

NJDOE News

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Revised High School Graduation Requirements Unanimously Approved by State Board of Education

The New Jersey State Board of Education this week unanimously approved a proposal for revised high school graduation requirements designed to equip students with 21st century skills and better prepare them for the workplace and college.

Wednesday's approval allows the revised graduation requirements to be posted in the *New Jersey Register*, which will commence a 60-day public comment period. The updated graduation requirements could receive final passage from the State Board as early as June.

"It is vital that students in New Jersey are prepared to leave the halls of their high schools and become active, productive members of society," said State Board of Education President Josephine E. Hernandez. "The revised requirements advanced by the State Board will be a cornerstone in New Jersey's effort to ensure that every high school graduate is college- and/or career-ready."

Proposed changes to the state's high school graduation requirements include a total of 120 credits and the infusion of 21st century skills across all content areas. The proposal also would phase-in the following requirements: three years of mathematics, including algebra I, geometry, and a third year of math that builds upon these two courses; three years of lab science, including biology, a choice between chemistry, physics or environmental science, and a third inquiry-based lab or technical science; and a half of year of economics and financial literacy.

Revision of the state minimal graduation requirements is one component of New Jersey's ongoing commitment to make its high schools more relevant to the 21st century and more effective in educating students. The updated requirements coincide with the revision of the state's nine Core Curriculum Content Standards (CCCS), which outline what students should know and be able to do at all grade levels, as well as the alignment of statewide and local assessments with the new graduation expectations and the revised CCCS.

"We owe it to the students and taxpayers of New Jersey to ensure our high school diplomas have added value and truly represent that graduates have the knowledge and skills deemed necessary for the workplace or higher education," said Commissioner Davy. "The updated graduation requirements strike a balance between preparing high school students for a world that changes rapidly and providing local districts with ample time to prepare students at lower grade levels for the increased expectations"

The proposed graduation requirements include:

- **Language Arts Literacy** -- 20 credits aligned to grade 9 to 12 standards
- **Math** -- 15 credits including algebra I content (effective with the 2008-2009 9th grade class), geometry content (effective with the 2010-2011 9th grade class), and a third year of math that builds upon algebra I and geometry and prepares students for college and 21st century careers (effective with the 2012-2013 9th grade class)
- **Science** -- 15 credits including laboratory biology (effective with the 2008-2009 9th grade class); chemistry, environmental science or physics (effective with the 2010-2011 9th grade class); and an additional lab/inquiry-based science (effective with the 2012-2013 9th grade class)
- **Social Studies** -- 15 credits including histories and integrated civics, economics, geography, and global content
- **Economics** -- 2.5 credits in financial, economic, business and entrepreneurial literacy (effective with the 2010-2011 9th grade class)

The updated graduation requirements also include the introduction of the Alternative High School Assessment to replace the Special Review Assessment (SRA), which currently is administered to students who cannot demonstrate proficiency of current curriculum standards via the 11th grade statewide assessment.

The proposal also includes a phase-in of personalized student learning plans to follow students from middle school through high school graduation. The personalized plans would set learning goals for students based on their personal, academic and career interests, and would include the involvement of teachers, counselors and parents.

"Personalized learning plans will be instrumental in discovering how each child learns best and in what subjects and careers he or she holds an interest," said Commissioner Davy. "These plans will expose a student to new opportunities and actively engage parents, teachers and counselors in education decision making."

The graduation requirements are based on recommendations from the New Jersey High School Redesign Steering Committee and the department's Secondary Transformation Committee.

The revised graduation requirements are available on DOE's Web site

<http://www.state.nj.us/education/sboe/meetings/2009/February/public/Item%20C.%20High%20School%20Graduation%20Amendments.doc>.