

# **Jefferson County Schools Handbook for Secondary Counselors, Administrators, and Teachers Working with English Language Learners**

**Golden, Colorado  
2014 Edition**



## Section Four: Enrollment and Scheduling

### D: Obtaining and Evaluating Foreign Transcripts

ESL students entering high school come to us from a variety of places. Many come from the local middle school or another high school in the United States. Schools face particular challenges when students arrive from another country with a transcript that looks very different from ours. The purpose of this section is to provide guidelines for schools with steps to follow when they encounter a transcript from another country.

In the Appendix, you will find summaries of the educational systems for the most common countries represented in Jeffco (see table). Additional country summaries will be available on Blackboard.

Most Common Countries for ELLs in Jeffco born outside the United States
Mexico
Russia
China
Vietnam
South Korea
Ukraine
Bosnia

Remember the three “C’s” when putting together a plan:

- ✦ **Consistency:** All counselors and site administrators should know how foreign transcripts are being evaluated and should follow similar procedures for all students at their school site.
- ✦ **Collaboration:** Counselors should not arbitrarily decide how to evaluate student transcripts from foreign countries. Follow the guidelines established in this handbook. Collaborate with ESL teachers, ESL Resource Teachers and/or translators to make final decisions.
- ✦ **Communication:** It is important to communicate with the family and students. Schools should help families understand the importance we place on high school graduation in this country. Also, students and families need to understand what courses they will need to complete to obtain a high school diploma in Jefferson County and the length of time this should take.

## Questions and Answers:

### 1. How do I determine grade level placement for an immigrant student?

- # Student age and credits earned should be taken into account when placing students in a grade level. If students have been enrolled in school, either in the U.S. or a foreign country, schools can typically follow their procedures for placing students in the appropriate grade level. You can use the chart below as a *general* guideline:

Grade	Student Age	Typical # of credits
9 <sup>th</sup>	14 - 15 years old	6 - 7
10 <sup>th</sup>	15 - 16 years old	12-14
11 <sup>th</sup>	16 - 17 years old	17-20
12 <sup>th</sup>	17 - 18 years old	22-26

- # Place students in the grade level with their age-appropriate peers. If the student is 17 or 18 and is just beginning high school in this country, enroll the student as an 11<sup>th</sup> grader since they will take at least two years to graduate (Note: students most likely will need additional courses outside of the typical 11<sup>th</sup> grade curriculum.)
- # We consistently find that students, regardless of age, prefer to attend their home high school. Students who arrive with limited formal schooling face tremendous challenges when pursuing a high school diploma. It is important to work with the student/family to overcome these challenges and make the student feel welcome and supported.
- # Inform students that schools need a transcript in order to give them appropriate credit for courses completed in another country. Encourage families to bring them in as quickly as possible or fax them to the school to ensure an accurate plan for graduation.
- # **Refugee students** may have no way of obtaining school records from their home country. Counselors should work with interpreters to determine which courses the students have successfully completed in their home country. Seek approval from the principal to award credit. Schools are encouraged to work with the district ESL Resource Teacher with these exceptional cases.

## 2. If a student needs additional time to graduate, how will this impact my graduation rate for my school?

- # At the time of original publication, calculation of graduation rate for the class of 2008 was still under consideration by the state. As of the beginning of 2009-2010 school year, the Federal government determined that there would be no exemption from the on-time graduation rate for either Special Education or ELL students. Colorado is therefore continuing with the previous on-time calculations. CDE decisions regarding the definition of the on-time graduation rate will most likely occur this school year.

## 3. How do I award credit for courses taken in another country?

- # Award up to 3.5 credits per semester of equivalent high school courses. For questions about the equivalent of “high school” in the foreign country, see country-by-country resources in Appendix or additional resources on Blackboard.
- # In many countries, students take ten to twelve classes a semester so it is often difficult to determine what courses they have completed and how much credit they should receive. When students enroll, students can fill out a *seat-time chart* of the classes (see sample in Appendix) they took in their home country, indicating how many days a week they were in that class and for how many minutes/week. This information can be used to award appropriate credit. Schools are encouraged to follow guidelines for awarding Carnegie units for seat time. Approximately 90 hours of seat-time is equivalent to 0.5 credits.
- # Students’ Jeffco transcripts will detail the courses and the credits that they have earned for classes taken in another country. The school number is coded “0033” and the typed description should read “Out-of-Country” or “Out-of-District” for these credits.
- # ELLs must complete all graduation requirements. Most students transferring into this country will **not** have met the following requirements in their home country: four years (units) of English Language Arts, one year (unit) of American History, and one semester of U.S. Government. Other requirements in mathematics, social sciences, science and world language may transfer more readily. This means that most students – depending on their English language level – will need at least two years to meet these requirements.
- # **In accordance with Board Policy, principals maintain the authority to waive any course requirements (see Appendix, Board Policy IKF-R).**

#### **4. How do I align credit to Jeffco graduation requirements and place students in appropriate courses?**

- # The charts on pages 39-40 give guidelines for which courses taken in other countries meet Jeffco graduation requirements.
- # When placing students in classes, students should be placed with teachers who have ESL state endorsements, district qualifications or have received training in working with ELLs. Counselors are encouraged to keep a list of teachers who meet these qualifications that can be used during scheduling.
- # Go with student strengths! It may take a little time to figure out that you have an artist, a math wiz, or a poet. Building student confidence through appropriate scheduling and placement so they can begin to shine will only benefit their overall success in school.

#### **5. Should I transfer grades as well as credit?**

- # Grades awarded for each course should be representative of what the student earned in the course in the foreign country. Schools need to be consistent and interpret grades the same way they would when looking at grades from a student transferring in from another state or district. When possible, interpret grades into letters so as to allow the student to obtain a GPA, versus using only pass/fail grades.
- # For assistance with correlation of grades for Jeffco's most common foreign countries, please see the samples in the *Appendix*, consult the *Blackboard* resources on specific countries, or contact your school's ESL Resource Teacher for assistance.

#### **6. It looks like the courses from the home country have different names than our courses in Jeffco. How would I enter then on Campus?**

- # Complete the following steps to enter the course from the foreign country:
  1. In Campus, go the Transcript tab for entering courses.
  2. Select the correlating Jeffco course code.
  3. Change the name of the course to reflect the course taken in the foreign country.
  4. Select the type of credit.

## E. Content-Specific Guidelines for Credit and Placement

Subject in Foreign Country	Guidelines for giving credit in U.S. schools: (maximum of 3.5 credits per semester)	Guidelines for placement:
English	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>English courses taken in another country are considered "English as a Foreign Language" (EFL) classes count toward ESL <i>elective</i> credit.</li> <li>If students demonstrate English proficiency on a measure such as CELA, CSAP, or grade-level standards, principals have the discretion to award English credit for EFL courses taken in the other country.</li> <li>All students must have 4 years of English credit to graduate. These credits may come from ESL English or English.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Place in ESL or mainstream English classes based on the CELA intake assessment and native language literacy.</li> <li>In order to meet the HEAR requirements for 4 year universities, students must take at least 2 years of mainstream English.</li> </ul>
Math	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Give credit for appropriate math courses taken in the foreign country.</li> <li>Use data from <b>ESL Math Placement test</b> (Blackboard) and teacher input to assist with this decision.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use <b>ESL Math Placement Test</b>, previous course information, and teacher input to place in appropriate level.</li> <li>After the student has been in class for a week or so, check in with the teacher to confirm that the math placement is appropriate.</li> </ul>
Science	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Give credit for appropriate science courses taken in the foreign country.</li> <li>If students have taken an integrated science course, write out exactly the course completed on the transcript.</li> <li>Remember to ask the students if the course had a lab component and make sure the course is coded appropriately to meet the "lab-based" requirement.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consider giving some students more math-based courses first, such as chemistry or physics. Courses such as earth science and biology tend to be more language intensive.</li> <li>Students with strong science schooling and high levels of native language literacy will be ready for more challenging courses sooner.</li> </ul>

## E. Content-Specific Guidelines for Credit and Placement

Subject in Foreign Country	Guidelines for giving credit in U.S. schools: (maximum of 3.5 credits per semester)	Guidelines for placement:
Social Studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Geography and Economics transfer directly to our correlating courses in the U.S.</li> <li>• Courses in their native countries' history (such as History of China) count as World History.</li> <li>• Students <b>must</b> take U.S. Government or Civics and U.S. History in U.S. schools.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider waiting for a semester or a year to give NEP students social studies classes.</li> <li>• Students with high levels of native language literacy may be ready for more challenging courses sooner.</li> <li>• Geography may be the most appropriate social studies class for NEPs due to the prior knowledge they bring with them.</li> </ul>
PE or Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Give credit for appropriate physical education classes and health classes taken in the foreign country.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be sensitive to cultural norms when enrolling in PE or Health. Different cultures have different norms about personal health and privacy.</li> </ul>
World Language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Give credit for native language courses one year prior to high school and all years completed in high school. For example, a new 10<sup>th</sup> grade student from Mexico would receive world language credit for one year from middle school and one year from high school.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Place Spanish-speaking students with literacy skills in a <i>Spanish for Spanish Speakers</i> course or <i>Heritage Spanish</i> where available (see pages 27-29).</li> <li>• Before making decisions regarding placement of ELLs in World Language classes, always collaborate with both ESL and World Language teachers.</li> </ul>