

**WASHINGTON STATE
WORKFORCE TRAINING AND EDUCATION COORDINATING BOARD
MEETING NO. 121
AUGUST 2, 2007**

**HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS:
MAKING THE HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA MEANINGFUL**

Background

At the June meeting, the Board was briefed on the current examination of the high school graduation requirements by the State Board of Education (SBE). Included in this tab is the background paper from that meeting. The Board had the opportunity to discuss a draft motion that included recommendations for the SBE on preparing students for the world of work.

Since the June meeting, staff of the Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board have met with a number of stakeholders and drafted a revised motion, which is included in this tab for the Board's consideration. Also, the Meaningful High School Diploma Committee of the SBE has released some preliminary recommendations, an Executive Summary of which is included in this tab.

Board Action Requested: Adoption of the motion.

MEANINGFUL HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA MOTION

WHEREAS, Objective 3.1 of 2006 *High Skills, High Wages*, the 2006 State Strategic Plan for Workforce Development, calls for implementation of the Best Practice Comprehensive Guidance System, Navigation 101, across the K-12 system; and

WHEREAS, Objective 3.2 of 2006 *High Skills, High Wages*, the 2006 State Strategic Plan for Workforce Development, calls for integrating Individual Education Plans with the 13th year plan required for graduation; and

WHEREAS, there is no clearly articulated definition of High School and Beyond Plan in the current State Board of Education regulations; and

WHEREAS, Objective 4.1 of 2006 *High Skills, High Wages*, the 2006 State Strategic Plan for Workforce Development and the 2006 Washington Learns report both call for expanding opportunities for secondary students to take career and technical education preparation programs; and

WHEREAS, the Washington Learns report proposes a goal that all students in Washington complete a rigorous high school course of study and demonstrate abilities needed to enter a post-secondary education program or career path; and

WHEREAS, K-12 Education should be student-centered—offering education that prepares students to fulfill their future education and career goals;

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board recommends to the State Board of Education that the following issues be addressed to make the high school diploma “meaningful” for students in preparing for careers and the world of work:

1. Provide a more clearly-articulated definition of the High School and Beyond Plan and integrate all individual student planning requirements. The focus of the plan should be on personalizing the secondary education experience for each student. All students should be engaged in setting career and educational goals and identifying a program of study to meet their goals, including any postsecondary education or training that may further prepare them for 21st Century careers and citizenship.
2. Students should pursue a program of study in high school that provides them with the opportunity to successfully meet their postsecondary career and educational goals. Such a program of study should provide them with a curriculum that is relevant to their educational plans and includes rigorous academic skills, work and life readiness skills, and technical skills. Students should have the option to learn these skills in career and technical education programs as well as those programs that fully integrate academic and technical knowledge and skills. Specifically, all students should gain mathematics knowledge and skills that will offer them the ability to seamlessly transition from high school to college and/or work without needing mathematics remedial instruction in college or on-the-job.

Meaningful High School Diploma Background

SHB 2973, enacted in the 2006 Legislative session, directed the Board of Education to reevaluate the graduation requirements for students enrolled in vocationally intensive and rigorous career and technical education programs. Also, E2SHB 3098 required the Board of Education, by December 1, 2007, to develop and propose a revised definition of the purpose and expectations for a high school diploma, including addressing whether a diploma is intended to signify college readiness, readiness for work, or a combination. The definition is to focus on knowledge, skills and abilities rather than courses, credits, and test scores. In 2007, the Legislature passed 2SHB 1906 which directs the Board of Education to amend high school graduation requirements by December 1, 2007, to include a minimum of three credits of mathematics and describe the required content.

Attached is a briefing paper on a meaningful high school diploma and the world of work. The paper includes background on statutes and current rules related to Goal Four of the Performance-Basic Education Act, employer perspectives, and other related issues.

In *High Skills, High Wages 2006* the Board established certain objectives and strategies for youth that are important in considering high school graduation requirements.

High Skills, High Wages 2006 includes the following objectives:

- All students leave high school prepared for success in further education and/or work.
- There is a Comprehensive Guidance System throughout the K-12 system that provides students and their parents with a curriculum to individually plan their pathways and prepare for future education and/or work after high school.
- There are secondary career and technical education (CTE) programs throughout the K-12 system that enable students to explore career pathways and complete preparatory coursework that matches their aspirations.

High Skills, High Wages 2006 includes the following strategies in order to meet the above objectives:

- Increase the number of students who complete a CTE sequence and/or course requirements for admission to a four-year college or university or enrollment in college-level classes at a community or technical college.
- Expand implementation of the “Best Practice” guidance system, Navigation 101, across the K-12 system.
- Integrate Individual Education Plans with the 13th year plan required for graduation.
- Expand opportunities for secondary students to take CTE preparation programs and career assessments.
- Boost the academic content of CTE programs and recognition of academic course equivalencies.

The Governor’s Washington Learns Committee also recommended the implementation of a comprehensive guidance curriculum and the expansion of career and technical education opportunities. The 2006 Washington Learns report also proposed a goal that all students

complete a rigorous high school course of study and demonstrate abilities needed to enter a post-secondary education program or career path.

In March of 2005, the Board passed a resolution opposing a proposal by the Higher Education Coordinating Board (HECB) that would have set minimum four-year college admission requirements for math at four credits. The Board was concerned that such a requirement would be a barrier for students who are at risk of dropping out or have dropped out, would reduce career and technical education offerings, and would not leave enough time in the day for students to attend skills centers. The HECB recently passed new admission requirements that require three credits of math through Algebra II (or Integrated Math III), with a senior year requirement that may be met by applied math or CTE courses.

**Washington State Board of Education
Meaningful High School Diploma Committee
Preliminary Recommendations**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Meaningful High School Diploma (MHSD) Committee has been working since January 2007 on issues related to high school graduation. After seeking the counsel of local and national resources, including an advisory committee of 18 stakeholders, the MHSD Committee has produced a set of preliminary recommendations for revisions to the high school graduation requirements. The Committee has also compiled a database of current graduation requirements by district that will be posted on the Board's website.

Preliminary Recommendations

At this juncture, the Committee has two major recommendations: 1) changes to the minimum credit benchmarks that will bring high school graduation requirements nearly in alignment with entrance requirements at Washington's public four-year universities and colleges—while preserving and encouraging options for students who intend to enter the world of work upon graduation; and 2) a new set of requirements for what the Committee is calling "lifelong learning skills" that we believe every graduate should be able to demonstrate. The Committee would like the requirements to be effective for the class of 2012.

Changes to the credit requirements.

The MHSD Committee recommends that the Board make the following adjustments to the minimum state graduation credit requirements:

- Increase the minimum credit requirements from 19 to 22.
- Increase English requirements from 3 to 4.
- Increase math requirements from 2 to 3.
- Maintain science requirements at 2 credits, with one being a lab science.
- Increase social studies requirements from 2.5 to 3 credits.
- Maintain health & fitness requirements at 2 credits.
- Increase arts requirements from 1 to 2 credits.
- Add a 1 credit requirement in world language.
- Maintain occupational education requirements at 1 credit.
- Decrease elective requirements from 5.5 to 4 credits, and specify that the electives must be in the subject areas listed above.

Creation of lifelong learning skills requirements.

Require students to demonstrate through course work, the Culminating Project or extracurricular activity *lifelong learning skills* that would be assessed and accounted for using strategies developed locally. The *lifelong learning* skills would include: critical thinking/problem solving, teamwork/collaboration, public presentation skill, media literacy, financial literacy, creativity, leadership, ethical sense, civic responsibility, information/technology literacy, and career/life planning.

The Committee also recommends that the state maintain a single (nondifferentiated) diploma. No changes to the High School and Beyond Plan or the Culminating Project, two Board-initiated components of graduation requirements, are being suggested at this time.

Next Steps

In the coming months, the Committee will address legislative directives to specify the content of the math credits (2SHB 1906), evaluate progress toward a diploma of students enrolled in vocationally intensive and rigorous career and technical education programs (RCW 28A.230.090), and submit a revised definition of the purpose and expectations for high school diplomas (E2SHB 3098). The Committee will also reach a decision on including Tribal history, culture and government as a graduation requirement (Memorandum of Agreement). All of these reports are due December 1, 2007. Revisions to the preliminary recommendations will be informed by discussions with the Board, Advisory Committee, and input from stakeholders at public outreach meetings to be held in the fall.