

BELLEVILLE PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT

Option II Guidelines



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Option II Guidelines

Introduction

In an effort to provide our students with both a rich and diverse learning experience, Belleville Public School District ensures we investigate alternative programs to meet the needs of our students and expand curricular offerings to ensure students are college and career ready. Option II was created to provide a degree of flexibility for students who want to challenge themselves with educational experiences that fall outside the regular program offered in a school or to pursue higher levels of coursework than they would otherwise be able to take.

The New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) recognizes and acknowledges that all students will not achieve Core Curriculum Content Standards (CCCS) in the same manner and/or with the same level of success (N.J.A.C. 6A: 8-5.1(a) 2). While the Belleville Public School District believes that the best educational experience possible for our students is participating in courses offered at Belleville, we acknowledge that students may also choose to make individualized decisions about their course selections that will allow them to take additional courses or more advanced courses during their high school years. To this end, the Belleville Public School District allows for students to engage in individualized learning opportunities outside of the traditional classroom. These opportunities are stimulating and challenging and enable students to meet or exceed the Core Curriculum Content Standards. This is commonly referred to as, “*Option II.*” For more information related to Option II, please visit <http://www.nj.gov/education/aps/option2.htm>.

Students are permitted to earn credit toward graduation through Option II learning experiences. These experiences include, but are not limited to: early college credit, on-line learning, co-curricular or extra-curricular programs, and/or other structured learning experiences. In addition, Option II allows for group programs based upon specific instructional objects that meet or exceed Core Curriculum Content Standards. Option II procedures have been created to review and approve these requests while maintaining the integrity of the Belleville Public School District’s High School diploma. (Option II does not apply to courses taken for credit recovery due to previous course failure or loss of credit due to excessive absenteeism.)

Participation in Option II is predicated on the application process through which students seek approval. The process for application, is detailed in the information following. Attainment of credit toward graduation is based on the successful completion of assessments that verify student achievement in meeting or exceeding the Core Curriculum Content Standards at the high school level. Please carefully read the following for more information. School Counselors are available to answer questions and guide students through the process.

Important General Information

It is the student’s responsibility to maintain academic standing and enrollment in an approved Option II program. Any failure to complete an approved program may jeopardize the student’s ability to meet graduation requirements. In the event of a student withdrawing from an approved Option II program, BHS cannot guarantee placement in an equivalent BHS course.

The district reserves the right to determine the number of credits to be awarded. Credits earned via this Option II program will not be calculated toward the overall Grade Point Average; therefore having no effect on a student’s class rank. However, the course name and actual grade earned will be noted on the student’s official transcript. If a student receives a grade from an accredited

institution such as a college, it will be a graded course. The name of the course, number grade, and number of credits will appear on his or her transcript. The grade will not factor into his or her GPA. If a student participates in an Independent Study or alternate PE Program, it will be a Pass/Fail course. The name of the course, P or F, and number of credits will appear on his or her transcript. **In addition, credits accrued under Option II cannot exceed 10 in a given year.**

When considering awarding credit under Option II, Belleville is most concerned with the following:

- Does the content of the course/program satisfy the standards of the BHS course for which you are requesting credit? The standards may be found on the NJ Department of Education website at: <http://www.state.nj.us/education/cccs/>
- Is the program taught/organized by a qualified professional/person?
- What are the goals, objectives, activities, and assessment methods of this course or program?
- What is the total number of hours associated with this program? Are there any issues involving student safety?

After your application has been reviewed, you will receive a letter documenting your Option II application status. Once your Option II program is complete and you have provided documentation of completion and/or your final grade report, you will receive a letter documenting your successful completion. This will include the name of the course, the credits, earned, and the grade (either a number grade or Pass/Fail grade). This information will then appear on your transcript.

Program Requirements for Students & Parents

The following requirements should be considered when applying for credit through Option II.

The student(s)/parent(s)/guardian(s) is/are responsible for:

- Completing the application and any supplemental forms by the due date.
- Paying tuition and other costs relating to the program, including transportation, books, and lab fees.
- Providing BHS with all requested information including, but not limited to, academic progress, course syllabus, final grade report, instructor credentials, assessment methods, links to the academic standards, and proof of attendance.
- Providing final grade information to BHS. Final grade reports from an approved Option II program must be received as soon as available, but no later than two weeks after completion of the program. Please note that any final grade report that needs to be considered for graduation purposes must be received by BHS no later than June 1st of the graduating year.

OPTION II: WHAT COUNTS?-Some Examples of how Option II may be used in BHS

Option II: Advancing a Course Level in an Accredited School or Institute Grades 9, 10, 11

Students may advance a course level in a given sequence of courses such as mathematics by taking courses outside BHS (e.g. Educere). Course content must equate to that of the high school course that is being bypassed. **Note: Algebra I may NOT be bypassed.**

A Course of Study from the accredited institution must be attached to the application.

Purpose: Taking high school level courses at an approved school/institute or online enables a student to use those courses to meet pre-requisites for advanced courses and move more quickly through a course sequence. To be considered for advancement, the student must achieve an 85% or better as a final grade. Note: Successful completion of math courses will NOT impact science course placement. Successful completion of chemistry or biology will not lead to placement in AP classes in the Fall of that calendar year, but will qualify students for the following academic year if they meet all pre-requisites.

Assessment: In addition to passing the course with an 85%, the student will need to successfully pass the BHS final exam/assessment and achieve the mastery score established by the department in the bypassed course.

Proof of Experience: course of study, transcript, final exam

Grading:

- Grade is recorded.
- Course and grade are listed on student's transcript.
- Credits are counted toward graduation requirements.
- Grade is not included in the GPA. All fees and any necessary transportation arrangements are the responsibility of the student and his/her family.

Option II: College Course Work for High School Credit Grades 11-12

High school students may choose to enroll in college level work at an accredited college or university for both college and high school credit (called dual credit).

A Course of Study from the accredited institution must be attached to the application.

Purpose: Taking college course work while in high school enables a student to begin post-secondary study in an interest area or in a potential career path while simultaneously meeting the high school graduation requirements.

Proof of Experience: course of study, transcript

Assessment: Students must successfully pass the End-of-Course Assessment as required by the college/university.

Grading:

- Grade is recorded.
- Credits are counted toward graduation requirements (3-credit college course = 5-credit high school course).
- Course and grade are listed on student's transcript.
- Grade is not included in the GPA. All fees and any necessary transportation arrangements are the responsibility of the student and his/her family.

Option II: High School Course Work Taken Outside BHS for Credit Grades 9, 10, 11, 12

Students may complete high school course work in an academic setting other than BHS. The provider of this off-site coursework must be accredited.

A Course of Study from the accredited institution must be attached to the application.

Purpose: Taking high school courses at a site other than BHS enables a student to **take courses that are not currently offered** at the high school. Students may also take courses in which they must recover credits.

Proof of Experience: course of study, transcript

Assessment: The student must achieve the mastery score established by the department supervisor in the off-site course.

Grading:

- Grade is recorded.
- Credits are counted toward graduation requirements (3-credit college course = 5-credit high school course).
- Course and grade are listed on student's transcript.
- Grade is not included in the GPA.

All fees and any necessary transportation arrangements are the responsibility of the student and his/her family.

Option II: Independent Study at BHS Grades 11-12

The Independent Study Program is available for those students who are looking to do in-depth study beyond the BHS course offerings or have a desire to fulfill a course need that is not available in the current BHS curriculum. An Independent Study may be content-based or be an interdisciplinary/theme-based project. An Independent Study may not replace a course that is offered in the current BHS curriculum unless there is an irresolvable scheduling conflict. A maximum of 10 independent study credits may be attempted each year.

Purpose: The Independent Study option has been created for two reasons: (1) To allow for the student who has exhausted existing courses to complete more advanced or intense study in a given area; and (2) To respond to a scheduling conflict which precludes the student taking a course critical to his/her educational plan.

Note: Students may not use an Independent Study to extend the work they are already doing in a regularly scheduled course. Independent Study is NOT designed as a replacement option for a dropped course.

Requirement: The Independent Study Addenda must accompany the Option II Application.

Grading:

- Approved Independent Study courses will receive grades. Grades are not weighted.
- Each Independent Study will appear on report cards and transcripts.
- The deadlines and penalties for dropping an Independent Study are the same as for any other on-site course.
- Grades will be included in the GPA.

Assessment/Proof of Experience: As outlined in the Independent Study application.

Note: Independent Studies that are software-based have been identified by the NCAA Eligibility Center as nontraditional courses, and as such, must meet guidelines in order to be used for college-bound student-athletes who are planning to attend an NCAA Division I college or university. Refer to information in the section on Application Process. **Students must make sure they are checking and meeting NCAA guideline.**

Option II: Online or Distance Learning Grades 9-12

Online or Distance Learning courses may be taken from an accredited institution. A Course of Study from the accredited institution must be attached to the application.

Purpose: Taking online courses enables a student to take courses that are not currently offered at the high school, to recover credits, or to advance a course level. Note: Core Lab Science courses are excluded as online options.

Requirement: If a proctor is required for the requested course, BHS applicants must secure an eligible proctor from the list of BHS Teacher Proctors (available in the Guidance Department) prior to submitting their application.

Proof of Experience: course of study, transcript, final exam

Assessment: If a HS course for advancement, students will need to successfully pass the course with an 85% and take the BHS final exam/assessment and achieve a mastery score. For all other courses (high school or college level), students will need to successfully pass the End-of-Course assessment provided by the accredited institution.

Grading:

- Grade is recorded.
- Credits are counted toward graduation requirements.
- Course and grade are listed on student's transcript.
- Grade is not included in the GPA. All course and proctor fees are the responsibility of the student and his/her family.

Option II: Physical Education Athletic Participation Grades 10, 11,12

Student-athletes may earn marking period credits toward their PE requirement by participating in Belleville athletic programs as recognized by the NJ State Interstate Athletic Association (NJSIAA) as well as the Competitive Cheerleading Team and Marching Band. Participation in an activity must span a semester (Fall/Winter, Winter/Spring, or Fall/Winter/Spring).

Purpose: This is a "directed study" as student-athletes participate in athletics at the advanced level (learning, practicing, preparing and competing) under the direction of their coaches/advisors. Students may earn 2.5 Credits per year in Physical Education Only. Health Courses must be taken for credit.

Notes: A student may choose to receive credit but still participate in PE. Students who apply for this option and wish to bypass PE may be placed into a study period for the semester.

Credit Requirement: Students must complete one semester of health education/driver's education per year at BHS.

Notes: Medical: Excuses due to injury will be handled as they are during the traditional PE program.

Assessment/Proof of Experience: Successful completion of a season as verified by the head coach or advisor.

Grading:

- Pass (P) or Fail (F) grade is awarded.
- Course is listed on student's transcript.
- Grade is not included in the GPA.
- Credits are counted toward graduation requirements. Only a completed season will count for credit.

- The deadlines and penalties for dropping out are the same as for any other course. All participation fees are the responsibility of the student and his/her family. Student must report to their Physical Education class until they are notified by the Athletic Director that they have made the team

Process for Appeal

If the proposed Option II application is declined, the student has the ability to appeal this decision. The following must occur:

- The student shall notify the Content Area Curriculum Director(s) in writing within three school day of notification from the committee.
- This appeal to the Content Area Curriculum Director(s) should include the reason(s) the student feels he/she should be granted permission for the Option II Program.
- It should particularly address the criteria for program approval detailed above.
- The Content Area Curriculum Director(s) will gather information and notify the student of his/her decision, in writing, within three days of receipt of the appeal.
- **The decision of the Content Area Curriculum Director(s) is final.**

STEPS TO APPROVAL

Eligibility (with NO exceptions)

Option II opportunities only apply to the specified grade levels.

Option II applicants must meet all published dates and deadlines.

Option II opportunities must be pre-approved. Applications must be approved by Director of Student Personnel Services and the Principal of Belleville High School.

Application Process

Students who plan on pursuing credits outside the traditional BHS program must complete the Option II Application to be approved by Option II Credit Committee.

Application forms are available online at www.bellevilleschools.org. The Option II Credit Committee will review the application and make a decision based on the student's rationale and the criteria outlined.

Procedures

1. The student completes the online application, supplies their counselor with any additional information that will assist the committee in making a decision, obtains all required signatures, when applicable.
2. The counselor reviews the online application with student and if all in order, forwards to the supervisor.
3. Once approved by supervisor, the application is forwarded to the principal for final approval.
4. The principal examines the application based on the student's rationale and the criteria outlined in the instructions.
5. Upon final approval, the student/parent and/or guardian will receive an email advising of decision. A student may appeal the decision.
6. If approved, the student completes the work during the time specified above. The student arranges with the department supervisor/chair for completion of the final assessment (as applicable). Finally, the student provides the counselor with the proof of experience by the dates indicated.

Awarding of Credit

Each Option II opportunity has a final assessment, documentation of participation, presentation, interview and/or end-of-course final exam.

- If the student successfully passes the assessment and/or successfully meets the assessment requirements by the required dates, the student is awarded credit.
- If it is determined that the student has not met the minimum proficiencies via the final assessment or proof of experience, credit is not awarded.
- Option II: Advancing a Course Level If a student takes an off-site or online course for the purpose of advancement, and receives a transcript upon completion indicating a passing grade of 85% with a transcript indicating course completion from an approved and accredited institution, then the following applies:
 - **If the student passes** the BHS final assessment, the student is awarded credit and the student may advance a course level.
 - **If the student does not pass** the BHS assessment and is determined not to have met the minimum proficiencies, credit WILL NOT be awarded and the student WILL NOT advance a course level in a given sequence.

Course Completion

It is expected that each Option II opportunity will be completed during the time specified. Deadlines are firm. Exiting Option II When the Option II coursework is completed, the student exits the program in the following manner.

- The counselor forwards notice of completion to the Director of Students Personnel Services for official credit awarding by the principal and input into the student's records.
- The Director of Student Personnel Services provides final copies for the student's cumulative file, transcripts, and the student's counselor.

Core Curriculum Content Standards: Important URLs

Students applying for Option II will need to align requests with the State standards available at the New Jersey Department of Education website: <http://www.state.nj.us/education/cccs/>

National College Athletics Association (NCAA) Eligibility Information

The rules regarding software-based credit recovery, virtual, online, independent study and correspondence courses changed effective August 2010. These types of courses, which are identified by the NCAA Eligibility Center as nontraditional courses, must meet new guidelines in order to be used for college-bound student-athletes who are planning to attend an NCAA Division I college or university. The rule change was enacted to ensure that acceptable nontraditional courses provide opportunities for students to demonstrate their work was completed in a manner consistent with the intent and design of the core-course curriculum requirements. This legislation will allow the NCAA Eligibility Center to determine which courses and institutions are acceptable to satisfy initial-eligibility standards with the ultimate goal of ensuring that prospective student-athletes are enrolled in quality courses that satisfy the intent of the core curriculum requirements and prepare prospective student-athlete for college academic work.

Nontraditional courses must meet the following:

- Courses that are taught through distance learning, online, credit recovery, etc. need to be comparable in length, content and rigor to courses taught in a traditional classroom setting. Students may not skip lessons or test out of modules. The course must be four-year college preparatory.
- All courses must include ongoing access between the instructor and student, as well as regular interaction for purposes of teaching, evaluating and providing assistance. This may include, for example, exchanging of e-mails between the student and teacher, feedback on assignments, and the opportunity for the teacher to engage the student in individual instruction.
- Any course taken must have a defined time period for completion. For example, it should be clear whether the course is meant to be taken for an entire semester or during a more condensed time frame, such as six weeks, etc.
- Nontraditional courses should be clearly identified as such on the high school transcript.
- **NOTE: ALL COURSES TAKEN MUST BE APPROVED BY NCAA. ALL INSTITUTIONS MUST BE APPROVED BY NCAA.**

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. What does Alternate Path (Option II) mean?

The traditional way that students earn credit for a high school course is the one with which we are all familiar: they register for a course offered by the school; attend the required number of classes per quarter, semester, or year; and earn a passing cumulative grade on all required course work and assessments. In addition to this traditional option, BHS offers students options for earning credit in non-traditional ways.

2. What steps must I take to apply for Option II?

Planning for the experience should always begin with your counselor. It is important to ensure that the course work you wish to complete will complement the work you do at BHS. You will need to complete the Option II application, which is available online or in Student Services and then schedule an appointment to meet with your guidance counselor for the course work you are considering. Your counselor will review your proposed curriculum and discuss what credit will be offered to you. Your completed forms should be turned in to your counselor by the appropriate due date. Your application will be submitted to the Option II Credit Committee for approval.

3. If I failed a course, can I make it up through Option II?

Yes. If you fail a course, you may “recover credit” via a summer course or participation in High School Course Work Taken Outside BHS for Credit or an Online/Educere. See your counselor regarding registration.

4. Are there deadlines for submitting an Option II application?

Yes, refer to the dates listed on the application form.

5. If the application is late, will it be considered?

No late applications will be considered.

6. Can I get credit for a course without prior approval from the Option II Credit Committee?

No.

7. How long will it take to get a response from the Option II Credit Committee?

You will be notified within two weeks from the application due date.

8. Can Option II be used to advance a level or prepare for early graduation?

Yes. In order to receive credit for advancing a level or preparing for early exit and graduation, the course must meet the Core Content Standards, as well as those standards set by the Belleville Board of Education.

9. Do departments require specific exit assessments? In some cases, there is a final assessment. Final assessments will be discussed and determined when you meet with the overseeing department administrator.

10. What kinds of courses are not approved?

Personal enrichment courses that do not align with core curriculum or that have no curriculum associated with them are examples of courses not approved.

11. How will my grade be determined? Will my grade count in my GPA? - Yes

See the Belleville School District grading policy 2624.

12. How many Option II courses can I take during my high school career?

Some of the options have limits in terms of grade and number. For example, in the case of independent study, there is a limit of five credits per year and it can only be taken in 11th or 12th grade. Generally speaking, students are limited to two Option II experiences per school year or the equivalent of 10 credits. A student may appeal to the principal for an exemption to this limit.

13. What will appear on my transcript after I complete an Option II course?

The name of course, institution and appropriate credits will be recorded on the Belleville High School transcript for those students approved for alternative course work.

14. Is there a time limit for Option II work to be completed?

Yes, refer to the Belleville School District’s calendar for term dates.

15. How do I get an advisor/teacher for Independent Study?

If you are planning an independent study, arranging for the advisor is your responsibility. A Belleville HS certified faculty member must serve as the advisor. You will need to personally contact and make an appointment to meet with a teacher in your field of study to discuss the work to be completed, grading procedure, credits to be awarded and time to be allotted. Once you have secured an advisor/teacher you will need to complete the independent study section of the Option II application. Make sure you have obtained all required signatures on the application.

16. What happens if I can't find a teacher to sponsor my Independent Study?

You will not be given approval to complete an independent study without an approved sponsor.

17. What forms do I need for Independent Study?

The independent study application must include two things: Option II application Independent Study Addenda
All plans for the independent study must be discussed with your counselor. The online application and addenda must be received within the stated timelines and all required signatures must be obtained.

18. Can I take a regular existing class at BHS as an Independent Study?

Yes.

