*Willamette Promise: Frequently Asked Questions*

[**What is the Willamette Promise?**](http://www.eastern-promise.org/faq/what-eastern-promise)

The Willamette Promise will provide high school students with additional opportunities to participate in college-level courses and earn college credits while still in high school. The Willamette Promise will help build a robust and vibrant culture in our region where the transitions between high school, college and career are seamless, and every student leaves high school prepared for college or a career.

When students enroll in courses through the Willamette Promise, they get a jump-start on college while simultaneously satisfying high school requirements. Students are eligible to receive both high school and college credit.

These opportunities translate into real financial savings for students and families. In most cases, tuition is greatly reduced for Willamette Promise courses. Significant savings can be realized when students complete enough courses to enter college with their first term or even their first year of college requirements completed.

**Which organizations participate in the Willamette Promise?**

The Willamette Promise is a collaboration between 20 school districts in Marion, Polk and Yamhill counties, Willamette Education Service District, Western Oregon University, Oregon Institute of Technology, Corban University, Chemeketa Community College and the South Metro-Salem STEM Partnership.

The Willamette Promise is a commitment and promise between and among these organizations to eliminate the barriers that exist for students who choose to accelerate their learning and earn college credit while in high school.

**What is the goal of the Willamette Promise?**

There are several goals associated with this program but the primary goals for 2014-2015 are:

* Increase by 10% the total number of students who earn college credits and/or certificates while in high school;
* Increase by 15% the number of underrepresented students who earn college credits and/or certificates while in high school; and
* Create a robust and vibrant career readiness and college-going culture in our region.

**How is the Willamette Promise different from existing college credit programs?**

Currently, students have several pathways for earning college credit while still in high school.  Examples include:

**Advanced Placement (AP)** is a well-respected, rigorous program, but it requires conformance to external curriculum and traditionally has low enrollment in smaller high schools.

**International Baccalaureate (IB)** is an internationally recognized and rigorous program, but it is the most expensive options for students and not widely used in our region. Similar to Advanced Placement, It would be difficult to *“scale-up”* this program to achieve Oregon’s 40-40-20 goal.

**Dual Credit or College Credit Now** **(CCN)** is the largest program in our region and the avenue by which most students earn college credits and/or certificates. This program is the most economical for students, but high school teachers must meet the criteria for being an adjunct instructor at the community college. This requirement limits expansion of the program in many high schools.

The Willamette Promise solves many of the limitations with existing dual-credit programs. First, this new pathway is proficiency-based, and it can be expanded rapidly to help achieve Oregon’s ambitious 40-40-20 goal.

The program allows school administrators to assign highly competent teachers, who have a history of helping students achieve high academic standards, to teach dual credit courses.  Throughout the semester, students would be assessed, using multiple measures, to determine their proficiency in college-level learning outcomes.  When students demonstrate proficiency, teachers would award college credit.

Efficiency and timely implementation is achieved by overlaying existing high school courses with the college learning outcomes. Professional Learning Communities that include high school and college instructors will cross-score assessments to ensure that college credit is awarded only when the proficiency standards are met.

Colleges and universities participating in this program would work also with high school instructors to ensure they are prepared to teach and assess the proficiencies.

[**What are Professional Learning Communities (PLCs)?**](http://www.eastern-promise.org/faq/what-are-professional-learning-communities-plcs)

Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) are a blend of high school, college and university faculty who develop proficiency standards and assessments in the Willamette Promise model.  PLCs meet regularly to develop common proficiency assessments, share effective instructional strategies and review data on student performance.

**How does the Willamette Promise support Oregon's 40-40-20 initiative?**

The 40-40-20 goal states that by 2025, Oregon will ensure that 40 percent of adults will have earned a bachelor’s degree or higher; that 40 percent of adults will have earned an associate degree or post-secondary credential; and 20 percent of adults will have earned a high school diploma, modified high school diploma or the equivalent of a high school diploma.

The Willamette Promise supports Oregon’s 40-40-20 goal by increasing the number of students who earn:

* A bachelor degree;
* The Associate of Arts Oregon Transfer degree;
* Or are career-ready after completing a certificate program.

[**Is my school eligible to participate?**](http://www.eastern-promise.org/faq/my-school-eligible-participate)

All high schools in the consortium are eligible to participate in Willamette Promise sponsored “proficiency credit” opportunities.

[**What is the eligibility criteria for faculty?**](http://www.eastern-promise.org/faq/what-eligibility-criteria-faculty)

To be eligible to teach credit by proficiency courses through the Willamette Promise, high school teachers must meet several requirements:

1. Be approved by their high school administration
2. Have taught in the discipline or related subject area for at least three years
3. Attend course-specific Willamette Promise training sessions
4. Become an active member of the Professional Learning Community
5. Renew eligibility annually, and be willing to allow college and university faculty to assess their performance results

[**What is the eligibility criteria for students?**](http://www.eastern-promise.org/faq/what-eligibility-criteria-students)

1. Generally students must be 16 years and a junior or senior in high school.
2. Be approved by the high school (administration or faculty) to participate in a Willamette Promise, dual credit course.
3. Be prepared academically (placement tests, prerequisites, etc.) to be successful in college level work.

[**How do I register for courses?**](http://www.eastern-promise.org/faq/how-do-i-register-courses)

Unlike traditional dual credit options, students enroll after they have met the proficiency standards for the course. This is an important distinction, and will encourage more students to participate—particularly those who are concerned about costs, transcription of an unfavorable grade, or who may lack confidence.

For courses conducted during the first semester, registration will take place during the college/university winter term. For second semester and year-long classes, registration will take place during spring term.

[**How are courses graded?**](http://www.eastern-promise.org/faq/how-are-courses-graded)

All Willamette Promise courses will be graded A-F.

Credit by proficiency courses offered through the Willamette Promise require a minimum score of 70% to achieve an acceptable passing grade (“C” or better). It is important to note that many courses will measure proficiency using a rubric or scoring guide rather than traditional point systems.

[**How can I get involved?**](http://www.eastern-promise.org/faq/how-can-i-get-involved)

**Contact Willamette Promise** or your local school officials.