



THE WASHINGTON STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

A high-quality education system that prepares all students for college, career, and life.

COVER: HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

Prepared for the September 2018 Board Meeting

As related to:

- Goal One:** Develop and support policies to close the achievement and opportunity gaps.
- Goal Two:** Develop comprehensive accountability, recognition, and supports for students, schools, and districts.

Goal Three: Ensure that every student has the opportunity to meet career and college ready standards.

Goal Four: Provide effective oversight of the K-12 system.

Other

Relevant to Board roles:

- Policy Leadership
- System Oversight

Advocacy

Communication

Convening and facilitating

Policy considerations/Key questions:

What changes or modifications of the diploma framework should the Board work on as part of its new strategic plan?

Materials included in packet:

- Memo on graduation requirements
- Brief on Transitions and Diploma in this packet (but not in this section)

Synopsis:

At this Board meeting the Board will discuss graduation requirements and the strategic plan. This memo provides background information and lists some challenges of the current diploma framework and options for addressing those challenges. At the meeting, SBE staff will review these options with the Board. The Board will discuss what actions the Board may take as part of the strategic plan, and what legislative priorities the Board might initiate or support regarding credit and assessment graduation requirements.



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Policy Considerations

At the State Board of Education (SBE) September 2018 retreat, the Board will be discussing key policy issues to develop the SBE's five year strategic plan. This memo provides information on credit graduation requirements, a discussion of district challenges in implementing requirements, and possible options for the SBE to consider incorporating into a strategic plan or a legislative priority. This memo focuses on credit graduation requirements but also contains a brief overview of assessment graduation requirements. The document in this board packet on Student Transitions and the High School Diploma also provides background information on this topic.

The SBE was last updated on the implementation of the new requirements at the November 2017 Board meeting. Additional background information may be found in that 24-Credit Graduation Requirements Implementation Update meeting [memo](#).

Background: Phase-in of Graduation Requirements

Washington has been undergoing a decade-long transition to new graduation requirements. This work originated with the SBE's legislatively-directed work on the definition of a meaningful high school diploma and progressed through the current 24-credit graduation requirement framework that is implemented for the Class of 2019, or 2021 for districts with a two year waiver to delay implementation. Some highlights of the phase-in included:

- Math credits were increased from two to three, and total credits from 19 to 20, starting with the Class of 2013. In 2008, at the direction of the Legislature, the SBE adopted rules for this change ([WAC 180-51-066](#)).
- In 2009, the Legislature redefined Basic Education as the opportunity to earn 24-credits for high school graduation with a phased-in implementation ([ESHB 2261](#)).
- In 2010, the SBE approved a [resolution](#) for a 24-credit framework.
- English credits were increased from three to four and social studies from two and a half to three credits, starting with the Class of 2016. Electives were decreased from five and a half to four. The SBE adopted rules ([WAC 180-51-067](#)) for these changes in 2012.
- In 2013, the Legislature's budget bill for the 2013-2015 biennium included funding to implement the 24-credit graduation requirements.

- In January 2014, the SBE approved another [resolution](#) that revised the 24-credit framework, and the Legislature directed the SBE to implement new graduation requirements based on both the November 2010 and January 2014 Board resolutions ([E2SSB 6552](#)). The SBE adopted rules to implement the 24-credit framework starting with the Class of 2019 ([WAC 180-51-068](#)). A two-year waiver to delay implementing the new requirements to the Class of 2021 was available for districts that needed more time. Currently, 89 districts take advantage of this waiver.

Graduation Requirement Framework and Flexibility

Table 1 summarizes the graduation requirements framework. Seven flexible credits are part of the framework; four electives and three Personalized Pathway Requirements (PPR). If a student wants to pursue a Career and Technical Education (CTE) pathway, a total of eight credits, or a third of the required credits, are available for the CTE program (one CTE required course plus the seven flexible credits). Additional CTE options to meet core course requirements through state or local frameworks for [CTE equivalency](#).

Figure 1 illustrates a simplified phase-in of the 24-credit graduation requirements framework, showing the change in the total core requirements (English, math, social studies, science, health and fitness, CTE/occupational education) and the increase in flexible credits (electives and PPR). Between 2012 and 2019, the number of core subject area required credits increased from 13.5 to 17. Flexible credits increased from five and a half to seven credits.

The flexible credits and other options that provide flexibility within the graduation requirement framework are described in Table 2.

Table 1: 24-Credit Graduation Requirements ([WAC 180-51-068](#))

Subject	Number of Credits	Notes
English	4	
Math	3	Algebra 1 or Integrated Math 1, Geometry or Integrated Math 2, and a third credit of math. The choice of the third credit should be approved by the parent or guardian and be based on the student's High School and Beyond Plan (HSBP).
Science	3	At least two of the three credits of science should be laboratory science. The choice of the third credit should be approved by the parent or guardian and be based on the student's HSBP.
Social Studies	3	One credit in US History and Government and one credit in Contemporary World History, Geography, and Problems. Half a credit in Civics. Washington State History and Government is also required. This requirement may be met by a pre-high school class or by a half credit high school course. Recent legislation (HB 1896) makes Civics a stand-alone course requirement by 2020-21, for the Class of 2024.
Arts	2	One credit of performing or visual arts is required. One of the two credits may be a Personalized Pathway Requirement, which are

Subject	Number of Credits	Notes
		courses chosen by a student to align with the student’s education and career goals in their HSBP Plan.
World Language	2	Two credits of World Language. To align with College Admissions Distribution Requirements (CADRs), students planning on attending a 4-year postsecondary institution should take two credits in the same language. Both of these credits may be replaced with a Personalized Pathway Requirement, which are courses chosen by a student to align with the student’s education and career goals in their HSBP Plan.
Health and Fitness	2	Half a credit in Health and 1.5 credits in Fitness or Physical Education. Physical Education may be waived locally for individual students according to RCW 28A.230.050 .
Career and Technical Education	1	May be an Occupational Education course.
Electives	4	Courses chosen by the student to support their post-high school plans or in a subject of their interest.

Figure 1: The Phase-In of Core Requirements and Flexible Credits in the 24-Credit Graduation Requirement Framework for the Graduating Classes of 2012 to 2019 and Beyond

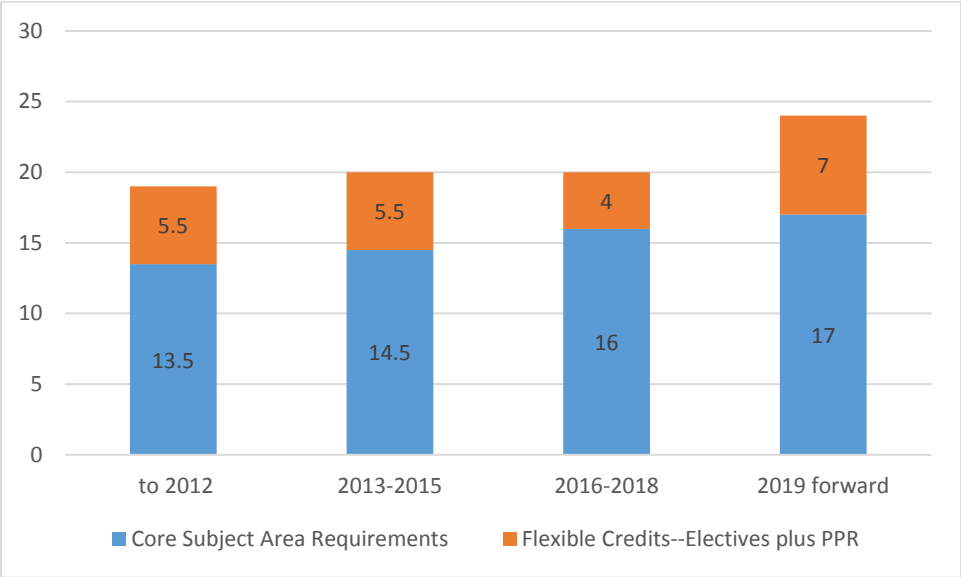


Table 2: Flexibility Within High School Credit Graduation Requirements

Flexible Option	Description	Notes
Two credit waiver for “unusual circumstances.”	Two credits of the flexible credits (electives and Personalized Pathway Requirements) may be waived locally for individual students, by local district policy. May be done proactively, before a student is credit deficient. The Washington State School Directors Association (WSSDA) has a model policy for the waiver.	In rule, the Board interpreted the waiver as applying to the flexible credits, not the core credits. The Board received a letter from multiple legislators supporting this interpretation, and a letter from multiple legislators disagreeing with this interpretation. Public testimony was given on both sides, with more in favor of the waiver applying only to the flexible credits.
Personalized Pathway Requirements—three flexible credits	Up to three courses chosen by the student that support post-high school career or educational goals specified in the student’s HSBP.	SBE and OSPI resources and guidance link the Personalized Pathway Requirements to implementing the HSBP, but there is variation in how districts are implementing Personalized Pathway Requirements.
Electives—four flexible credits	Courses chosen by the student to support their post-high school plans or in a subject of their interest.	District requirements may reduce the number of electives available.
Competency-based Credit	Credit for students demonstrating knowledge and skills in a subject area through a district-specified assessment aligned to learning standards. The WSSDA has a model policy for competency-based credit.	Because competency-based credit is not necessarily tied to time in the classroom, districts may look to competency-based credit for credit retrieval and accelerated learning.
CTE Course Equivalency and “Two for One”	Career and Technical Education Course Equivalencies and other courses recognized by a district may allow students to meet two graduation requirements with one course.	“Two for One” allow greater flexibility in a student’s schedule. While a single course may meet two requirements, the student would earn only one credit for an individual course.
Dual Credit and college courses	Dual credit courses and those that allow a student to earn both college and high school credit.	Students who earn high school credit by taking a college course, such as through the Running Start programs, earn credit at an accelerated rate (WAC 180-51-050). A full-time Running Start Student taking 15 quarter credits per term would earn 9 high school credits per year.
Earning high school credit in middle school	If a course is taught to high school learning standards, high school credit may be earned (RCW 28A.230.090).	The statute requires that the parent request the credits earned in middle school be counted toward High School requirements.
Credit for advisory	Advisory is usually a short period that may not meet every day. Districts with an advisory often use it for high school and beyond planning.	Typically, districts award a quarter or half a credit per year for advisory, so that a student earns one or two credits during a four-year high school tenure. Earning credit may help some students meet a total credit requirement.

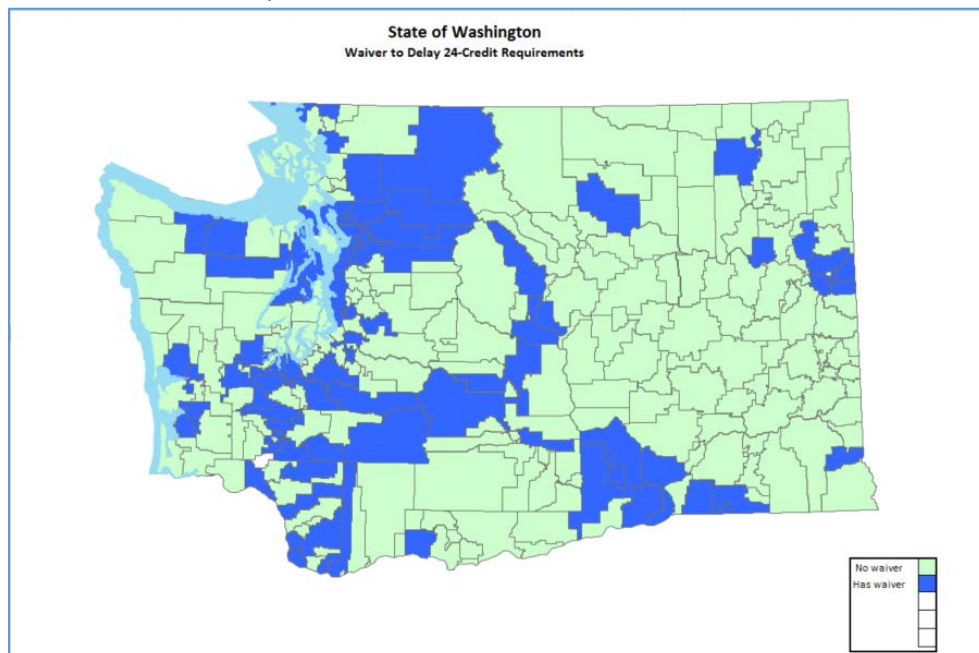
How are Districts Implementing the 24-Credit Requirements and What are the Main Challenges?

According to the Association of Washington School Principals (Scott Seaman's [November 2017 presentation](#) to the Board), in the 2016-2017 school year, 62 percent of high schools had a six-period day and 38 percent had a non-six-period day schedule that offered more than 24 credits. Districts with a six period day must offer more supports and opportunities for students to earn credit because many students fail one or more courses in high school. A data analysis from a May [2015 SBE meeting memo](#) shows that about 43 percent of students fail one or more classes in their freshmen or sophomore years. Recently, a data request from OSPI showed that 31.8 percent of students in the Class of 2018 cohort had accumulated fewer than 18 credits by the end of their junior year, and therefore were not on-track to earn 24 credits by the end of their senior year. (About 10 percent of students were behind by 1 or 2 credits, and therefore could graduate if the 2-credit waiver could apply to them.)

Eighty-nine districts have a waiver to delay implementation of the 24 credit graduation requirement, and are shown in the map in Figure 2. Districts that have waivers tend to be larger, urban districts. Districts appear more likely to have a waiver if they have one or more neighboring districts with a waiver, suggesting that districts that share information, services, and have students who transfer back and forth, probably find it useful to be on the same schedule of implementation.

A group of 36 waiver applications were looked at in detail to evaluate the needs that districts cited in their waiver applications. These applications were chosen to be representative of large and small, urban and rural districts on both the east and west sides of the state. All applications were from districts with high school schedules that offered 24 or fewer opportunities for earning credit. The most common reasons mentioned as the need for the waiver were staffing (72 percent of the applications), exploring a different schedule (64 percent), increasing facilities (61 percent), creating credit recovery options (53 percent), and communication and professional development (50 percent). Eleven percent of the applications cited leadership changes involving district or high school leadership as a need for additional time for implementation.

Figure 2: Map of the State Showing School Districts with Waivers to Delay the Implementation of the 24-Credit Graduation Requirements.



Assessment Graduation Requirements

Assessments for [statewide testing](#) and for graduation are established by the Legislature. Students who meet the graduation assessment requirements earn a Certificate of Academic Achievement (CAA) or, a Certificate of Individual Achievement (CIA). (Students who receive special education services may earn either a CIA or a CAA depending on their Individual Educational Program plan.) The SBE identifies the scores students must earn on the assessments to meet standard and for scores for graduation. The 2017 Legislature specifically permitted the Board to set a score for graduation that was different from the Level 3 score on the Smarter Balanced math and English language arts tests. A score of Level 3 on the Smarter Balanced tests indicates the student is on-track to be career and college ready by the time they graduate.

To set the graduation score on the Smarter Balanced tests the Board approved [an approach](#) to set an initial graduation score on the Smarter Balanced tests that had an impact on students approximately equal to previous exit exams. As a result of this approach, a graduation score was set at less than a Level 3—approximately a “Level 2.6”—on the Smarter Balanced assessments.

The Class of 2019, this year’s seniors, will be the first cohort of students who will use the Smarter Balanced tests in math and English language arts as assessments for graduation.

State law does not permit a second score to be set for science. So starting with the Class of 2021, the first class that will use the Washington Comprehensive Assessment of Science as an assessment for graduation, assuming no statutory change via legislation or in graduation policy, students will need to earn a score that corresponds approximately to a Level 2.6 or higher in ELA and Math and a Level 3 or higher in science.

While most students use the statewide high school assessments for graduation, the system of assessments includes, in addition to re-takes, alternatives that students may use to meet the graduation requirements. Legislation passed in 2017 ([ESHB 2224](#)) that eliminated some alternatives, namely Collections of Evidence, and established new [alternatives and waivers](#) for the CAA, including:

- [Dual credit courses](#) (students must pass a course that is eligible for college credit at a 100 level or above in English or math)
- [Bridge to College](#) (transition) courses
- [Locally determined courses and assessments](#)
- [GPA \(Grade Point Average\) comparisons](#)
- [SAT/ACT/AP and IB tests](#)
- [Out-of-state transfer waivers](#)
- [Expedited appeal waiver](#) (available for the Class of 2018 and earlier)

The system of high school assessments are intended to be an integral part of the diploma framework. The statewide assessments are an independent way that students can demonstrate their mastery of learning standards, as well as a check that the system is delivering an education to all students that meets the expectations of the state. The system of alternatives are intended to provide pathways for students so that high school assessments for graduation do not become a barrier for students to move

forward in their education. Does the current system meet these intentions? Student testing results from the spring of 2018 will be available soon, and should start to help to address this question.

Basis for the Diploma Framework: Statute, Rules, and Local Policy

The SBE may decide in favor of clarifying or modifying the graduation requirement framework to address some of the challenges faced by schools and districts in implementing the requirements. In addition, the Board may wish to examine the high school testing system as part of the diploma framework. Based on the originating authority for requirements, the SBE may effect change by:

- Providing guidance or advocating that districts employ particular policies or practices.
- SBE rule-making.
- Promoting legislative priorities to encourage the Legislature to enact new statute.

Table 3 shows challenges within the current diploma framework, and possible options the Board may consider for addressing those challenges.

Table 3: Challenges in the Diploma Framework and Options to Address the Challenges

A: Challenge to be Addressed	B: Possible Modification [or Outcome]	C: Options addressed through Program Guidance	D: Options addressed in Rule	E: Options that require change in Statute
<p>1. 2-credit waiver District are unsure how and when to apply the 2-credit “waiver for unusual circumstances.” Some students who would benefit from it may not have access to it.</p>	<p>1. Address the meaning of “unusual circumstances.” All student who have met core requirements but would be challenged to meet the 24 credits requirement should be able to graduate with 22.</p>	<p>1. Communicate to districts about the waiver. Work with WSSDA to encourage all districts to adopt WSSDA’s model policy.</p>	<p>1.A Define “usual circumstances” broadly in rule. 1.B Allow waiver to apply to core courses in certain circumstances.</p>	<p>1. Remove the “unusual circumstances” language and allow districts to streamline a process for allowing more students who need it to graduate with 22 credits.</p>
<p>2. Middle school credit Students and parents are unaware of options to earn high school credit in middle school.</p>	<p>2. Make earning high school credit the default rather than only at the request of the student or parent. Students who enter high school with credit already will have more leeway in meeting 24-credit requirements.</p>	<p>2. Communicate to districts about best practices for awarding high school credit for middle school courses.</p>	<p>2. Probably no option for the Board to act through rule—high school credit for middle school courses is defined in statute. (RCW 28A.230.090).</p>	<p>2. Make earning credit default, and students and parents would need to “opt-out” if they did not want the credit.</p>
<p>3. Competency-based credit Lack of capacity in districts for credit retrieval, accelerated learning, and individualization of student learning. Schools, such as Big Picture schools, see the need to apply for a waiver to offer a competency-based program.</p>	<p>3. Create more opportunity for competency credit. This would allow for greater individualization in student learning, including career-focused programs, and may ease challenges districts have in offering graduation requirements.</p>	<p>3.A Work with WSSDA and OSPI on expanding the competency-based model policy, or creating additional model policies. 3.B Work with partners to define a competency –based diploma program.</p>	<p>3. Revise competency-based crediting rule and create more definition for a high school credit.</p>	<p>3. Funding for a workgroup to study and make recommendations for expanding competency-based credit and learning.</p>

A: Challenge to be Addressed	B: Possible Modification [or Outcome]	C: Options addressed through Program Guidance	D: Options addressed in Rule	E: Options that require change in Statute
<p>4. HSBP Implementation of the HSBP varies district by district, which may lead to inequitable student access to opportunity. Many districts have not yet fully implemented the HSBP in middle school.</p>	<p>4. Strengthen the HSBP through developing more structure for the plan.</p>	<p>4. Work with partners to create a framework for a credit-bearing HSBP course with a middle-school component.</p>	<p>4. Create more definition for the required elements of the HSBP.</p>	<p>4.A. Fund SBE workgroup to study and make recommendations for strengthening the HSBP. 4.B. Require HSBP course required for graduation.</p>
<p>5. Personalized Pathways Inconsistent implementation of Personalized Pathway Requirements. Some districts, possibly because of lack of capacity, offer only the “default pathway” to students.</p>	<p>5. Ensure all students have access to different pathways.</p>	<p>5. Work with partners, including Career Connect Washington, to define different pathways within the existing graduation requirement framework.</p>	<p>5. Create more definition for Personalized Pathways and Personalized Pathway Requirements.</p>	<p>5. Require all districts to provide access to multiple pathways.</p>
<p>6. Postsecondary alignment The graduation requirements do not match CADR (College Academic Distribution Requirements) and there is often a lack of alignment between high school and postsecondary curricula.</p>	<p>6. Aligned expectations between the high school diplomas and preparation for community and technical colleges, career training programs, and 4-year institutions.</p>	<p>6. Work with partners to create better alignment and better communication of preparation for student postsecondary success.</p>	<p>6. Modify graduation requirements to better match postsecondary expectations, such as math pathways that align with community and technical college math pathways (Quantway and Statway), world language and arts.</p>	<p>6. Mandate a study to make recommendations for aligning secondary and postsecondary expectations.</p>
<p>7. Expedited Appeal Waiver Some students meet all other requirements but</p>	<p>7. Continue the Expedited Appeal Waiver as a “safety valve.” This waiver of the</p>	<p>7. No option.</p>	<p>7. No option.</p>	<p>7. Reinstate the Expedited Appeal Waiver indefinitely.</p>

A: Challenge to be Addressed	B: Possible Modification [or Outcome]	C: Options addressed through Program Guidance	D: Options addressed in Rule	E: Options that require change in Statute
find the assessment graduation requirement a barrier to earning a diploma.	assessment graduation requirements expired with the Class of 2018.			
8. High School Graduation Score The graduation score is not an indication of readiness for career or college.	8. Change the graduation score to a Level 3 on the Smarter Balanced Assessments. This change would be implemented for a specified class in the future—the change cannot impact students currently in high school.	8. No option.	8. This option would require formal Board action, but scores have not been specified in rule in the past.	8. The Legislature would need to be advised of any changes.

Action

At the September Board meeting, the Board will discuss the high school diploma framework and may consider including some of these options for modifications of the framework in the Board’s new strategic plan.

If you have questions about this memo, please contact Linda Drake at linda.drake@k12.wa.us, 360-725-6028.