

CORE 24 REVIEW AND “REFRESHER”

BACKGROUND

Since 2006, the Board has been considering the components of a Meaningful High School Diploma, including revising the purpose of a diploma (January 2008) and approving a Framework of CORE 24 graduation requirements (July 2008). The Board has asked in recent meetings for a recap of the CORE 24 Framework.

Background for the July 2008 actions was provided in a lengthy memorandum that was accompanied by a shorter (four-page) “adoption document” (see Attachment A). The Board’s actions, expressed in four motions, referenced the adoption document.

Following are the guiding principles and key tenets that are the “core” of CORE 24.

Guiding Principles. Six guiding principles shape CORE 24:

1. Equip everyone. Prepare all students for life after high school—in gainful employment, an apprenticeship or postsecondary education.
2. Expect more. Align requirements to meet the increased expectations of the 21st century workforce.
3. Provide flexibility. Allow students to customize their education, creating relevance to their interests.
4. Give focus. Encourage students to align course work to achieve their future career goals.
5. Plan ahead. Emphasize the High School and Beyond Plan to offer students personalized guidance to prepare them for work, postsecondary education, or both.
6. Start early. Prepare students to enter high school and create opportunities to meet high school graduation requirements in middle school.

Key Tenets. Four key tenets reflect these guiding principles:

1. CORE 24 aims to prepare students for postsecondary and career success. There are several ways to meet the CORE 24 graduation requirements—a college and career ready path, a college emphasis, or a career emphasis.
2. All students are automatically enrolled in a default set of college and career ready CORE 24 requirements that meet the Higher Education Coordinating Board minimums and complete career preparation requirements.
3. Students are not locked into the default requirements and can choose to pursue a college or career emphasis, based on their High School and Beyond Plan.
4. Flexibility is built into the different paths of CORE 24 so that students can personalize their course taking.

POLICY CONSIDERATION

Explicit in the July 2008 adoption document is a paragraph that expresses the Board's intent about automatic enrollment.

CORE 24 will provide all students with a strong foundation of core subjects and the opportunity to personalize their course choices to pursue their individual postsecondary and career goals. While all students will be automatically enrolled in CORE 24's college and career ready requirements, students will have the option to pursue a more in-depth career or college emphasis based on a well-thought out High School and Beyond Plan.

The table in the adoption document notes some flexibility for students pursuing a "career emphasis" (e.g., students would not be required to earn a math credit in the senior year). The Implementation Task Force is currently considering other ways to make the CORE 24 Graduation Requirements Policy Framework flexible for all students.

The longer, accompanying background document¹ for the July 2008 meeting asserts that "The central tenet of CORE 24 is preparation of *all* students for *all* options—whatever they choose to do after high school. Many students of high school age are not certain of their future path, and change their minds frequently. For this reason, students need to keep all options open so they do not foreclose possibilities too early."

In the year that has elapsed since the passage of CORE 24, there have been several graphic iterations of the framework; the text accompanying the current graphic repeats the idea of having all options open but does not talk about automatic enrollment. A policy of automatic enrollment will require some students to formally declare a college or career emphasis that enables them to make allowable substitutions to the CORE 24 default college- and career-ready program of study. The timing of this declaration, and the process for students to make it, may be an area of consideration for the CORE 24 Implementation Task Force.

EXPECTED ACTION

Staff recommends that the Board direct the CORE 24 Implementation Task Force to recommend a process connected to the High School and Beyond Plan for students to elect and formally declare a college or career emphasis as an alternative to pursuing the default college- and career-ready requirements.

¹ Meaning High School Diploma Memorandum, July 23-24, 2009 Board Meeting, p. 14

Attachment A

MEANINGFUL HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA

CORE 24 GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS FRAMEWORK ADOPTION DOCUMENT (DRAFT July 18, 2008)

One of the Board's three goals is to "improve student preparation for post-secondary education and the 21st century world of work and citizenship." In pursuit of this goal, the Board has taken a fresh look at the purpose of a diploma and the graduation requirements for which it has authority: minimum credit requirements, Culminating Project, and the High School and Beyond Plan.

In January, 2008, the Board approved a revised purpose of a diploma, stating:

The purpose of the diploma is to declare that a student is ready for success in postsecondary education, gainful employment, and citizenship, and is equipped with the skills to be a lifelong learner. The diploma represents a balance between the personalized education needs of each student and society's needs, and reflects, at its core, the state's basic education goals. The diploma is a compact among students, parents, local school districts, the state, and whatever institution or employer the graduate moves on to—a compact that says the graduate has acquired a particular set of knowledge and skills. How the student demonstrates those skills may differ. Whether a student earns the credit by participating in formal instruction or by demonstrating competency through established district policies is immaterial; they are equally acceptable.

After extensive review of educational and workplace needs for the 21st century, national trends, public feedback, and current district practices, the Board is prepared to take a positive step toward a stronger, more coherent set of graduation requirements through the CORE 24 Graduation Requirements Policy Framework.

The Board has heard clearly the public's concern about unfunded mandates; therefore implementation of the CORE 24 Graduation Requirements Policy Framework will be contingent on funding. No rules will be written until after the 2009 legislative session, and a phase-in timeline will be worked out in consultation with implementation advisors. Phase-in would begin in 2013 and be fully implemented in 2016.

CORE 24 GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS POLICY FRAMEWORK

The CORE 24 Graduation Requirements Policy Framework consists of a set of defined subject-area requirements, a Culminating Project and a High School and Beyond Plan. Implicit in all of the requirements are competencies defined by the state's essential academic learning requirements, grade level expectations, basic education goals, program standards (e.g., career and technical education), and district-determined policies.

CORE 24 will provide all students with a strong foundation of core subjects and the opportunity to personalize their course choices to pursue their individual postsecondary and career goals. While all students will be automatically enrolled in CORE 24's college and career-ready requirements, students will have the option to pursue a more in-depth career or college emphasis, based on a well-thought out High School and Beyond Plan. The High School and Beyond Plan, subject-area requirements, and Culminating Project are separate but related parts

that together should comprise an integrated, goal-directed course of study that will provide sufficient breadth and depth to educate the whole student.

Subject	CORE 24	CORE 24 Notes
English	4.0	
Math	3.0 (math or math-based quantitative course in senior year)	Students pursuing a “career emphasis” may <i>elect</i> to take, but are not required to take, a math credit in their senior year.
Science	3.0 (2 lab)	
Social Studies	3.0	
Arts	2.0	
Fitness	1.5	
Health	.5	
Career Concentration	3.0	Students must complete a CTE program of study <u>or</u> a course sequence which helps a student prepare for their intended postsecondary studies or career field.
World Language	2.0	Students pursuing “career emphasis” requirements may substitute other courses for world language.
Electives	2.0	Students pursuing “career emphasis” requirement will have 4 elective credits if they choose to waive world language.
Culminating Project	Yes	
High School and Beyond Plan	Yes	
Total	24	

Although subjects are “counted” through credits, credits can be earned in two ways²:

- 1) Achievement demonstrated and assessed through 150 hours of instruction.
- 2) Achievement demonstrated and assessed through competencies established through local district policies.

By defining high school credit through both competencies and seat-time, and by recognizing each approach as equally viable in the purpose of the diploma, the Board strongly encourages districts to pursue both strategies to help students meet their educational goals and the state’s requirements with greater flexibility.³

² WAC 180-51-050.

³ Other state policies recognize competencies, as well. The Higher Education Coordinating Board has established minimum college admission standards or College Academic Distribution Requirements (CADRs) that provide a means for math and English competencies to be recognized when students achieve proficiency on the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL). Proficiency on the reading WASL satisfies the first two CADR credits of English; proficiency on the math WASL satisfies the first two CADR credits of math (algebra I and geometry, or integrated math I and II).

The Board will ask its implementation advisors to develop recommendations for the Board's consideration for ways to operationalize the use of competency-based methods of meeting graduation requirements, including such possibilities as CTE course equivalencies, where students earn one credit but complete two requirements, world language credit for ELL students who pass a competency-based assessment of their native language skills, etc.

Culminating Project and High School and Beyond Plan

The Culminating Project and the High School and Beyond Plan became graduation requirements for the first time in 2008. The Board reviewed the respective rules and guidelines, heard presentations from three school districts, and studied perspectives and information provided by 145 (of 246) districts with high schools that responded to a Board request for feedback. Because each district has developed locally the criteria for satisfactory completion of these requirements, there is considerable variation in what students are expected to do, and when they are expected to begin work on the requirements. The Board will maintain both requirements, but may consider modifications if recommended by the Board's implementation advisors. The Board intends, at a minimum, to require that the High School and Beyond Plan will begin in middle school.

IMPLEMENTATION

Considerable support has been expressed for the basic premise of these suggested revisions: preparing all students for postsecondary education, the 21st century workplace, and citizenship. At the same time, public outreach has helped to identify significant implementation issues that will need to be addressed in order to move this Graduation Requirements Policy Framework forward. These issues, and the Board's response to them, have been acknowledged in the larger paper. The Board's next steps would include the following:

Task	Time Period
Revise CORE 24 Framework in response to stakeholder feedback and approve a new graduation requirements policy framework, with implementation contingent on funding.	July 2008
Cost out and submit a budget request for graduation framework.	August/September 2008
Establish an implementation task force to assist the Board in understanding and making decisions about implementation (phase-in 2013-2016, flexibility, facilities impact, teacher impact, etc.).	fall 2008-spring 2009
Respond to the Memorandum of Agreement with the Tribal Leader Congress on Education.	fall 2008
Write rules for graduation requirements, informed by outcome of 2009 legislative session.	spring/summer 2009

PROPOSED ACTIONS

Note: Underlining reflects changes made at the Board Meeting on July 24, 2008.

In order to move forward on the CORE 24 Graduation Requirements Policy Framework in time to shape a legislative strategy and provide input to the Joint Task Force on Basic Education Finance, the following actions are proposed for adoption by the Board:

1. Motion to establish a CORE 24 Graduation Requirements Policy Framework (per the attached document) consisting of subject area requirements, Culminating Project, and the High School and Beyond Plan to be phased in over four years, beginning with the class of 2013 and becoming fully implemented with the class of 2016, contingent upon funding approved by the Legislature.
2. Motion to maintain the Culminating Project and High School and Beyond Plan as graduation requirements, with modifications developed in consultation with the Board's implementation advisors. Begin the High School and Beyond Plan in middle school.
3. Motion to direct staff to establish an implementation task force to provide regular feedback and make recommendations to the Board by June 2009, to address implementation issues identified through public outreach and cited in the larger paper. These include but are not limited to:
 - a. An implementation schedule that prioritizes phase-in or new credit requirements.
 - b. Ways to operationalize competency-based methods of meeting graduation requirements.
 - c. Ways to assist struggling students with credit retrieval and advancing their skills to grade level.
 - d. Phasing in CORE 24 to address issues such as teacher supply, facility infrastructure, etc.
 - e. Ways to provide appropriate career exploration courses as well as career concentration options.
 - f. Scheduling approaches to 24 credits that can meet the required 150 instructional hours.
4. Motion to affirm the intention of the Board to advocate for a comprehensive funding package and revision to the Basic Education Funding formula, which among other necessary investments should link the implementation of CORE 24 directly to sufficient funding to local school districts for a six-period high school day, funding for a six-period high school day, a comprehensive education and career guidance system, and support for students who need additional help to meet the requirements. The Board will direct staff to prepare a funding request for the 2009-2011 bienniums to begin implementation of CORE 24.