



NJDOE News

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State Board of Education Adopts New High School Graduation Requirements Effective with 2004-05 Freshman Class

New regulations permitting greater flexibility in teaching and learning skills and knowledge required for high school graduation will take effect with the 2004-05 freshman class. The new regulations represent a shift away from seat-time course requirements in favor of optional ways for students to demonstrate proficiency in required subject matter.

Commissioner of Education William L. Librera praised the new requirements as key to the Department of Education's mission and to Governor James E. McGreevey's 21-point plan for education reform.

"These new requirements reflect a 21st century view of how children learn and how educators teach," Commissioner Librera said. "They take into account the need to provide students with multiple and diverse paths for success, and place an emphasis on proficiencies over courses. They also respond to Governor McGreevey's call to stimulate learning by providing a way for students who demonstrate proficiency in required subjects to take more challenging courses."

By adopting the new regulations today, the State Board of Education completed a 14-month public process of discussion and debate. The regulations reflect the deliberations of the State Board Ad Hoc Committee on Graduation Requirements and represent the best thinking of the department, as well as a review of written and oral testimony presented by educators and interested citizens throughout the state.

"We believe that we have put in place a set of requirements that reflects the reality that students attain necessary knowledge and skills at different rates and in different ways," said State Board of Education President Arnold Hyndman. "By creating a flexible system of graduation requirements, we are empowering schools to substitute course requirements with course proficiencies, in certain circumstances, while assuring that students are meeting state academic standards as described in the Core Curriculum Content Standards."

Dr. Hyndman commended the State Board Ad Hoc Committee on Graduation Requirements for its work that led to the development of the new requirements. The committee, chaired by State Board of Education Vice President Debra Casha, had conducted a comprehensive study of the issue earlier this year.

Today's action culminates a public process that began with the Department of Education's Standards and Graduation Requirements Forum, held in November 2002. Shortly after the forum, the State Board Ad Hoc Committee began a study that included a survey of New Jersey high schools on their local requirements for a high school diploma, as well as a review of graduation requirements in other states.

The regulations adopted today serve as minimum graduation requirements for all New Jersey high schools. Local school boards have the authority to set more rigorous graduation requirements.

The new requirements set a total minimum graduation requirement of 110 credits 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.

Option 1 modifies existing credit requirements for the visual and performing arts, practical arts, and world languages. It includes as options, for 5 credits of courses in career education and consumer, family and life skills, or vocational-technical education. It also calls for technological literacy to be taught across the curriculum.

Option 2 extends flexibility at the local level by allowing schools to choose from an array of models for developing activities or programs linked to the Core Curriculum Content Standards, such as: 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.

"Our Core Curriculum Content Standards provide school districts, parents, students and other citizens with a clear educational destination," Dr. Librera said. "These graduation requirements assure that our expectations remain high and that our public school graduates will be prepared for the challenges of higher education or initial employment."

The new graduation requirements 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;
- Replace references to cross-content workplace readiness with new standards areas;
- Add a requirement for at least 5 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 enrollment in high school under Option 2; and
- 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.

For more information, please contact the Department of Education Public Information Office at (609) 292-1126.