Will the 24 Credit Graduation Requirement Increase Dropouts?
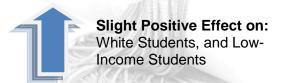
The Short Answer: No!

Background: When funding is procured to implement ESHB 2261, Washington students will have the opportunity to earn 24 credits for a high school diploma. This move, an increase from our current 19* credit graduation requirement, will better prepare students for success in postsecondary education, gainful employment, and citizenship. One aspect of the SBE's proposed CORE 24 graduation requirement framework is the opportunity to earn 24 credits— beginning, for some students, in middle school.

The Concern: Some have expressed concern that a statewide move to 24 credits will increase the dropout rate among some types of students, especially those from low-income families and among many students of color (who are more likely to live in low-income homes).

The Study: The State Board of Education studied the issue by examining the relationship between higher credit requirements and extended graduation rates within the state's 246 districts with high schools. Graduation credit requirements in those districts range from 19-31. Over half of the districts require 24 credits or more.

The Findings: Analysis of Washington's districts found either no or a slightly positive relationship between higher credit requirements and extended graduation rates, regardless of a student's income level or race/ethnicity. A study of the class of 2007 (the most recent data available) shows that the number of graduation credits required of a student has little relationship to dropout rates. **The implementation of a 24 credit graduation requirement (pending funding) will likely have no effect on—or may even decrease—dropout rates compared to today's numbers.**

Slight Positive Effect on:
White Students, and Low-Income Students

No Effect on:
Black, Native American, Asian, and Hispanic Students

Summary: The causes of dropout are complex and many-faceted, but the experience of Washington's school districts suggests that the number of credits required is **not** a major contributing factor.

*20 credits, beginning with the class of 2013