



NJDOE News

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State Board Hears Proposal for Revised Graduation Requirements

The State Board of Education today heard a proposal to revise New Jersey's graduation requirements for high school students. As proposed, the new regulations would create greater flexibility in required course offerings and would empower local school boards to substitute seat-time course requirements with course proficiencies, in limited circumstances.

Today's proposal was developed by the State Board Ad Hoc Committee on Graduation requirements. The committee, chaired by board vice president Debra Casha, conducted a comprehensive study of the issue over several weeks before making recommendations to the Department of Education.

"The Ad Hoc Committee has developed a carefully crafted compromise," said Commissioner of Education William L. Librera. "They have grappled with these issues and have done a very good job in a very difficult area."

Commissioner Librera noted that the committee's work extended and built upon the work of the Department of Education's Standards and Graduation Requirements Forum, held last November. As part of its review, the committee surveyed New Jersey high schools on their local requirements for a high school diploma. The committee also considered graduation requirements in other states before proposing graduation requirements that would serve as a minimum for all New Jersey high schools.

The proposal sets a total minimum graduation requirement of 110 credits, with at least 95 credits tied to specific courses linked to the state's Core Curriculum Content Standards. Local school boards can choose between two different options (Option 1 and Option 2), or can blend aspects of both options, according to the proposal.

Option 1 modifies existing credit requirements for the visual and performing arts, practical arts, and world languages. The proposed amendments include as options, for 5 of the 95 credits, courses in career education and consumer, family and life skills, or vocational-technical education. Option 1 also calls for technological literacy to be taught across the curriculum and not as a distinct course.

Option 2 extends flexibility at the local level by allowing schools to choose from an array of models, including: interdisciplinary and theme-based programs; independent study; co-curricular and extracurricular activities; magnet programs; student exchange programs; distance learning opportunities; internships; community service; or other structured learning experiences. Under Option 2, local school boards would be empowered to use performance or competency assessment to approve, as fulfilling requirements for high school graduation, the completion of educational programs or activities occurring all or in part before students enroll in high school.

The proposed new graduation requirements would change the current requirements in the following ways:

- Establish a 5-credit visual and performing arts requirement
- Reduce the 10-credit world languages requirement to 5 credits
- Permit students to successfully complete a proficiency assessment to meet the world languages requirement
- Add a new requirement to integrate technological literacy instruction throughout the curriculum
- Removes mention of cross-content workplace readiness, which is replaced by new standards areas
- Add a new requirement for at least five credits in career education and consumer, family, and life skills, or vocational-technical education
- Add examples of non-traditional models for developing Option 2 activities for programs linked to the Core Curriculum Content Standards
- Add requirement for appropriate assessments to be developed to accompany educational programs adopted under Option 2

- Permit school boards to use performance or competency assessment to approve student completion of programs that meet or exceed the Core Curriculum Content Standards at the secondary level, including those prior to a student's a high school enrollment under Option 2
- Permit school boards to recognize successful completion of accredited college courses as meeting or exceeding requirements in the Core Curriculum Content Standards under Option 2.

"The implementation of the Core Curriculum Content Standards provides school districts, parents, students and other citizens with a clear educational destination," Dr. Librera said. "This proposal identifies pathways that can be effective in carrying all of our students to that destination.

"In particular, the introduction of allowing for proficiencies as one way to fulfill graduation requirements represents a huge step forward in the right direction," the Commissioner said.

The proposed regulations will continue to undergo a process of public commentary and review that is scheduled to culminate in January 2004, when the state board will consider them at adoption level. As proposed, the regulations would affect freshmen entering high school in September 2004.