicated if a youth is moving up or down in a class level. For example, if a youth moves from Spanish 1 to Spanish 2, all the credits earned can be issued for the higher class. Further, a youth can earn full credits if the teacher determines the youth has mastered the entire course, even if they do not attend the entire semester.

▲ **EQUITY CONSIDERATION |** Districts are required to create School Board regulations for notifying education rights holders (either through conference or written report) when a student is at risk of failing a course.<sup>37</sup> This policy must also be equitably applied to youth in foster care earning partial credits. Arguably, if the notification does not occur, regardless of when the youth changes schools, districts cannot issue a failing grade. Some Network districts are also choosing to not issue failing grades and partial credits on a transcript (and thus not have the failing grade count in the cumulative grade point average), under the equity argument that a typical student would have more time than a youth in foster care moving schools mid-semester to bring up their grade (for example, a chance to earn extra credit or make up missing assignments). Without an equal opportunity to bring up their grade, youth in foster care would be held to a harsher standard than a typical stable student. In these cases, districts must devise an alternative to issuing a failing grade, and also cannot solely note a No Mark or Incomplete, to signify that partial credits have indeed been calculated but not awarded as the student did not receive a passing grade. One method for doing this would be to reflect the partial credits possible on a disenrollment form or transcript, with zero credits earned and a special notation about the grading situation.

+ **PRACTICE TIP |** The Network recommends providing guidance to teachers on how to go back and finalize an exit grade, even after a youth has been dropped from their class list and may not immediately show up on their grading list. Alhambra Unified School District created an instructional video showing teachers how to access a dropped youth's grades and how to enter a final grade in their student information system.

\* **PRACTICE TIP |** A technology-based solution would be to program the student information system to automatically pull a grade from a teacher's grade book in real time.

37 California Education Code Section 49067.

If check out grades are requested for a youth who has not been attending within the district for many days, the Network recommends teacher training and/or other processes to ensure that a youth does not receive zeros for assignments and tests that were assigned or graded after a youth was no longer attending at the school. For example, attendance counselors could be trained to back date the disenrollment date to the last day of actual attendance or the student information system could be programmed to not count zero grades issued after the last date of actual attendance into the cumulative grade for the class.

## STEP 4

### Determine Seat Time or Enrollment

If your district uses seat time/attendance to determine partial credits, develop a process to ensure seat time is evaluated and, assuming a passing grade is earned, partial credits are calculated based on the district's partial credit calculation formula. This process could require a counselor or registrar to count the days of attendance and calculate the partial credits owed by hand. The Network recommends utilizing your student information system to automatically count attendance and calculate partial credits owed. This can be especially helpful if districts utilize a block class schedule as it cuts down on human error in calculation of seat time.

If your district uses enrollment to determine partial credits, develop a process to ensure enrollment is evaluated and, assuming a passing grade is earned, partial credits are calculated based on the district's partial credit calculation formula. This process could require a counselor or registrar to review the youth's days of enrollment, but could likely be automatically determined in the student information system.

## STEP 5

### Issue Partial Credits on Transcript

Develop a process for issuing check out grades and partial credits on an official transcript. If possible, utilize your student information system to automatically issue these credits. Then, ensure there is a district staff member (e.g., counselor or registrar) identified to double check the calculation for accuracy. Student information systems may be able to calculate partial credits based on enrollment or seat time but having them issued on an official transcript may be a second step in the process that needs to be programmed differently or done by a person who can perform a human check for accuracy.

**PRACTICE TIP** | The Network recommends reminding teachers that students are not responsible for any work assigned or due after their check out date, at the beginning of every semester (e.g., during a staff meeting), as well as including this information on the notice provided to teachers when asking them to issue a final grade.

**DISTRICT HIGHLIGHT** | To see a written procedure including a withdrawal report, teachers issuing grades, calculating attendance, and awarding partial credits, see [West Covina USD's Procedures for Awarding Partial Credits](#).

**PRACTICE TIP** | Various student information systems use either positive (count of the number of days attended) or negative (count the number of days of absence from a total) attendance. Knowing which is used in your student information system is essential when creating an automatic calculation system within your student information system.

**PRACTICE TIP** | The Network recommends ensuring a specific person at each high school (e.g., designated academic counselor with special training on the needs of youth in foster care) be tasked with ensuring this process is implemented consistently. The Network also recommends having a district staff member (e.g., AB 490 Foster Youth Liaison in coordination with SIS staff) regularly run checks to ensure that all eligible youth have received their partial credits.

**DISTRICT HIGHLIGHT** | Alhambra Unified School District has created sample [SQL Code for Power School](#) student information system which tallies attendance and calculates partial credits. They have two different tables for [Partial Credit Calculator for Comprehensive High School](#) and [Partial Credit Calculator for Alternative School](#) since the number of days of attendance/seat time to earn credits is different.

**EQUITY CONSIDERATION** | A youth in foster care cannot have their grade lowered due to court attendance or court ordered activities.<sup>38</sup> Equity also demands that a youth's absence caused by court attendance or court ordered activities also not be used to lower their seat time calculation for purposes of awarding partial credits. Typical students do not lose credits for absences over which they have no control and youth in foster care should be treated in an equal manner. These principles should be kept in mind regardless of which method of determining partial credits is chosen. However, many districts have found that using dates of enrollment is preferable because it eliminates these concerns. In addition, it allows for students to be treated like any other student who does not receive fewer credits based on their number of absences.

**PRACTICE TIP** | Since many student information systems already allow for calculation of days of enrollment, it will likely be easier from a technical perspective to utilize enrollment, rather than seat time/attendance to calculate partial credits.

38 Cal. Educ. Code Sections 49069.5(g),(h).

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**STEP 6****Send Transcript to New School Within 2 Days**

The Network recommends communicating with a youth's social worker or reviewing CALPADS or a local county information sharing system to identify which school a youth next enrolled in. Ensure a transcript including all check out grades and partial credits is sent to the new school within 2 days.

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**STEP 7****When Enrolling a Youth, Advocate for Partial Credits from the Prior School, As Necessary**

After a counselor or registrar gathers a youth's transcripts from all their prior high schools, they may determine that partial credits are owed by a prior school. The Network recommends that counselors/registrars send the **Receiving School Partial Credit Request Letter** to attempt to obtain those credits for a youth.