

Expanded Core Curriculum: Introduction

Goal

The goal of the Expanded Core Curriculum for Students with Visual Impairments (ECC-VI) is the ongoing development of board authorized expanded core curriculum (ECC) courses for students with visual impairments in grade 10-12.

Rationale for the ECC-VI

Students who are blind or visually impaired can, with appropriate curriculum adaptations and instruction, meet the goals of the high school core curriculum in British Columbia. However, the very nature of blindness and/or visual impairment requires that a wide range of experiences and concepts often casually and incidentally learned by students that are sighted in the home, school and community must be systematically and sequentially taught to the blind or visually impaired student. Thus the core curriculum necessary for students who are blind or visually impaired is larger and more complex than that for sighted students and is referred to as the expanded core curriculum (ECC).

The ECC consists of nine specific areas of skill development, namely: compensatory or functional academic skills including communication modes (Braille), orientation and mobility, assistive technology, social interaction skills, independent living skills, recreation and leisure skills, career education, sensory efficiency skills and self determination and advocacy. While some of these skill areas are interrelated each is recognized as an area of study that warrants specific curriculum instruction. Furthermore, it is essential for students who are blind or visually impaired to develop competencies in each of these areas in order to reach their potential to live independently, have appropriate career opportunities, and live rewarding and fulfilling lives.

Expanded Core Curriculum: Mission Statement

The mission of the ECC-VI is to provide students with the skills they need in order to be successful in school and beyond. It is also intended to provide teachers of the visually impaired with high quality course materials. These British Columbia Ministry of Education board authorized courses will be available in all areas of the ECC, enabling students to develop these important skill sets while gaining credit in high schools in British Columbia.

Beliefs

- We believe that in order for students with visual impairments to reach maximum potential and be prepared for adult life, there are skills, in addition to those in the core curriculum that must be acquired.
- We believe that students have the right to equal access to instruction in

the expanded core curriculum regardless of where they reside in the province.

- We believe that instruction must be provided by qualified teacher of students with visual impairments and/or qualified orientation and mobility instructors and/or qualified instructors from accredited agencies offering specific training in the areas of the expanded core curriculum. We believe that an organized, structured system will aid in the equity of services and skills instruction delivered.
- We believe these courses should be specific enough to meet requirements and flexible enough to meet individual student needs.
- We believe that these skills must be taught regardless of the provision of "course credit" but the option for course credit should be available.
- We believe that there should be a variety of options for the provision of instruction for skills in the expanded core curriculum (including in-school, school blocks, out-of-school, summer, weekend, etc.).
- We believe that an assessment component for determination of skill level for entrance into instruction in the expanded core curriculum and achievement of skills is necessary.
- We believe that school districts have a responsibility to provide instruction in these skills.

Expanded Core Curriculum: Background

The BAA process provided an opportunity to address the Expanded Core Curriculum (ECC) needs for high school students who are visually impaired and/or blind in British Columbia.

During the 2003/04 school year development work on board authority authorized (BAA) high school courses in two areas of the ECC was initiated by two school districts in British Columbia. A group of teachers in Vancouver developed Braille course outlines at the grade 10, 11 and 12 level and a group of teachers in the Okanagan developed BAA course outlines at the grade 11 and 12 level in orientation and mobility. These courses were authorized by Boards/Authorities in 2004, submitted to the Ministry of Education and listed on the British Columbia School Trustees Association (BCSTA) website database of locally developed course offerings <http://www.bcsta.org/baa/>.

In early 2004, the Provincial Resource Centre for the Visually Impaired (PRCVI) and Special Education Technology – British Columbia (SET-BC) began planning and development work on the Expanded Core Curriculum Project (ECC-VI) for secondary students who are blind or visually impaired. The goal of the ECC-VI project was to develop Expanded Core Curriculum Course Outlines in order for courses to be accredited as board authorized, credit courses in British Columbia at the grade 10 -12 level.

In fall 2004, the Provincial Resource Centre for the Visually Impaired (PRCVI) and Special Education British Columbia (SET-BC), in cooperation with BC's teachers of

students with visually impaired, formed a steering committee to develop the framework for course outlines (procedure, assessments, learning outcomes, supporting materials and resources) for instruction in areas of the expanded core curriculum.

The steering committee surveyed existing documents related to ECC development in order to identify and prioritize the ECC modules to be developed in the 2004/2005 stage of the project. Anne Wadsworth, provincial outreach coordinator for PRCVI, and Constance McAvoy, projects coordinator for SET-BC, served as the ECC Project coordinators. Dr. Cay Holbrook, professor of the Masters Program for Teachers of the Visually Impaired, University of British Columbia, served as the advisor to the project.

Recommendations from the Steering Committee were recorded and a call for ECC module development was sent out to Vision teachers within British Columbia. Developers were enlisted. Using the framework prescribed by the Ministry of Education, British Columbia, developers completed course outlines containing module overviews, curriculum organizers, resource listings, and instructional time allotments for courses pertaining to the instruction of Skills for Living – VI and Technology – VI course modules. To date the ECC-VI Braille course, the ECC-VI Technology course and the ECC-VI Orientation and Mobility courses have been approved by school districts in British Columbia.

Expanded Core Curriculum: Information

About Graduation Requirements for British Columbia and About Board/Authority Authorized (BAA) Courses

British Columbia Secondary School Graduation requirements

Students must earn a minimum of 80 credits in order to graduate of which 28 credits must be electives. Students must complete a minimum of 16 credits at the Grade 12 level (with four of these credits being for a Language Arts 12 course). The other 12 credits must be from Ministry-authorized or BAA courses.

There is no limit to the number of BAA that may be used as part of the 28 credits of electives needed for graduation.

Schools are responsible for recording all course credits and for reporting that information to the Ministry for transcript production at the end of Grades 10, 11, and 12.

For more information: <http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/graduation/docs/atagance.pdf>

Courses and Course Options

Credits refer to the value of a grade 10, 11, or 12 course. The credit value reflects the length and scope of a course. A full course is 4 credits, 100-120 hours. One credit is the value attached to the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that most students can acquire in 30 hours of instruction. Instructional hours for individual modules vary, ranging from 5 to 50 instructional hours. The credits depend upon the total number of instructional hours of the combination of modules selected. (A sum of 25 to 45 instructional hours for selected modules is a one credit course, 46 to 70 instructional hours is a 2 credit course, 71 to 95 credits is a 3 credit course and 96+ is a 4 credit course.)

Course modules would be selected according to student interest and need and would be dependent on availability of course offerings. Some modules skill areas are developmentally sequenced and therefore should be offered sequentially. In summary, at each grade level (10, 11 or 12) the course can be taken for 1, 2, 3 or 4 credits depending upon the number of instructional hours required to complete the selected modules.

BAA Courses

In British Columbia, BAA courses are offered or developed by school boards or independent school authorities to meet student needs and interests. They are authorized by boards/authorities according to requirements set by the Ministry of Education.

See the Ministry of Education's [Policy Document for Board/Authority Authorized Courses](#).

In British Columbia, school boards have a tradition of encouraging development of innovative course offerings in response to local needs and priorities. The Ministry of Education, as well, encourages school boards and independent school authorities to offer locally relevant courses to meet the needs of schools and their communities while providing choice and flexibility for students.

Course descriptions for BAA courses that are offered in school districts are listed on the British Columbia School Trustees website [British Columbia School Trustees list of BAA courses by district](#).

For the latest list of ECC courses, either board approved or "in development", please refer to the status chart available on the PRCVI website.

Student Profiles

Teachers of students with visual impairments are encouraged to develop an individual profile of ECC competencies for each student. Recommendations for ECC courses and related modules should be based on the student's individual profile. The ECC competencies profile may serve as a tool to anticipate course challenges.

Course/Module Challenges

Individual students who are blind or visually impaired upon entry into grade 10 vary significantly in the level to which they have acquired skills in the nine ECC-VI areas. In some cases they may have already developed significant competencies in specific areas of the ECC-VI as a result of formal and informal training and experiences in their home, school and community. Similar to other core curriculum courses in the BC high school program, students with blindness or visual impairment have the right to challenge ECC-VI course modules and if successful receive the corresponding high school credits.