

Ohio Graduation Requirements Workgroup

Recommendations

April 6, 2017

The Ohio Graduation Requirements Workgroup is pleased to provide the following recommendations to the State Superintendent for consideration in addressing the graduation challenge currently facing the state's Class of 2018. The state's education system has not yet fully acclimated to the 2010 standards in combination with new assessments, and consequently many students in the Class of 2018 are not yet on track to graduate using the three diploma pathways adopted in 2015.

We owe it to all students to prepare them, by the time they leave high school, to be able to pursue any path they may choose, whether it involves entering the workforce or pursuing additional learning in college or in other educational programs. We recognize that many of today's careers and those of the future require increasingly higher levels of knowledge and skills. More jobs will require a post-secondary credential or degree. (This does not necessarily mean a two-or four-year college degree, but some post-secondary education is increasingly necessary.)

We recognize that the well-prepared student will be able to demonstrate competency in foundational knowledge and abilities that are essential to future learning – English language arts, mathematics, science and social studies. We also recognize that successful students will need to possess 21st century skills such as the ability to work in teams, to communicate effectively, to be creative, and to exercise self-discipline and management. Such skills support student success in both post-secondary educational pursuits as well as in the workplace.

We take seriously our ongoing responsibility to support students in realizing their fullest potential. We believe that, given time, the education system can reach the point where as many students as have graduated in previous years – and more -- can graduate using one of the three specified diploma pathways. We also believe, however, that, in the long term, further refinement of the pathways is merited in the interest of broadening opportunities for students to demonstrate their knowledge, skills and abilities with less reliance on standardized assessments, and with additional focus on 21st century skills.

For the short term – and specifically for the Class of 2018—it would be unfair to close doors to even low or middle skill jobs for some students by making the bar to getting a high school diploma unreachable given the newness of tests and the challenges to supporting students in meeting the current three diploma pathways. A high school diploma often is required by employers as a minimum indicator of high school completion, and consequently we do a disservice to students who have shown dedication and commitment to completing their studies and demonstrating meaningful accomplishments with academic and/or workforce relevance by denying them one.

To this end, we offer the following two recommendations for alternative approaches to graduation for the Class of 2018:

Alternative Graduation Requirements Recommendation 1:

A student in the Class of 2018 who does not otherwise meet one of the three current diploma pathways may receive a diploma if the following conditions are met:

- *Complete all required high school courses*
- *Take all required end of course exams; retake once any ELA or Math test for which student scored a “1”*
- *Meet two of the following eight conditions:*
 - *Attendance rate during senior year – 93%;*
 - *2.5 GPA for senior year courses (minimum 4 full year courses or equivalent);*
 - *Complete a capstone senior project as defined by the district;*
 - *Complete 120 hours work experience (including, but not limited to internship, work study, co-op, and/or apprenticeship) or community service during the senior year as defined by the district;*
 - *Earn 3 or more credits in a College Credit Plus course at any time during the student’s high school experience;*
 - *Successfully complete an International Baccalaureate, or Advanced Placement course and earn a score on the respective exam that would earn college credit (4 on IB exam, 3 on AP exam) –at any time during the student’s high school experience;*
 - *Earn a minimum Level 3 score on each of the reading for information, applied mathematics, and locating information components of the WorkKeys exam (9 points total);*
 - *Earn a State Board of Education approved, industry recognized credential or group of credentials equal to or greater than 3 points.*

Alternative Graduation Requirements Recommendation 2 – For students in a career tech program:

A student in the Class of 2018 who does not otherwise meet one of the three current diploma pathways may receive a diploma if the following conditions are met:

- *Complete all required high school courses;*
- *Take all required end of course exams;*
- *Successfully complete an Ohio Department of Education approved Career Technical training program that includes four or more Vocational-Technical (VT) courses AND*
- *Successfully complete **one** of the following:*
 - *Score proficient or better on the total test score based on the average of the student’s performance across the end-of-course tests or test modules (WebXams) that are required for the program **OR***
 - *Earn a State Board of Education approved, industry recognized credential or group of credentials equal to or greater than 12 points **OR***
 - *Demonstrate successful workplace participation based on a written agreement signed by the student, school district representative and employer/supervisor as evidenced by:*
 - *Documented completion of 250 hours of workplace experience (paid or unpaid)*
 - *Evidence of regular written positive evaluations from the workplace supervisor and school district representative.*

The recommendations included here should apply only to the Class of 2018. Further data analysis, including analysis of the first year of statewide ACT/SAT testing should be done to gauge improvement in the system and drive discussions about the Class of 2019 and beyond. These conversations should take place at the earliest possible opportunity in the fall of 2017 to provide as much time as possible for students to understand what will be required.

We would also offer the following suggestions about future work related to the state's graduation requirements for consideration:

1. The state should explore ways to define and measure students' acquisition of 21st century skills, including the soft skills that employers stress as critical.
2. The state should explore ways, beyond traditional standardized testing, to allow students to demonstrate knowledge and skills through methods such as student portfolios, performance based assessments or other methods.
3. The state should work with a subgroup of school districts to further develop the unified set of college and career readiness indicators that was drafted by this workgroup and that had broad support. The unified set of indicators was not put forward as a recommendation for the class of 2018 because the timeline was too short to adequately refine and evaluate the option.
4. The state should reconvene this group to gauge the impact of these recommendations and further discuss strategies for future classes of students.

We appreciate the opportunity to be part of this process and make a meaningful contribution to addressing the present challenge.