



# NLPS Frequently Asked Questions

The following document provides answers to many of the most common questions received regarding Indiana's secondary CTE programs (Next Level Programs of Study). The document is regularly reviewed and updated to reflect updates to guidance and new common questions.

**Newer questions are denoted in red.** Questions regarding current content or suggestions for future additions can be directed to [CTE@che.in.gov](mailto:CTE@che.in.gov).

- Looking for additional information?
  - You can find a variety of resources by visiting our website at [www.in.gov/che/cte/](http://www.in.gov/che/cte/). Sign up to receive updates regarding CTE through our newsletter [here](#).

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## NLPS Implementation

### **Q1: How should schools make determinations about what programs of study they will offer?**

A1. Schools are encouraged to first use the [NLPS Planning Guide](#) when making determinations on program of study offerings. The guide provides a rubric that will assist schools in thinking through multiple factors that are key towards making decisions around program offerings. Quality program components to consider include, but are not limited to labor market alignment, qualified instructors, facility and equipment, college credit, credential attainment, work-based learning opportunities, employer engagement, and equity and access.

### **Q2: How is CTE Concentrator defined?**

A2. Beginning with the 2023 cohort, **Indiana adopted the following definition of a CTE Concentrator based on guidance from the federal Perkins Act:** A student who *completes at least two advanced courses in a single Career and Technical Education program or program of study.*

Advanced courses include the Concentrator A and Concentrator B courses listed in the NLPS course sequences. The CTE team defines *completes* as meeting all required prerequisites and earning at least 2 credits in each advanced course. Under this definition of completes, students have to earn 2 credits (by passing the course/earning credit using the local district grading scale)

in the Principles, Concentrator A, and Concentrator B course within a CTE program of study to qualify as a concentrator.

**To qualify as a CTE Concentrator under Graduation Pathways**, the student must also complete the courses required for concentrator status with a C average. The Department of Education and CTE team at CHE have collectively determined that the Capstone course in a NLPS sequence may be used to meet this requirement. A school may choose to include the cumulative grade average earned in the capstone to meet the C average requirement. If using the Capstone, the C average would be based on grades earned in the following courses: Principles, Concentrator A, Concentrator B, and the cumulative Capstone grade.

For additional questions related to Graduation Pathways, individuals are encouraged to refer to the [Department of Education's Graduation Pathways FAQ](#).

**Q3: Do schools have to offer all of the courses in a program of study?**

A3. NLPS are designed to give students the opportunity to earn concentrator status and to earn credentials while they are in high school. Offering only part of a pathway does not provide this opportunity to students. Thus, schools are strongly discouraged from offering a Principles course without at least offering the corresponding Concentrator A and B courses for at least one pathway. However, course enrollments would still be funded in scenarios where only the Principles course is offered.

**Q4: What funding is available to support schools, career centers, or other entities in covering the costs of offering CTE programs of study?**

A4. Through the federal Perkins Grant, state tuition support for CTE programs, and additional investments in related programs the state of Indiana invested over \$200 million dollars in the most recent year to help cover the costs of CTE programs. The CTE team also provides targeted grant opportunities like Reserve Grants for Area CTE Districts and the [Education Readiness Grant program](#) to assist with implementing or expanding CTE programs. Schools are discouraged from offering programs that they are not fiscally able to support with the appropriate facilities, equipment, and materials.

## NLPS Capstone Courses

*Guidance on offering Capstone Courses can be found [here](#). Capstone courses are available for multiple credits per semester and have flexibility built in for schools to embed work-based learning opportunities when possible.*

**Q1: Can students complete some, but not all, of the dual credit courses in a Capstone course?**

A1. Schools have the option of offering the capstone for 1-3 credits per semester (2-6 credits per year). Schools should focus first on the dual credit courses that allow students to complete a certificate (CT). The CTE team has identified priority competencies aligned to the dual credit courses that

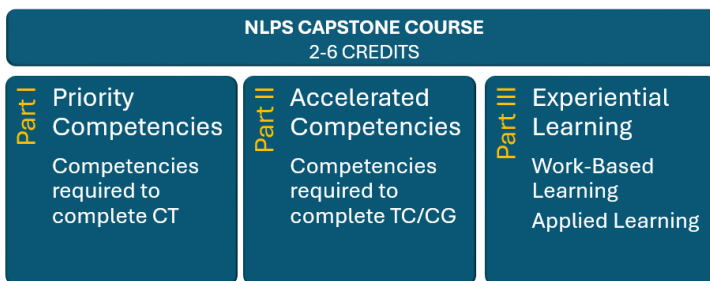
should be completed *first* if the course is only being offered for 1 credit per semester. These priority competencies have been selected based upon which courses are required for the CT (Certificate).

- Courses that are required for the TC/CG (Technical Certificate/Certificate of Graduation), but are only available through dual enrollment, have been placed in the Capstone course. Schools may choose to teach this content without dual credit or work with a postsecondary partner to be able to provide students with the opportunity to complete the courses through dual enrollment.

**Q2: In what ways can Capstone courses be offered?**

A2. There are a variety of ways to offer a Capstone course, but a school will always choose to offer it for 2, 4, or 6 credits.

- 2 Credits: This is a similar format to the concentrator courses.
- 4 Credits: Must include Part I. May include *either* Part II or Part III.
- 6 Credits: Must include Parts I, II & III.



**Q3: Are there benefits or consequences if a student who reaches concentrator status does not take (or complete) the Capstone course?**

A3. Schools are encouraged to offer at least the first two credits of the Capstone course for students, but there is no penalty if they don't. In many cases the required courses for a short-term certificate will not be able to fit into the concentrator courses and the student will need to take some credits of the Capstone course to complete the Certificate (CT).

- The Capstone courses have been designed to provide up to 150 instructional hours of embedded work-based learning experiences. This focus means many of the Capstone courses are only aligned to 12 or fewer dual credits. Students are expected to be enrolled in at least two credits of related instruction to take advantage of the embedded work-based learning experiences.

**Q4: Can students complete a work-based learning (WBL) course or experience in place of the Capstone course?**

A4. Absolutely. The WBL Capstone course (5974) is still available for students and maintains its current prerequisite of at least one advanced course (a Concentrator A or Concentrator B course). If a student is doing a WBL experience without any related instruction, the WBL capstone course should be used rather than the Capstone course for the student's particular NLPS pathway.

**Q5: Can the capstone course be combined with a Concentrator A or B course?**

A5. Yes, as long as the student does not exceed 6 total credits of CTE coursework for the school year.

This means that students could complete the Concentrator B (Concentrator A could be used depending on prerequisites) and 4 credits of the Capstone course in a single school year.

- Capstone courses have been designed around the technical courses that are required for the Technical Certificate (TC). Schools are encouraged to have students complete the TC first before focusing on courses required for an associate degree. However, if schools are having students complete courses beyond a TC they can use the Advanced CTE College Credit courses for the appropriate career cluster.

## Industry Certifications

**Q1: Is there a comprehensive list of industry certifications available to high school students taking NLPS courses?**

A1. The best starting place is the Graduation Pathways Eligible Industry Certifications list [found here](#). That is the list of industry certifications students can earn that count for Graduation Pathways. The Review Document does also list out some certifications that students can earn within specific CTE programs of study.

**Q2. Who is responsible for covering the cost of certification testing?**

A2. In the 2023 legislative session, the Indiana General Assembly approved a \$2,000,000 line item to reimburse schools for the costs of student certification exams. To receive this funding, schools must enter their certification data into Indiana Technical Education Reporting System (InTERS) by September 1.

Reimbursement funds are paid to the student's sending school, regardless of whether the high school or career center oversees the student's certification process. Career centers are encouraged to negotiate funding for certification exams in tuition agreements/MOUs with high schools. Additional information can be found on Page 2 [here](#).

**Q3. How can I recommend that a certification be added to the State Promoted Industry Certification list?**

A3. The applications are received by the Department of Workforce Development and then reviewed by a cross-agency team. The application for submitting an industry certification for review can be found [here](#).

**Q4. What are the criteria for a certification to be added to the Graduation Pathways Eligible Industry Certifications List?**

A4. For a certification to be included in the Graduation Pathways list it first must be on the Promoted Industry certification list and then meet several additional criteria. The criteria are [outlined here](#).

**Q5. Do students need to obtain concentrator status prior to gaining or attempting an industry certification?**

A5. The short answer is no, a student does not have to take any particular course prior to taking a certification exam. If a student obtains the knowledge in some other way and passes the exam, they will still earn the industry certification (and be able to count that towards Grad Pathways if the certification is on the eligible list).

However, just taking the certification without going through the program of study limits their ability to earn dual credits, obtain concentrator status, and make progress toward other credentials. In most cases a student is going to earn a certification after going through a course(s) where the standards cover skills that are tested through the certification.

Depending on the pathway, a student may be ready to earn a certification after just one of the Concentrator courses (so before they reach concentrator status) but rarely after just the Principles course.

## Dual Credit and Dual Enrollment

*Guidance on offering courses for Dual Credit can be [found here](#). This resource is the recommended starting place for a school/career centers and additional common questions are shared below.*

**Q1: Are all NLPS courses eligible for dual credit?**

A1. Whenever possible, NLPS courses have been directly aligned to postsecondary programs and courses and are available for dual credit. However, there are courses within a few pathways (i.e., BioMed and Engineering) that are not aligned to any postsecondary courses.

**Q2: Do courses have to be taken for dual credit to count for concentrator status?**

A2. No, offering CTE courses for college credit is highly encouraged but is not required for students to earn CTE concentrator status. Concentrator status is only determined by completion of the secondary courses (Principles, Concentrator A, and Concentrator B).

**Q3. What if our school doesn't have teachers qualified to teach dual credit courses in our building?**

A3. NLPS courses are meant to be flexible enough to be offered in a variety of settings and most importantly in the way that students can enjoy the most benefits. Dual credit opportunities are a significant emphasis of NLPS, but the CTE team recognizes that not every school or site is able to offer dual credits for each CTE course. In these cases, dual enrollment (taught by a postsecondary instructor either on campus or at the high school) provides a particularly good option for schools to consider.

**Q4. How do we implement dual enrollment as part of an NLPS pathway?**

A4. The first thing to consider when looking at dual enrollment options is that the student is being enrolled in and is completing the secondary course for concentrator status and the school likely desires that the enrollment be eligible for CTE funding. For example, having students complete

WELD 100 at Ivy Tech is simply the way that a school has chosen to cover standards for the Principles of Welding (7110) course.

- For a course to count toward concentrator status and be eligible for funding, the student must complete 2 secondary credits over the course of the year (or a semester if using the Program Enrollment option). The Program Enrollment option is described on [Page 3 here](#).
- In cases where there are not multiple postsecondary courses, like Principles of Welding, the additional high school credit could be used to complete a student success course and/or to complete the ITCC Technical Math course (MATH 122) that is required for the credential. This option would cover some of the updated college and-career standards that have been added to all Principles courses.

**Q5: What if the dual enrollment course doesn't cover all the competencies listed for the course in the NLPS pathway?**

A5. When there are competencies included in a secondary course that don't align to a postsecondary course the high school is responsible for covering the secondary standards if enrolling students in the course. In some cases, postsecondary institutions may only offer one of the two courses that are aligned. The student can still earn the college credit, but they must also cover the competencies for the high school course.

**Q6: How can schools meet all the contact hour requirements that must be covered for students to earn Ivy Tech and/or Vincennes University dual credits?**

A6. The required contact hours have been taken into consideration when deciding which postsecondary courses could be paired together to create a secondary course. The standards development steering teams, made up of secondary and postsecondary instructors, have verified that there is enough time available to meet the required hours. Schools may also choose to use the Technical Skills Development course to provide additional time to meet these requirements.

**Q7: If schools have dual credit agreements with colleges/universities other than Vincennes or Ivy Tech, do they have to change those relationships?**

A7. The CTE team continues to work with public institutions around the state to discuss the role they may play in NLPS. While Ivy Tech and Vincennes were our primary partners in building out the programs of study, many conversations with 4-year institutions have occurred over the last few years and several 4-year institutions now have courses on the CTE Dual Credit Crosswalk.

Secondary schools are not limited to partnering with only Vincennes or Ivy Tech. However, these institutions have a significant percentage of the courses on the dual credit crosswalk. Postsecondary courses on the crosswalk have been vetted for competency alignment and transferability. Additionally, schools should consider the ultimate cost to the student when selecting a postsecondary partner.

- The [CTE Dual Credit Crosswalk](#) details which postsecondary courses are available for dual credit with related secondary courses at Ivy Tech and Vincennes, plus some four-year institutions who have agreed to offer dual credit for particular CTE programs.

- If a postsecondary institution and course is listed on the CTE Dual Credit Crosswalk, the *maximum tuition cost is up to \$25 per credit hour* and \$0 for students that are eligible for free and reduced lunch.

## NLPS Course Sequence and Student Progression

### **Q1: How do I propose a modification for an NLPS course sequence?**

A1. Modifications can be proposed through the pathway/course adoption form in InTERS. These are due on May 1 for the upcoming school year. You can access [Adoption Form Guidance & Directions here](#) (information on submitting adoption forms with modifications begins on page 5).

### **Q2: Many NLPS courses are linked to more than one postsecondary course, are schools and career centers allowed to pick which postsecondary course they wish to align to?**

A2. The entirety of the standards for each NLPS course must be taught. When a course is aligned to more than one postsecondary course, teaching all the standards will generally mean that you are aligned to all listed postsecondary courses. Achieving the certificates, certifications, etc. that a particular NLPS contains requires teaching to all the aligned postsecondary courses.

### **Q3: What is the process to request a Locally Created Pathway?**

A3. Locally Created Pathways are approved through the State Board of Education. Information on this process can be found on the Indiana Department of Education's [Graduation Pathways webpage](#) under "Grad Pathway Requirement 3: Postsecondary Ready Competencies."

### **Q4: What advice is there for smaller schools who may have trouble teaching all these classes or offering a wide variety of pathways to students?**

A4. Schools are encouraged to focus on offering high-quality pathways that provide students with the opportunity to earn a credential. This may mean offering fewer overall pathways in some cases. There are several options available to expand current pathway offerings including complementing Career Center/Co-op programs or taking advantage of dual enrollment opportunities.

### **Q5: Does a student have to start an NLPS as a 9th grader?**

A5. No, a student may progress through a pathway in a variety of ways. While there are 4 courses within each NLPS pathway, it does not mean that a student must take 1 class per year of high school. How a student progresses through an NLPS is a local decision and should be based on the pathway and what is best for the student.

- Taking 1 course per year may be optimal in certain pathways, such as Agriculture, Engineering, Biomedical, or Business. In other pathways, starting the NLPS later and taking two courses in one year may be a more ideal fit.
- When determining when to offer the Principles course, schools should consider a student's readiness to complete associated dual credits. Some students may not be ready to take a dual credit class as a freshman. In these cases, it may be better to have the students fully explore a

career cluster by taking an Introductory course their freshman year and wait until their sophomore year to begin an NLPS pathway. Most students would have enough flexibility in their schedule to take 2 courses their Junior and Senior year if necessary.

- Health Science or Welding are examples of pathways which may be better taught in longer blocks of time (2 or 3 period blocks). To facilitate offering courses in this way, a school may co-enroll students in up to 6 credits within a pathway per school year. For example, a student may be enrolled in the Principles, Concentrator A, and Concentrator B course during their junior year and then complete the capstone course for 6 credits their senior year.

**Q6: Can students take just one Next Level Program of Study course (as an elective), such as just the Principles course?**

A6. Schools are encouraged to only offer the Principles courses when students also have the opportunity to continue in the pathway to the Concentrator A and Concentrator B course.

- Students are also free to take other NLPS courses as elective courses. However, if the student has not met the prerequisite or course length requirements, the enrollment will not be eligible for CTE funding. Students taking an NLPS course as an elective will often not be able to take advantage of all dual credit opportunities.

**Q7: Are the Principles courses and Introductory courses interchangeable?**

A7. No, the Principles course for each pathway and the Introductory courses are different courses and serve distinct purposes. An Introductory course offers a broad overview of a career cluster, and the main purpose is to help students explore career interests before starting a pathway. The purpose of the Principles course is to provide necessary knowledge and skills for an individual pathway or a select group of closely related pathways. Principles courses are aligned to dual credit courses required for the Technical Certificate (TC) or Certificate of Graduation (CG) at ITCC and VU respectively.

**Q8: Can a Principles level class be offered to students in 8<sup>th</sup> grade? If so, will the class count as part of the NLPS pathway?**

A8. Yes, a Principles course can be offered to 8<sup>th</sup> grade students. Credit will be received by the student towards their NLPS pathway. However, **this option is discouraged** as Principles courses contain dual credit content designed for high school students and postsecondary providers are not able to award dual credit to 8<sup>th</sup> graders. Additionally, Principles courses are not eligible to receive CTE funding when offered at the 8th grade level.

- Preparing for College and Careers or an Introductory CTE course often are the best CTE course options for a student in 8<sup>th</sup> grade. The Introductory CTE courses currently available for CTE funding when offered at the 8th grade level are:
  - Introduction to Agriculture
  - Engineering Essentials
  - Introduction to Advanced Manufacturing and Logistics
  - Introduction to Business
  - Introduction to Computer Science
  - Introduction to Construction



- Exploring Education Professions
- Introduction to Health Science Careers
- Introduction to Transportation

**Q9: Can the Principles course and the Concentrator A course be taught concurrently during the same block of time?**

A9. No, both courses are aligned to dual credit courses and have required dual credit contact hours. Each course should be taught in a separate block of time or class period.

**Q10. Where does the Preparing for College and Careers course fit in NLPS?**

A10. Preparing for College and Careers (PCC) is still available following the transition to NLPS. In December 2023, the Indiana State Board of Education (SBOE) [approved updates](#) to the PCC course standards to align with Indiana Code (IC) 20-30-5-24 enacted in 2023. The course is required for students beginning with the 2034 cohort.

Additional guidance on PCC was released in February 2024 by the Indiana Department of Education (IDOE) in conjunction with the Indiana Commission for Higher Education (CHE) and can be [found here](#).

**Q11: What is the Technical Skills Development course and when/how should it be included within NLPS?**

A11. The Technical Skills Development (TSD) course was designed to meet two different purposes depending on the situation.

- The first option is to provide additional instructional/learning time. This time may be used to provide students with additional hands-on or lab time or intensive work-based learning experiences.
- The second option is for situations where a student is participating in a NLPS at a career center but has already completed the Principles course earlier in their high school career. For example, a freshman student took Principles of Agriculture and then later enrolled at a career center for the Precision Agriculture pathway. The student could enroll in the Technical Skills Development course in place of the Principles course, alongside enrolling in one or both of the Concentrator courses. This will also provide students the opportunity to earn the dual credit for the Principles course if they did not earn the dual credit their freshman year.
- The course allows students to earn 2 elective credits (does not count for concentrator status) and the course is funded at \$300 (introductory level).

TSD must be used with a multi-period block that includes a Concentrator A or B course. Schools should use course code 7156 for enrollments in the TSD course.

## Q12. Can NLPS courses be offered in the summer?

A12. There is not a restriction preventing offering CTE courses in the summer as long as the instructor meets assignment codes requirements and all of the competencies for the course(s) are covered. However, CTE courses offered in the summer are not eligible for CTE enrollment funding.

## Instructor Qualifications

### Q1: What are the requirements for instructors to teach NLPS courses?

A1. Assignment codes for NLPS courses are available in the NLPS Review Document as well as the Assignment Codes document. These codes have been developed in collaboration with the Department of Education.

- Additional requirements may be needed to teach some courses for dual credit. Assignment codes do not equal credentialing requirements for dual credit as those requirements are determined by the postsecondary institution that awarding credit. The state does not expect nor is requesting these requirements to be lowered. You can find information on faculty dual credit requirements for Ivy Tech [here](#) and [here](#). Information for teaching dual credit courses through Vincennes University can be found [here](#) beginning on page 11.

## CTE Course Delivery Options

### Q1. What Next Level Programs of Study are currently approved for virtual delivery?

A1. There are currently 20 NLPS pathways approved for virtual delivery. They are shown on the table below. Additional [guidance on online/virtual delivery of CTE pathways can be found here](#).

Agriscience	Education Careers	Legal Studies/Paralegal
Biomedical Sciences	Engineering	Marketing
Business Administration	Entrepreneurship	Natural Resources
Business Operations	Finance and Investments	Nutrition
Computer Science	Hospitality Management	Social and Community Services
Criminal Justice	Human Services	Software Development
Digital Design	Insurance	

### Q2. What is the difference between courses offered virtually and those offered online?

A2. Credits attained in NLPS courses taught online only count toward concentrator status if the program of study/course has been approved for virtual delivery or the course is taught online through a postsecondary dual enrollment agreement. As shown in the chart below, the CTE team defines virtual and online delivery as two separate categories.

<b>Course Delivery Method</b>	<b>CTE Funding</b>	<b>Credit Application</b>
<b>Classroom Course</b> <i>(in-person/ face-to-face)</i>	Fully Funded	Credits count toward concentrator
<b>Virtual</b> <i>(online - synchronous)</i>	Fully Funded <i>for approved courses</i>	Credits count toward concentrator <i>for approved courses</i>
<b>Blended (Hybrid)</b> <i>(face-to-face/virtual)</i>	Fully Funded <i>must meet hands-on requirements</i>	Credits count toward concentrator <i>must meet hands-on requirements</i>
<b>Online Only</b> <i>(online-asynchronous)</i>	Not Funded <i>unless postsecondary dual enrollment agreement</i>	Credits count toward concentrator <i>for approved virtual course or online dual enrollment</i>

**Q3. Which NLPS courses can be offered as applied?**

A3. CTE staff have collaborated with the Indiana Department of Education (IDOE) to review and update policies around applied units for CTE courses. Specifically -

- All Introductory and Foundational courses are available to be offered as Applied Courses/used as Applied Units and will be eligible to count toward applicable CTE funding as detailed in the annual CTE funding memo.
- NLPS Concentrator Sequence courses (Principles, Concentrator A, Concentrator B, and Capstone) that are modified can be offered as Applied based on local decisions, however modified courses are not eligible to count for CTE funding due to modified courses not offering the necessary preparation for achieving concentrator status and leading to the earning of credentials and/or certifications.
  - While modifications to courses will remove CTE funding, accommodations will be necessary in some courses to make them fully accessible to students in special populations and schools/career centers are encouraged to offer these accommodations in support of student success.