



Proposed Changes to Graduation Requirements: Discussion

Background Information

Greeley-Evans School District 6 increased graduation requirements in 2003 in response to increased Colorado Higher Education Admission Requirements. At that time, credit requirements were set at 50 semester credits. Students were also required to take two additional courses, a computer course and Academy. This increased actual credit requirements for most students to 52.

Starting with the 2005-2006 school year, our low graduation rate prompted ongoing and in-depth study to gain understanding about why our school system was producing such a low graduation rate overall and across subgroups.

In 2007 and 2008 two state laws were passed that directed our work around graduation requirements. These were HB 07-1118 “Concerning guidelines for high school graduation” and SB 08-212 “Preschool to postsecondary education alignment act - Colorado Achievement Plan for Kids (CAP4K).”

These laws stipulated that by December 15, 2009, the Colorado State Board of Education would be required to adopt a comprehensive set of guidelines regarding high school graduation requirements to be used by each school district board of education when developing local high school graduation requirements. The law stated that local school board would retain the authority to develop its own unique graduation requirements as long as they met or exceeded any minimum standards or basic core competencies or skills identified in the guidelines that were created by the State Board. (Although the date was modified from the original date of July 1, 2008, this requirement in HB 07-1118 remains unchanged.)

The laws further stated that local school boards would be required to undertake a community-based process to develop a blueprint for the education system in the community and to determine the skills students will need to be successful after graduation. School boards were to seek input from the community at large. (Originally this date was July 1, 2009 in HB 07-1118.) School boards were to use this blueprint, along with guidelines for high school graduation requirements developed by the State Board referred to in the previous paragraph to establish high school graduation requirements applicable to students enrolling in the 9th grade beginning July 1, 2010.

Additionally, SB 08-212 created a landmark education reform initiative based on a truly aligned preschool to postsecondary educational system. Among other requirements, this law requires districts to develop Individual Career and Academic Plans (ICAPs) for every student so they are adequately prepared with postsecondary and workforce readiness skills.

The following table outlines the timeline and content of activities in which District 6 has been engaged to revise graduation requirements.

District 6 Graduation Requirement Review Process

Date	Activity	People Involved	District's Response to Findings
2005-2006	District 6 convened a High School Task Force to "study various ways students can earn a District 6 diploma and to remove barriers to achievement at the high school level." The task force, which met monthly, developed a report of findings. One of the recommendations was to revise graduation requirements.	Eight middle and high school principals, one board member, two counselors, nine district office administrators and one ESS teacher	
2006-2007	The District Curriculum Council (DCC) identified barriers to high school achievement and graduation.	Twenty-one teachers, four principals and nine district administrators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initial attempts were made to provide reading and math interventions at the middle and high school levels.
2007-2008	The original High School Task Force was reconvened and expanded to continue the discussion about high school achievement and graduation rates. Once again, the recommendation was made to revise the graduation requirements.	Ten district administrators, eight principals, two counselors, five teachers (including GEA) and two community persons.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PLATO was purchased for dropout recovery. Students were allowed to retake courses during the regular school day. Middle and high school reading and math interventions were fully implemented.
	Community engagement meetings were held on October 22, November 26 and April 28 at which parents and community members were asked for feedback related to graduation.	165 people attended these meeting. Attendees were a mix of district employees, civic leaders, parents, and general public.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data were collected from patrons to guide the revision of graduation requirements.
2008-2009	Community engagement meetings were held on September 22, October 27, November 24 and January 26 at which parents and community members were asked for feedback related to graduation.	100 people attended these meetings. Attendees were a mix of district employees, civic leaders, parents, and general public.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data were collected from patrons to guide the revision of graduation requirements. Greeley Alternative Program (GAP) was created to provide multiple options for dropouts and potential dropouts to graduate. Trademark West was opened in the fall of 2009 to provide more options for students who were dropping out of our traditional high schools.
Dec. 5, 2009	Special board meeting was held at CASB. The Board reviewed preliminary recommendations for graduation requirements.	Six board members were in attendance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Board made suggestions which were incorporated into first draft.
Dec. 16, 2009	First draft of new graduation requirements was created by district administration based on all data collected from 2005 to date. Feedback was elicited from principals, assistant principals, counselors and high school teachers.	12/16/09 - Met with 4 high school principals, 12 counselors, and approximately 60 teachers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Second draft was created based on feedback from these groups. The second draft cleaned up issues identified by these groups; it did not change the credit requirements nor specific content area requirements. Further feedback from other

			constituent groups is needed.
Jan. 2010	<p>Meetings were scheduled to elicit feedback from other constituent groups:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • January 5 - District Diversity Council • January 6 - Elementary Principals • January 13 - Middle School Principals • January 14 - District Curriculum Council • January 19 - Northridge parents • January 19 - District Accountability Committee • January 20 - Greeley Central parents • January 25 - Greeley West parents • January 25 - BOE Community Engagement meetings • TBA - Alternative High Schools • January - high school student council meetings • January - follow up meetings with teachers • January 27 & 28 - review with BOE 		
Jan.-Feb. 2010	Third draft will be created based on feedback from January meetings and other public feedback.		
Feb. 2010	<p>Board meetings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • February 8 - first read • February 22 - adoption 		
August 2010	New graduation requirements will go into effect.		

Comparison: Current Requirements to Proposed Requirements

Current Graduation Policy	Proposed Graduation Policy	More Information
Defines graduation credits by the semester	Defines graduation credits by the year	Provides consistency with other school districts and higher education
Required 50 semester credits for graduation (equivalent to 25 credits)	Requires 22 credits (if based on semester, would be 44)	Brings requirements more in line with other similar school districts. Allows students to take Aims and UNC courses while still in high school.
Defined 12 specific courses in Language Arts and Social Studies that every student is required to pass before graduating	Leaves specific coursework requirements up to student's plan of study based on career and interest aspirations	Changes in state law require students to have a plan of study from years 9-13.
Required 4 credits of Language Arts	No change	
Required 3 credits of Math	No change	
Required 3 credits of Science	No change	
Required 3.5 credits of Social Studies	Requires 3.0 credits of Social Studies	Brings requirements more in line with other similar school districts
Requires 2.0 credits of PE/Health	Requires 1.5 credits of PE/Health	Allows for more elective choices in interest/career area; those who like PE or are on a career path that requires these courses may take more
Only PE/Health courses counts toward PE/Health this requirements	PE credit may be acquired through CHSAA-approved sports or marching band	If our goal is students who are healthy and fit, students who are actively involved in sports and marching band are in fitness-related activities. In addition, students who are involved in these kinds of activities are more engaged in school and this provides an incentive. Provide for another elective option. There is strong parent support for this option, especially band parents.
Grade-level classification was based on age of student	Grade-level classification will be based on the number of credits a student has acquired	This has been requested by teachers and principals.
Required 8.5 elective credits	Requires 7.5 elective credits	The plans of study will help students focus on the electives that are most appropriate for their interest and career aspirations. Students may take more electives if they choose to do so.
Required .5 Fine Arts credits	Eliminates this requirement	Allows for more elective choices in interest/career area; those who like Fine Arts or are on a career path that requires these courses will take more
Requires .5 Career and Technical Education (CTE) credits	Eliminates this requirement	All students will take career-related courses based on their plans of study.
Does not specifically allow credit for community service experiences	Allows credit for community service experiences	The business community has long encouraged the school district to provide more opportunities for students to be involved in the community. This provides for that option.

Timeline for Policy Adoption

First read - February 8, 2010; Adoption - February 22, 2010