

Making Core 24 Work For All Students: Building Policy Flexibility

GROUP: _____

Worksheet 5: Career Concentration. One of the built-in flexibilities of Core 24 is the career concentration requirement, which will provide room in the schedule for students interested in pursuing a career and technical education (CTE) program of study, taking courses related to their post high school plans, or attending a skills center. The SBE, when it adopted Core 24, noted in the July 2008 adoption document that for the 3 credits of career concentration, “students must complete a CTE program of study or a course sequence which helps a student prepare for their intended postsecondary studies or career field.” The ITF worked on fleshing out a definition that would capture the spirit of the SBE’s intent and be manageable in schools. Specifically, the ITF suggested that the SBE consider a definition of career concentration that integrates both academic and CTE/occupational courses with sufficient flexibility to address students’ interests in a variety of ways, such as:

Fulfill three (3) credits of career concentration courses by taking: CTE courses; credited, work-based learning experiences; approved independent study, and/or general education courses that prepare students for postsecondary education based on their identified program of study in their high school and beyond plan. One of the three credits ~~should~~ shall meet the standards of an exploratory CTE course.

(The word, “shall,” has been substituted for “should” to clarify that it was never the SBE’s intent to eliminate the occupational education credit.) The advantages and disadvantages of the policy, identified previously by the ITF, are listed below.

Advantages	Disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provides sufficient flexibility to address different students’ needs• Retains core (employability and leadership skills) of occupational education requirement• Connects High School and Beyond Plan with course selection	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Relies on a High School and Beyond planning process that may not exist yet in some schools

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Based on the feedback you have received to date and the further thinking you have done, would you:

1. endorse the policy description as written above? _____yes _____no
 - a. If no, how would you revise the policy description, advantages, and disadvantages?

2. Please read the following letter from a school district to the SBE:

CORE 24 is extremely inflexible for students in its “4-year college degree” pathway.

It only permits 2 electives in the entire 4 years of high school.

We think it is good that CORE 24 has aligned high school graduation requirements with Washington HECB Minimum College Admission Requirements by requiring more English, math, science, social studies, and foreign language.

However, we think it is not good to have an additional 4 credits be devoted to:

- a. *Requiring double the Fine Arts required by the HECB (2 credits versus 1); and*
- b. *Requiring 3 credits of “Career Concentration,” with the result that only 2 electives are available for these students.*

Consider a student who may want to be a journalist or a politician and who wants to go to a selective university. He/she would often need (or may just want) 4 years each of science, math, and language, but could not do so under the CORE 24 regime (i.e., needed 4 extra credits, but only 2 electives would be available).

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Consider the student who loves Fine Arts, but later finds many of the currently existing electives no longer available because the teachers then have to spend double their current time teaching required courses to students who don't want to be there.

There is nothing on SBE's website showing the justification for requiring 8.33% of every student's time being spent in Fine Arts. It is not required by HECB, and there was no such recommendation in Washington Learns. Rather, it seems to be merely a feeling, manufactured out of whole cloth by the SBE.

If "Career Concentration," which is currently undefined, is eventually defined narrowly, then the problem of no flexibility remains. Conversely, if it is defined broadly, to become the substantial equivalent of an elective anyway, then it serves only to add confusion for students and parents. It is good for students to realize the consequences of their choice of electives, but we feel this is better done with parents and guidance counselors than through a rigid graduation requirement.

For Discussion

Would your response to question #1 address the career concentration-related concerns expressed in this school district's letter?

_____yes _____no

If not, what advice do you have for the SBE regarding this issue?