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**Reference Points**

- This revised set of graduation requirements were developed at the request of the State Superintendent of Education and reflect the ideas received from hundreds of educators, students, parents, community groups, the District of Columbia Public Schools and public charter school leaders, and experts.
- The State Board has spent 18 months on the issue, holding more than a dozen public meetings on an initial draft of proposed high school graduation requirements.
- These revised graduation requirements do the following:
  - Retains four (4) required units for **English/Language Arts** but instructs LEAs to offer courses aligned with the Common Core State Standards;
  - Retains four (4) required units for **Mathematics** but instructs LEAs to offer courses aligned with the Common Core State Standard. Further, the graduation requirements specify that courses below the Algebra I level will be ineligible for high school credit;
  - Retains four (4) required units for **Science**, including Biology, at least two (2) other laboratory sciences, and another science course, but for the first time, specifies the level of rigor expected in a “laboratory course;”
  - Retains four (4) required units for **Social Studies**, where a student must take courses in world history (1.0), United States history (1.0), US government/civics (0.5) and history of the District of Columbia (0.5). An additional 1.0 unit may be selected by the student. The requirements enumerate suggested courses, but is not an exhaustive list;
  - Requires two (2) units of the same world language, with a recommendation for the courses to be taken consecutively;
  - Retains the requirement of 0.5 units of **Visual/Performing Arts** and 0.5 units for **Music**;
  - Reduces the number of **Electives** from 3.5 units to 2.5 units;
  - Increases the **Physical Education** requirement from 1.0 unit to 1.5 units, so as to create consistency with the Healthy Schools Act’s provisions as well as national efforts to combat obesity. This proposal also allows credit for playing a varsity sport or other vigorous activity;
  - Increases the **Health Education** units from 0.5 units to 1.0 unit, acknowledging the need for increased time spent on important topics, such as nutrition and sexual education;
  - Expands community service to “**Community Involvement**,” which will allow students to engage in a larger number of activities, such as community service, participation in school-based activities (performing arts, science fairs, etc.), presenting at community meetings or testifying before the State Board of Education or the DC City Council;
  - Ensures that students take 2.0 units of **College Preparatory Courses**, including AP, IB, CTE and/or dual enrollment courses;
- Under development are three (3) additional program options:
  - **Diploma of Distinction:** A diploma of distinction will be available for students who wish to challenge themselves and go above and beyond the standard diploma requirements.



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- **Career Pathway Programs:** Students will be able to graduate with a “career credential” that aligns to a particular specialty or career-focused course of study.
  - **Achievement Diploma:** For students unable to attain a standard diploma, an additional diploma option may be made available.
  - **Competency Education**
    - Corresponding to the increased focus on knowledge and skills, and not how long a student is in the classroom, the revised graduation requirements allow LEAs to award credit for competency;
    - In order to award credits based upon mastery, LEAs will be required to have a system in place that allows proper measurement of a students mastery;
    - The State Board will identify and release targets for student learning while LEAs will be responsible for deciding appropriate competency assessment methods as well as defining sufficiency (identifying what is necessary and sufficient evidence for students to demonstrate mastery). Online or independent research may be used to fulfill graduation requirements.



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**The State Board of Education's  
Revised Graduation Requirements**

**Preamble**

Public education is this nation's great equalizer. It provides a pathway to opportunity and passport to freedom for each and every child.

The world is changing rapidly, however. Technology has revolutionized industries from manufacturing to retail to medicine, spawning scores of jobs that did not exist just a few years ago.

To thrive in today's complex, globally competitive economy, our young people must acquire skills and knowledge beyond the traditional core subjects. They will need to think critically and creatively, communicate effectively, work in diverse teams, and apply what they have learned to unfamiliar tasks. They also will need to develop a deep understanding of the shared heritage and values that bind Americans and communities together. Above all, if tomorrow's generations are to lead healthy, productive lives as full participants in a free society, they must learn to learn.

Research shows that completing a challenging, rigorous, and well-rounded curriculum builds a strong foundation for future success. The courses, experiences, and activities that compose this academic bedrock are expressed as credits required for a high school diploma.

The proposed graduation requirements maintain the District of Columbia's current 24 credits – already among the nation's highest – and preserve the "core four" in English, mathematics, science, and social studies. However, these revised requirements increase flexibility for learners and educators in several ways:

- They redefine which courses "count," such as aligning English and Mathematics requirements to the Common Core State Standards, as well as modifying the prescribed series of social studies courses;
- They increase the physical education/activity requirement, consistent with the Healthy Schools Act's provisions as well as national efforts to combat obesity, but allow credit for playing a varsity sport or other vigorous activity;
- They expand the definition of "community service" to include involvement in such community and school activities as speaking at an Advisory Neighborhood Commission meeting or participating in the citywide science fair. The goal is to broaden service-learning opportunities for students who may have an academic or community interest but must care for siblings or work after school; and
- They allow credit for competency, where students are invited to demonstrate mastery of Board-approved standards through an array of mechanisms, so that outside pursuits such as performing with a youth orchestra or conducting scientific research at a federal laboratory can be used by students to demonstrate knowledge and skill. Thus, students could access the



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education they need regardless of shrinking school resources.

Graduation requirements are a floor – not a ceiling. They represent the minimum students need to finish high school well-prepared for college, careers, and citizenship. Districts and individual schools may require additional courses, capstone projects, research papers, greater service-learning hours, etc.

The proposed revisions are a major first step in recalibrating graduation requirements. The DC State Board of Education plans to consider the development of a diploma of distinction, similar to New York’s Regents Diploma, for students who complete senior projects or can demonstrate other evidence of mastery.

These revisions will help transform learning and teaching – and propel the District of Columbia into the vanguard of states that have embraced competency-based education. This model permits students to move at their own pace, follow their interests, and advance only after showing they know and can apply key concepts. It also allows teachers to truly differentiate instruction. The result, as evidence from New Hampshire and other states suggests, should be higher motivation, reduced dropout rates, and improved outcomes for all students.

Further, these recommendations were developed at the request of the State Superintendent of Education and reflect the ideas received from hundreds of educators, students, parents, community groups, the District of Columbia Public Schools and public charter school leaders, and experts over the past 18 months. The State Board of Education held more than a dozen public meetings on an initial draft of proposed high school graduation requirements. Those thoughts – which included increasing the requirements for health, physical education, and the arts; restoring social studies to four (4) credits; and holding total credits to no more than 24.0 to maintain flexibility for block scheduling and foundational freshman courses – were taken into account along with research to create this new draft proposal. The State Board also aligned its recommendations with the Common Core State Standards in English language arts and mathematics, and benchmarked the proposal against other states’ requirements.

The overall goal was to ensure all students receive a balanced education that not only covers traditional academic content but creates well-rounded, global citizens who appreciate the arts, participate in their communities, and make healthy decisions about their bodies.

This is a transitional document. The State Board recognizes that time-in-seat is not an accurate measure of academic attainment nor whether a student has acquired the skills they need to succeed. Consequently, this recommendation also reflects an interest in moving towards a competency-based system, where the focus of a student’s education is on achieving specific skills that may be acquired through learning or by participating in activities outside the classroom.

The shift from credits based on time spent in a classroom – a year of English, a half-year of District of Columbia history – to competency is long overdue. For nearly a century, “seat time” has been a proxy



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for rigor. However, student performance remains all over the map, with the majority falling in the mediocre middle of the GPA bell curve.

By making performance the constant and letting time vary, most students can meet proficiency benchmarks. High achievers could master Algebra 1 in less than a year, for example, while struggling students would not be doomed to repeat the course year after year until they pass.

With that, the State Board of Education formally recommends the following revisions to the District of Columbia's high school graduation requirements:



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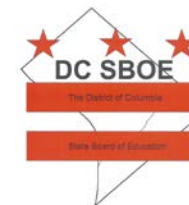
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**Recommendation of Revised Graduation Requirements**

Subject	Current Credits	Current Requirements	Proposed Units	Proposed Requirements
English	4.0		4.0	Maintains proposed requirement. The content covered must align with the Common Core State Standards (CCSS).
Mathematics	4.0	Students must complete Algebra I, Geometry, Algebra II, and Upper Level Math.	4.0	To satisfy this requirement, students must complete at least the following three (3) courses: Algebra I, geometry, Algebra II or the equivalent of these courses that are aligned to the CCSS. Students may earn credit for high school level mathematics courses taken in middle school if their rigor can be verified. Courses below the Algebra I level shall not receive high school credit.
Science	4.0	Students must complete Biology, two (2) lab sciences, and one (1) other science.	4.0	<p>To satisfy this requirement, students must complete Biology and at least two (2) other laboratory courses, which may include physics, chemistry or engineering or other standards-based course that requires a laboratory component.</p> <p>Adapted from the National Science Teachers Association (NSTA) a “laboratory course” may be defined as inquiry-based experience that are designed with the following elements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Have a definite purpose that is communicated clearly to students;</li><li>• Focus on the processes of science as a way to convey content;</li><li>• Incorporate ongoing student reflection and discussion; and</li><li>• Enable students to develop safe and conscientious lab habits and procedures.</li></ul>
Social Studies	4.0	Students must complete World History I & II, DC History, US Government, US History	4.0	<p>To satisfy this requirement, students must take courses in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• World history (1.0)</li><li>• United States history (1.0)</li><li>• US government/civics (0.5)</li><li>• DC history (0.5)</li></ul> <p>The remaining 1.0 unit may be selected by the student from subjects such as: African-American history, global studies, geography, economics, financial literacy, etc.</p>



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<b>World Languages</b>	2.0		2.0	To satisfy this requirement, students must progress through two (2) units of the same language. Students may earn units for high school language courses taken in middle school, online, or in directed study if their rigor can be verified.  Students will be encouraged to complete two (2) consecutive years of the same world language in the graduation requirements rules.
<b>Visual/Performing Arts</b>	0.5		0.5	Maintains proposed requirement.
<b>Music</b>	0.5		0.5	Maintains proposed requirement.
<b>Electives</b>	3.5		2.5	Students must complete 2.5 elective courses.
<b>Health and Physical Education</b>	1.5		2.5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Physical Education (1.5 units) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participation in a team sport or other school-sponsored athletic activity may satisfy up to 0.5 units of the physical education requirement as long as the activities connect to standards and are appropriately assessed.</li> </ul> </li> <li>Health Education (1.0 units)</li> </ul> <p>Consistent with the Healthy Schools Act, the importance of physical activity will be emphasized in the graduation requirements rules.</p>
<b>Community Involvement</b>	100 Hours		100 Hours	Students must engage in community involvement activities that may include participating in community service, an internship, leadership programs, presenting at a community meeting, and testifying before the State Board of Education or DC City Council, or other activities approved by the LEA.
<b>College &amp; Career Readiness</b>		At least 2.0 credits of the 24.0 required credits must be earned through courses that appear on the approved "College Level or Career Prep" list (AP, IB, CTE courses and college-level courses).		At least 2.0 units must be earned through courses that appear on the approved "College Level or Career Prep" list (AP, IB, CTE, and/or dual-enrollment college level courses). These units can be used to satisfy any of the graduation requirements.
<b>Diploma of Distinction, Career Credential &amp; Achievement Diploma are Under Development</b>				
<b>Total</b>	<b>24.0</b>		<b>24.0</b>	
<b>Multi-Disciplinary Courses:</b> Multidisciplinary courses may only count within one subject.				
<b>Competency:</b> For all subjects, LEAs should have in place a system by which students may demonstrate mastery of required high school courses, which may include online or independent coursework, as well as a plan to implement and continuously improve this system. The State Board of Education will identify and release targets for student learning while LEAs will be responsible for deciding appropriate competency assessment methods as well as defining sufficiency (identifying what is necessary and sufficient evidence for students to demonstrate mastery). Online or independent research may be used to fulfill graduation requirements.				



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