



Graduation Guidelines Waiver Requests

Colorado law (22-2-117(1)(a), C.R.S.) allows districts to request waivers from certain areas of state statute and rule, including graduation guidelines. These waivers are granted by the Colorado State Board of Education to enhance educational opportunity and quality. The state board policy on requesting waivers from graduation requirements allows individual school districts to request waivers from all or a portion of the Graduation Requirements adopted by the state board.

STEP 1: Waiver Request Submission

When submitting your waiver request please include the following items as required by C.R.S. § 22-2-117(2):

Requirement	Comments/Timeline & Dates
<p>Include a rationale for the requested graduation guidelines waiver. The state board shall grant the waiver if it determines that:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) the waiver would enhance educational opportunity and quality within the school district; and 2) the costs to the school district of complying with graduation guidelines significantly limit educational opportunity within the school district. <p>(C.R.S., 22-2-117(1)(a))</p>	
<p>Include a replacement plan that describes the manner in which the school/district shall comply with the intent of the waived statutes or rules and shall be accountable to the state for such compliance.</p>	
<p>If the district has a pupil count of 3,000 or more, majority consent must be demonstrated by each of the 3 groups:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Majority of School Accountability Committee; 2) licensed administrators; and 3) teachers <p>Note: Districts below 3,000 are exempt from having to demonstrate majority consent.</p>	
<p>A hearing is required prior to adoption of a school board resolution approving the waiver application. Please include evidence of notice of public hearing in 3 public places within the district for at least 30 calendar days prior to the local hearing. This notice must include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) the time and location of the hearing; and 2) a description of the waiver request <p>If a newspaper is published within the county, documentation of public notice in the newspaper is required once each week for at least 4 weeks. This may be demonstrated through a copy of the public notices posted (including location and dates) or a statement that includes a summary of this information.</p>	



Include evidence that at least 60 days before the hearing, the district board of education met with the district School Accountability Committee. This may be demonstrated through a statement about when the meeting occurred or by including meeting minutes as evidence.	
Signed Board Resolution from the local board of education demonstrating approval to apply for the waiver and specifying the statutes and rules for which the board will request waivers.	

STEP 2: Contents of Replacement Plan

The Colorado State Board of Education will only consider a waiver request for the Graduation Requirements if the waiver request is accompanied by an acceptable replacement plan. For your convenience, the following areas of Graduation Guidelines are eligible for waiver consideration. Please note that the requirement to meet or exceed graduation requirements for your district cannot be waived. Thus, in order to be considered for approval, Districts must provide a replacement plan that meets or exceeds the following criteria (as outlined in C.R.S. 22-2-106 (a.5)):

Each school district board of education retains the authority to develop its own unique high school graduation requirements. Those local high school graduation requirements meet or exceed any minimum standards or basic core competencies or skills identified in the comprehensive set of guidelines for high school graduation developed by the state board.

- Align with postsecondary and workforce readiness description, including:
 - Minimum English language competencies (C.R.S. 22-7-1008)
 - Preschool through elementary and secondary education standards (C.R.S.22-7-1005)
 - Postsecondary academic admission standards (C.R.S. 23-1-113)
- Recognize and address the multiple and diverse pathways to diplomas and show how each pathway is equally rigorous.
- Utilize standards-based education (C.R.S. 22-7-402) as the framework for the guidelines for high school graduation.

"Standards-based education" means a system of instruction focused on student learning of content standards. This system aligns programs of instruction and assessments with the content standards. The implementation of "standards-based education" shall not require districts to abandon the use of Carnegie units, to abandon a letter grade system, to adopt outcome-based methods of teaching, or to use student portfolios in place of assessments. In addition, implementation of "standards-based education" shall not require changes in current class schedules and does not encourage block scheduling or other experimental methods of class scheduling. (C.R.S. 22-7-402 (11))

- Recognize and acknowledge the importance of obtaining the core competency skills and standards to succeed in the twenty-first century, including proficiency in math, science, written and verbal communication skills, and the importance of performing and visual arts.



- Consider career planning efforts in middle school and high school for students and parents, including outlining multiple pathway options, as available.
- Describe how your district has completed 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.
- Each board of education shall seek input from the community at large including students, parents, business persons, neighboring school districts, and regional boards of cooperative services.
- Each board of education shall use this blueprint, together with the guidelines for high school graduation requirements developed by the state board pursuant to establish local high school graduation requirements applicable to students enrolling in ninth grade beginning in the 2017-18 school year.

Where can I learn more?

- Graduation Guidelines: <http://www.cde.state.co.us/postsecondary/graduationguidelines>
- Other Waivers: <http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdechart/waivers>
- For questions about Colorado Graduation Guidelines, contact Robin Russel at Russel_R@cde.state.co.us or 303-866-2908
- To view all CDE fact sheets, visit: www.cde.state.co.us/Communications/factsheetsandfaqs