

Graduation Guidelines Engagement Toolkit



To help school district administrators and local school boards begin engaging, planning for implementation and communicating about:

- Colorado Graduation Guidelines
- Menu of college and career-ready demonstrations

Colorado Graduation Guidelines



Overview

Colorado Graduation Guidelines mean changes for students, school districts, and local boards of education

Life beyond high school is different from what it used to be. Most jobs in Colorado now and in the future require training or education beyond high school. Students who graduate and work in Colorado will need in-demand skills that meet business, industry, and higher education standards.

Colorado Graduation Guidelines provide a road map to help students and their families plan for success after high school. Students in middle and high school must think about their passions and interests and plan for their future.

The guidelines have two purposes, the first is to articulate Colorado's shared beliefs about the value and meaning of a high school diploma. The second is to outline the minimum components, expectations, and responsibilities of local districts and the state to support students in attaining their high school diploma.

The guidelines mean changes for students, school districts and local boards of education. Ninth-graders in fall 2017 will be the first class to demonstrate competency—or show what they know—in English and math in order to graduate from high school.

The state board of education adopted the guidelines in September 2015. The guidelines include a state menu of college and career-ready demonstrations. Local school boards and districts may select from this menu to create a list of options their students will use to demonstrate competency in subjects that reflect Colorado standards and 21st century skills in order to graduate from high school.

Work groups of educators, parents and students statewide are continuing conversations to identify implementation recommendations, best practices, and tools and resources. The goal is to support school districts and school leaders in implementing career and college ready demonstrations such as capstone projects, 21st century skills, individual career and academic plans (ICAP), industry certificates, special populations, assessments, and concurrent enrollment.

Fundamental shifts in Colorado's high school graduation guidelines—and local policies and practices—are intended to ensure that all students are prepared for success in a globally competitive workforce:

Today

Carnegie Units and seat time
Fixed time and place

Tomorrow

Competencies and standards-based education
Flexible time and place



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Note—a detailed implementation toolkit will become available in **summer 2015**.

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How to use this toolkit

Who is this toolkit for?

This toolkit is designed for use by:

- Local school board members
- Superintendents
- School district administrators

Within graduation guidelines the roles of these stakeholders are:

- Local school board members: adopt local graduation requirement policies that meet or exceed Colorado’s graduation guidelines.
- Superintendents and administrators: implement and align learning opportunities, instructional practices, professional development, and communications with locally adopted graduation requirements.

What is the purpose of this toolkit?

Superintendents have asked the Colorado Department of Education for resources to help district administrators and local school board members:

- Understand the Colorado Graduation Guidelines.
- Begin to implement changes in 2017-18 starting with ninth-graders.

This toolkit follows up years of work by the Graduation Guidelines Council. The state’s graduation guidelines have been in policy since 2007.

They reflect Colorado’s updated expectations for students and educators, and were informed by considerable input from stakeholders across the state:

- K-12 education representatives—local school board members, administrators, teachers and counselors
- Parents and students
- Business and community leaders
- Community college and higher education representatives
- Department of Labor and Employment experts
- Military personnel

The graduation guidelines also were informed by nearly 50 in-person stakeholder meetings across the state and in-depth conversations with nearly all of Colorado’s 178 superintendents.

This draft toolkit:

- Assembles essential information.
- Recommends next steps for school districts.
- Offers resources to carry out next steps.



To-dos



At-a-glance timeline

Phase 1 to-do list

Phase 2 to-do list

Phase 3 to-do list

Phase 4 to-do list

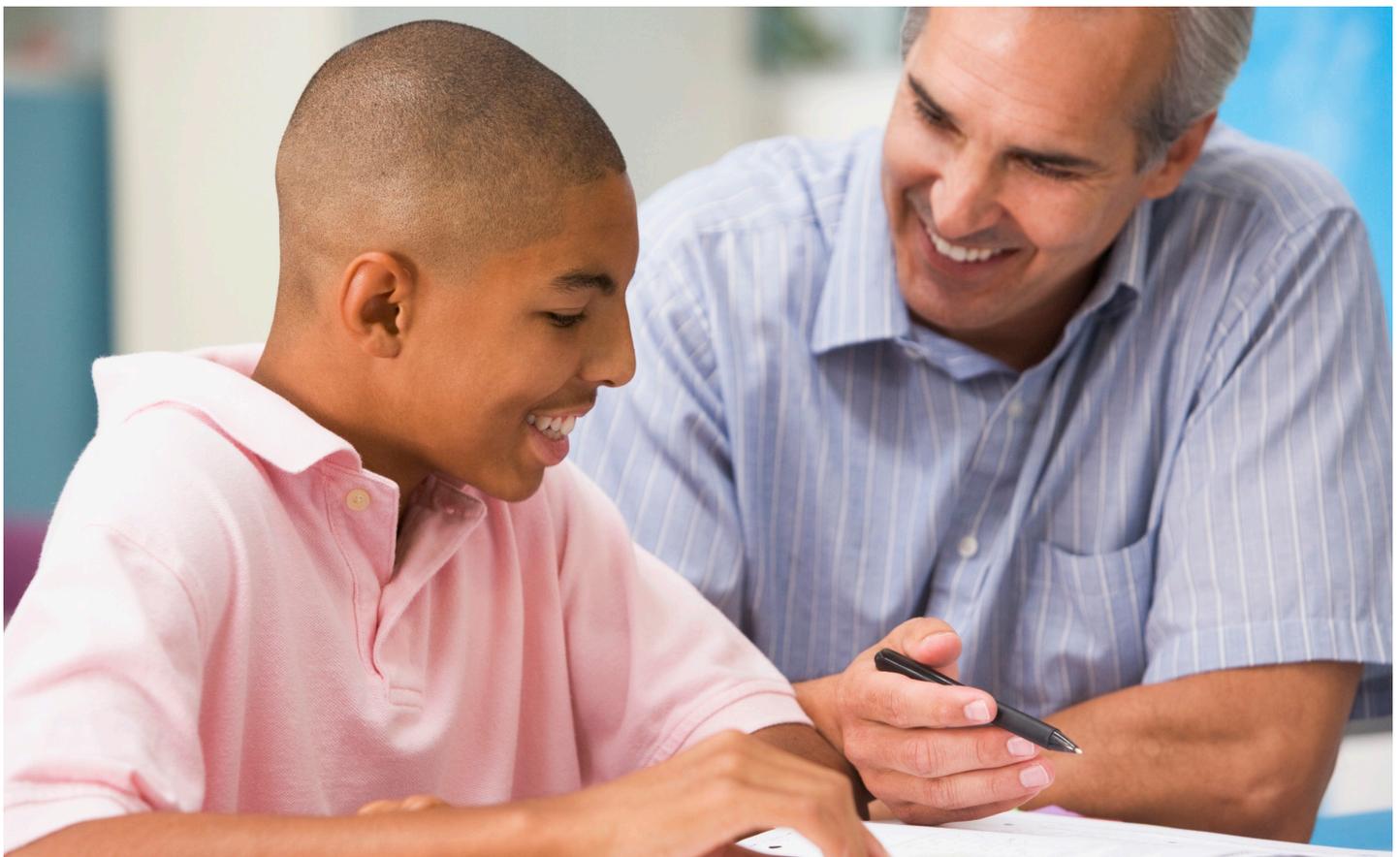
Guiding questions for district leaders

Local school board responsibilities

Sample local school board work session agenda to discuss Colorado Graduation Guidelines



Colorado Graduation Guidelines



Within three years—when 2014-15 sixth-graders start ninth-grade in fall 2017—Colorado school districts will begin implementing revised local high school graduation requirements that meet or exceed the Colorado Graduation Guidelines approved in September 2015 by the Colorado State Board of Education. This includes offering a list of options that students may use to demonstrate their readiness for college and careers in order to graduate from high school.



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Phase 1 To-do list

2014-15:
Review

local high school graduation requirements

Under way:

- ✓ **IMPLEMENT** Colorado Academic Standards—including embedded 21st Century Skills—for all students.
- ✓ **INITIATE** Individual Career and Academic Plans (ICAP) for incoming ninth-graders.

Superintendents collaborate with district administrators to:

- REVIEW** Colorado Graduation Guidelines and Colorado menu of college and career-ready demonstrations.
- COMPARE** local high school graduation requirements to state guidelines.
- IDENTIFY** areas of alignment for practices and policies.

Superintendents collaborate with their school boards to:

- DISCUSS** comparison of local high school graduation requirements to state guidelines, and Colorado menu of college and career-ready demonstrations.
- CONSIDER** areas of alignment for practices and policies.
- DETERMINE** district action steps and timelines.
- ADOPT** revisions in 2015-16 to meet or exceed state guidelines, including a local menu for students to demonstrate college and career readiness.
- PREPARE** to implement starting in 2017-18 with ninth-graders.
- ENGAGE** with employers, community members, students, and parents to identify values and priorities for district graduation.

2

Phase 2 To-do list

2015-16:

Local school boards adopt
revisions to meet or exceed state graduation guidelines

Decide on

menu of options for students to demonstrate college and career readiness

Superintendents and local boards:

- CONSIDER** state board of education's potential expansions to the Colorado menu of college and career-ready demonstrations (*expected in summer 2015*).
- ENGAGE** community and staff members in conversations about the skills students will need to be successful after they graduate from high school.
- DECIDE** on a list of options students may use to demonstrate college and career readiness in order to graduate from high school.
- ADOPT** revisions to local high school graduation requirements to meet or exceed the Colorado Graduation Guidelines, including a local menu for students to demonstrate college and career readiness.
- COMMUNICATE** revisions and menu of college and career-ready demonstrations to students (*as early as sixth-grade*) and parents.
- CONNECT** with district charter schools about graduation guidelines adoption.



3

Phase 3 To-do list

2016-17:
Prepare
to implement starting in 2017-18 with ninth-graders

District administrators:

- PREPARE** to implement revised local high school graduation requirements starting in 2017-18—with ninth-graders—including a local menu for students to demonstrate college and career readiness.
- CONTINUE** to communicate revisions and menu of college and career-ready demonstrations to students (as early as sixth-grade) and parents.

4

Phase 4 To-do list

2017-18:
Implement
starting with ninth-graders

District administrators:

- IMPLEMENT** revised local high school graduation requirements starting with ninth-graders, including a local menu for students to demonstrate college and career readiness.
- CONTINUE** to communicate revisions and menu of college and career-ready demonstrations to students (*as early as sixth-grade*) and parents.

2018-19:
Implement
with ninth and tenth-graders



2019-20:
Implement
with ninth, tenth, and eleventh-graders

District administrators:

- CONTINUE** to phase in revised local high school graduation requirements with ninth, tenth, and eleventh-graders, including a local menu for students to demonstrate college and career readiness.
- CONTINUE** to communicate revisions and menu of college and career-ready demonstrations to students (as early as sixth-grade) and parents.
- ASSESS** implementation.
- ADJUST** if necessary.

2020-21: **Graduate** first class under revised graduation guidelines

District administrators:

- IMPLEMENT** revised local high school graduation requirements for all high school students, including menu for students to demonstrate college and career readiness.
- GRADUATE** first class to:
 - Use revised local high school graduation requirements.



Guiding questions for district leaders

Initial guiding questions

Suggested discussion participants:

- Local school board members
- Superintendent
- Cabinet (*e.g., directors of communications, curriculum, assessment, counseling, etc.*)
- Middle and high school principals
- Middle and high school counselors
- Teachers

- What requirements must our current students meet to earn a high school diploma from our district?
- How do our current local high school graduation requirements compare to the Colorado's graduation guidelines?
- Which of our current requirements meet or exceed the state guidelines?
- What additions do we need to meet the state guidelines?
- Which of our current requirements no longer are needed? What do we want to keep or eliminate?
- What processes do we have in place or should we consider options to bring community members, workforce, and higher education to discuss input for our diploma planning process.
- Using student achievement data, in what ways do students currently demonstrate their readiness for college and careers based on the Colorado menu of college and career-ready demonstrations?
- Are there other requirements beyond the state's guidelines that we should consider adding to our local high school graduation requirements (*e.g. world languages, music, art, health, etc.*)?
- How would we like to incorporate the state's civics requirement for high school?

Guiding questions for district leaders (continued)

Additional guiding questions

Learning opportunities

- How might learning opportunities for students be different with an emphasis on student competencies—showing what they know— vs. earning passing grades in high school?
- What options for students would we like to provide that currently are not available in our district?
- What changes and resources would we need to make to provide those options?

Instructional practices

- How might instructional practices be different with an emphasis on students mastering content vs. earning passing grades in high school?
- Do our current instructional practices support this change?
- What teaching methods might need to change?
- How might we include demonstrations of mastery earlier than 12th-grade to facilitate student transitions?

Professional development

- How will we develop a collective understanding of the emphasis on students mastering content vs. earning passing grades—the concept and rationale, benefits to students, etc.?
- What professional development is needed to help staff make necessary changes to instructional practices?

Communications

- What opportunities for discussion will we provide for our staff, community, students, and parents?
- How and when will we communicate approved changes to staff, community, students, and parents?

Local school board responsibilities

When the class of 2021 starts ninth grade in fall 2017, Colorado school districts will begin implementing revised local high school graduation requirements that meet or exceed the Colorado Graduation Guidelines approved in September 2015 by the Colorado State Board of education. This includes offering a list of options that students may use to demonstrate their readiness for college and careers in order to graduate from high school.

Each local school board has the authority to establish local high school graduation requirements that meet or exceed the Colorado Graduation Guidelines.

Local high school graduation policies must:

- Align with:
 - Colorado Academic Standards in 10 content areas adopted in 2009
 - Colorado Career and Technical Education Standards adopted in 2009
 - Colorado English Language Proficiency Standards adopted in 2009
 - Postsecondary and Workforce Readiness description adopted in 2009
- Include a course on the civil government of the U.S. (Civics) which students must complete satisfactorily, C.R.S. 22-1-1-4 (3)(a)
- Allow students multiple, equally rigorous and valued pathways to demonstrate competency of the knowledge and skills necessary for postsecondary education and meaningful careers.
- Complete student demonstrations of:
 - Individual Career and Academic Plans (ICAP)
 - Proficiency in 21st Century Skills, embedded in Colorado Academic Standards
 - Academic proficiency in English and math using options that local school boards and districts select from the approved Colorado menu of college and career-ready demonstrations
- Recognize and acknowledge the importance of education in world languages, comprehensive health, physical education, music, dance, performing arts, visual arts, and career and technical education in strengthening students' learning in other subjects and supporting their ability to succeed in the 21st century.

Local high school graduation policies may:

- Permit students longer or shorter time periods to earn their diploma.
- Adopt the college and career demonstrations necessary to earn a standard high school diploma to accommodate for students with the following exceptions: English learners, gifted students and students with disabilities.



Sample local school board work session agenda to discuss Colorado Graduation Guidelines

Suggested discussion participants:

- Local school board members
- Superintendent
- Cabinet (e.g., directors of communications, curriculum, assessment, counseling, etc.)
- Middle and high school principals
- Middle and high school counselors
- Teachers

Agenda

- Share history, concept, rationale, benefits to students, and implementation timeline for state graduation guidelines.
- Review current local high school graduation requirements.
- Discuss how current local high school graduation requirements compare to Colorado's graduation guidelines.
- Discuss what changes are necessary to meet the state guidelines.

Questions for local board members:

What else do you need to know?

What process will we follow for reviewing and adopting revised high school graduation requirements?

How will we engage the community and staff in conversations about the skills students need to be successful after they graduate from high school?

How will we engage parents and students in this process?

Who needs to be included in the conversation (e.g. parents, business community, community college representatives, etc.)?

What is our timeline for community involvement and adoption?

What are the key messages we want to communicate to staff, students, parents, and the community?

How will we engage workforce and higher education in this process?



Resources in this toolkit



Colorado menu of college and career-ready demonstrations

Data landscape

Colorado by the numbers

Background and history

Additional communications resources

Key messages and talking points

Drop-in article for students and families, staff, and community

PowerPoint presentation for community and staff conversations



Why Colorado Graduation Guidelines?

Life beyond high school is different from what it used to be. Most jobs require education beyond high school. Colorado Graduation Guidelines provide a road map to help students and their families plan for success after high school. The graduation guidelines take effect with ninth-graders in fall 2017.



COLORADO
Department of Education

www.cde.state.co.us/postsecondary/graduationguidelines

Colorado menu of college and career-ready demonstrations

How to use this menu

Local school boards establish high school graduation requirements that meet or exceed the Colorado Graduation Guidelines for the graduating class of 2021.

Local school boards and districts select from this menu to create a list of options their students must use to show what they know or can do in order to graduate from high school, beginning with the graduating class of 2021. School districts may offer some or all of the state menu options, may raise a cut score on an included assessment and may add graduation requirements in other content areas.

Students must demonstrate college or career readiness in English and math based on at least one measure.

Graduation Requirements begin with the implementation of:

- Individual Career and Academic Plans (ICAP)
- Colorado Academic Standards
- 21st century skills

Districts have the authority to adapt the college and career demonstrations necessary to earn a standard high school diploma to accommodate for: English learners, gifted students and students with disabilities.

MENU OF OPTIONS. This menu lists the minimum scores required.

| ACCUPLACER | |
|---|--------------------------|
| English | Math |
| 62 on Reading Comprehension or 70 of Sentence Skills | 61 on Elementary Algebra |
| ACCUPLACER is a computerized test that assesses reading, writing, math and computer skills. The results of the assessment, in conjunction with a student's academic background, goals and interests, are used by academic advisors and counselors to place students in a college courses that match their skill levels. | |

| ACT | |
|---|----------------|
| English | Math |
| 18 on ACT English | 19 on ACT Math |
| ACT is a national college admissions exam. It measures four subjects - English, reading, math and science. The highest possible score for each subject is 36. | |

| ACT WorkKeys - National Career Readiness Certificate | |
|---|------------------|
| English | Math |
| Bronze or higher | Bronze or higher |
| ACT WorkKeys is an assessment that tests students' job skills in applied reading, writing, mathematics and 21st century skills. Scores are based on job profiles that help employers select, hire, train, develop and retain a high-performance workforce. Students who score at the bronze level (3 or better) in applied mathematics, mapping and reading earn the ACT's National Career Readiness Certificate. | |

| Advanced Placement | |
|---|------|
| English | Math |
| 2 | 2 |
| AP exams test students' ability to perform at a college level. Districts choose which AP exams will fulfill this menu option. Scores range from 1 to 5 (highest). | |

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Colorado menu of college and career-ready demonstrations (continued)

| ASVAB | |
|---|------|
| English | Math |
| 31 | 31 |
| The Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB) is a comprehensive test that helps determine students' eligibility and suitability for careers in the military. Students who score at least 31 on the AFQT are eligible for service (along with other standards that include physical condition and personal conduct). Students who take the ASVAB are not required to enlist in the military. | |

| Concurrent Enrollment | |
|---|--|
| English | Math |
| Passing grade per district and higher education policy | Passing grade per district and higher education policy |
| Concurrent enrollment provides students the opportunity to enroll in postsecondary courses, simultaneously earning high school and college credit. School districts and institutions of higher education each determine passing grades for credit. A passing grade is determined by district and higher education policy for concurrent enrollment. An eligible concurrent enrollment course is 1) the pre-requisite directly prior to a credit-bearing course or 2) a credit-bearing course. | |

| District Capstone | |
|---|----------------|
| English | Math |
| Individualized | Individualized |
| A capstone is the culminating exhibition of a student's project or experience that demonstrates academic and intellectual learning. Capstone projects often include a portfolio of a student's best work. | |

| Industry Certificate | |
|---|----------------|
| English | Math |
| Individualized | Individualized |
| An industry certificate is a credential recognized by business and industry. Industry certificates measure a student's competency in an occupation, and they validate a knowledge base and skills that show mastery in a particular industry. | |

| International Baccalaureate | |
|--|------|
| English | Math |
| 4 | 4 |
| IB exams assess students enrolled in the official IB Diploma Programme. Courses are offered only at authorized IB World Schools. Scores range from 1 to 7 (highest). | |

| SAT: Scores updated for new SAT (2016) | |
|---|------|
| English | Math |
| 470 | 500 |
| The SAT is a college entrance exam that is accepted or required at nearly all four-year colleges and universities in the U.S. The current SAT includes sections on reading, writing and math. The highest possible score for each section is 800. | |

| Collaboratively-developed, standards-based performance assessment | |
|---|-----------------------------|
| English | Math |
| State-wide scoring criteria | State-wide scoring criteria |
| <i>(In development)</i> | |

Why Colorado Graduation Guidelines?

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www.cde.state.co.us/postsecondary/graduationguidelines

Data landscape



Few jobs will require only a high school education. Colorado ranks 48th in available jobs for high school graduates or dropouts.



48th



Many jobs will require additional training beyond high school. Colorado ranks third in the proportion of 2020 jobs that will require a bachelor's degree.

3rd



Between 2010 and 2020, new Colorado jobs requiring postsecondary education and training will grow by 716,000—compared to only 268,000 new jobs for high school graduates who have no additional training. This means that jobs requiring additional training beyond high school are growing three times as fast as jobs requiring only a high school diploma.

716,000



In 2020, 74 percent of all jobs in Colorado—3 million jobs—will require education beyond high school.

- 26 percent will require a high school diploma or less.
- 32 percent will require some college, an associate's degree or certificate.
- 29 percent will require a bachelor's degree.
- 12 percent will require a master's degree or higher.

74%



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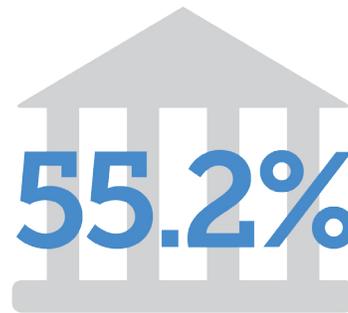
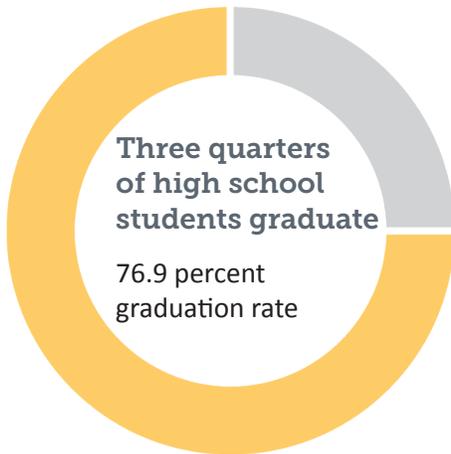


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Colorado by the numbers

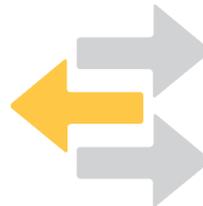
Current statistics



More than half of high school graduates enroll in college
(55.2 percent)



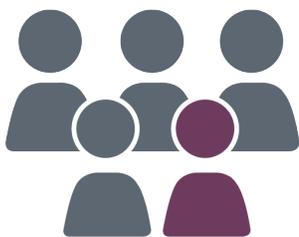
More than 10,664 students drop out of high school (2.5 percent)
\$3.8 billion lost lifetime earnings
Source: Alliance for Education Excellence



More than one-third of high school graduates need remedial classes in college

37 percent remediation rate

Promising Practices



1 in 5 Colorado eleventh-graders and graduating seniors participate in dual enrollment, taking college courses in high school (22 percent)

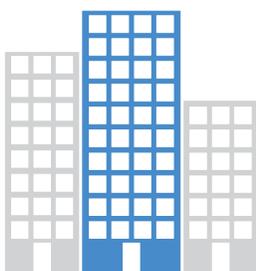
NEW!

85 percent of students who are enrolled in dual enrollment classes enroll in college



Twenty-five percent of high school students take an Advanced Placement exam

36.1 percent earned a score of 3 or higher (on a 1-to-5 scale)



More than one-third of high school students participate in career and technical education courses (38 percent)

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Background and history

The state's graduation guidelines have been in development since 2007.

They reflect Colorado's updated expectations for students and educators, and were informed by considerable input from stakeholders—a process that included nearly 50 in-person stakeholder meetings across the state and in-depth conversations with nearly all of Colorado's 178 superintendents. Here is who weighed in:

- K-12 education representatives, including rural and charter schools—local school board members, administrators, teachers, counselors, and parents
- Business and community leaders
- Community college and higher education representatives
- Department of Labor and Employment experts
- Military personnel

2007

- Legislature passes House Bill 07-1118 requiring the development of state high school graduation guidelines for school districts to meet or exceed.
- 18-member Graduation Guidelines Council forms to develop recommendations for the state board of education to consider.

2008

- Graduation Guidelines Council presents initial recommendation to state board of education.
- Legislature extends timeline to adopt revised state high school graduation guidelines to May 2013—allowing time for revised Colorado Academic Standards to be developed.
- Graduation Guidelines were reinforced and integrated into CAP4K policy.

2012

- A reconstituted Graduation Guidelines Council forms to build on initial recommendation of 2007 council.
- Forty-eight stakeholder meetings are held across the state to gather input.

2013

- State board of education adopts Colorado Graduation Guidelines proposed by the council, including the Colorado menu of college and career-ready demonstrations.
- Graduation guidelines work groups convene by topic area to begin a two-year statewide discussion of career and college-ready demonstrations.

2015

- State board of education approves the revised Colorado menu of college and career-ready demonstrations based on input from graduation guidelines work groups in order to complete the college and career-ready demonstration menu.

Key messages and talking points

How to use these messages

Consider selecting from these key messages and talking points—or the “in a nutshell” overview—to communicate about the state’s graduation guidelines during presentations, meetings, conversations, and in written materials. Select the messages that you think will resonate most with your audience. Consider customizing them with examples, stories, and compelling data specific to your staff and community.

In a nutshell

Life beyond high school is different from what it used to be. Most jobs in Colorado now and in the future require training or education beyond high school. There are fewer jobs for high school graduates now than at any other time in Colorado’s history. Students who graduate and work in Colorado will need in-demand skills that meet business, industry, and higher education standards.

Students in middle and high school must think about their passions and interests, and plan for their future.

The Colorado Graduation Guidelines are a road map to help students and their families plan for success after high school.

The goal of the graduation guidelines is to ensure that students don’t get left behind in Colorado’s changing economy.

The guidelines mean significant changes for students. Ninth-graders in fall 2017 will be the first class to demonstrate their readiness in English and math through the graduation guidelines menu.

The Why?

Most jobs in Colorado will require additional training or education beyond high school.

- Jobs that require training beyond high school are growing three times as fast as jobs that require only a high school diploma.
- By 2020, three out of four jobs in Colorado will require education or training beyond high school. That adds up to 3 million jobs.
- Already, Colorado employers cannot find enough workers to fill jobs in some manufacturing, health, technology, and science-based industries. They say that students are not prepared to be successful in thousands of available jobs in our state.
- Additionally, nearly 40 percent of students entering college are unprepared for college-level work.

Few jobs in Colorado are open to high school graduates who have no additional training.

- Students with only a high school diploma will be qualified for just one in four jobs by 2020.

- Our state ranks in the bottom three nationwide for jobs open to dropouts—or high school graduates with no additional training or education.

Middle and high school is the time when students should start planning for life after high school—which may include jobs, military service, or college.

It is essential for students to talk with their families about their passions and interests, to think about their careers, and to understand the world of work.

Students may choose options in high school to learn skills they will need to succeed after graduation.

High school students might choose options, such as participating in an internship or apprenticeship, earning credentials that count toward a two-year associate’s degree or four-year bachelor’s degree, or taking college-level courses for credit.

The Colorado Graduation Guidelines are a road map to help students and their families plan for success after high school.

Early results are promising.

For example:

- More than one-third of Colorado high school students enroll in career and technical education courses that translate to real-world skills—and nearly 90 percent of those students get jobs in their field within one year.
- One in five 11th graders and graduating seniors in Colorado takes college courses in high school—at no cost if they are earning a passing grade.
- More than one-third of Colorado high school students take an Advanced Placement exam, often earning college credit.



Key messages and talking points (continued)

The What?

Colorado is the last state to align graduation expectations for all students. Beginning in 2021, students must demonstrate competency—or show what they know—in subjects that reflect Colorado standards and 21st century skills before they can graduate. Their school diploma will prove they are ready to enter work, military, or college.

Changes will begin within three years. Ninth-graders in fall 2017 will be the first class to demonstrate their readiness in English and math through the graduation guidelines menu. They may select from a list of options to demonstrate competency. Students could fulfill one or more of these options any time during their high school career by:

- Earning minimum scores on state and national tests
- Completing rigorous learning projects guided by a faculty mentor
- Passing college-level courses taken during high school
- Earning professional certifications

The How?

Each local school board has the authority to establish local high school graduation requirements that meet or exceed the Colorado Graduation Guidelines.

Local school boards and districts:

- Have flexibility to align local graduation requirements by choosing options that work best for them.
- Choose from the Colorado menu of college and career-ready demonstrations to create a list of local options their students may use to demonstrate competency in subjects that reflect Colorado standards and 21st century skills in order to graduate from high school. Districts may choose to offer some or all of the state menu options, and at least one per subject area.
- Have the opportunity to determine their own high school framework, including whether to offer students a flexible timeline to demonstrate competency and to graduate from high school.

Colorado's graduation guidelines reflect our state's rigorous expectations for students and educators.

- The state's graduation guidelines are a meaningful link to improvements that Colorado has already made to set clearer, higher expectations for students and educators.
- The goal is for students to graduate from high school prepared to be successful in school and in life, earning a living wage and contributing to Colorado's economy.
- Colorado is committed to educating students so they enter the workforce with in-demand skills that meet business, industry, and higher education standards.

Toolkit Resources

- Guiding questions for district leaders—page 8
- Local school board responsibilities—page 10
- Colorado menu of college and career-ready demonstrations—page 13-14
- Sample local school board work session agenda to discuss Colorado Graduation Guidelines—page 11
- Community and staff conversations—revising local high school graduation guidelines (starting on page 25)
- Consider using key messages and talking points, data, and background starting on page 8 in this toolkit—and customize with local data.
- Online resources listed on page 32



Drop-in articles

How to use these articles

These sample articles are intended to help school districts communicate about upcoming revisions to their high school graduation requirements so they are aligned with statewide guidelines. Consider customizing your articles with local examples. For ideas about data to customize according to your district—such as the percentage of students who already take college courses in high school—refer to the early results included in “the why?” section of the “key messages” resource in this toolkit (see page 18).

For students and families

High school graduation expectations are going to change

More than any other time in Colorado’s history, life beyond high school is different from what it used to be.

Middle and high school is the time for students to start planning for life after high school. Will it be in a yet-to-be discovered career, military service, or college? It’s essential for students to talk with their families about their passions and interests, to think about careers, and to understand the world of work.

Most jobs in our state require more than a high school diploma. By 2020—less than six years from now—three out of every four jobs will require education or training beyond high school. That adds up to 3 million jobs. Our graduates who want to work in Colorado will need in-demand skills that meet business, industry, and higher education standards.

That’s why the state and all Colorado school districts recently adopted new academic standards—clear, high expectations for what students should know and be able to do at every grade level.

A new state law now links academic standards to high school graduation. The goal is to ensure that all of our students can succeed after high school no matter which path they choose—jobs, military, or higher education.

We are working with our board of education to create a list of options that our students will be able use to demonstrate competency (or show what they know) in subjects that reflect Colorado standards and 21st century skills—English and math—in order to graduate from high school. The changes will begin in three years—with ninth-graders in fall 2017.

Students would have the option to:

- Earn minimum scores on state and national tests
- Complete rigorous learning projects guided by a faculty mentor
- Pass college-level courses taken during high school
- Earn professional certifications

For example, high school students might choose to participate in an internship or apprenticeship, earn credentials that count toward a two-year associate’s degree or four-year bachelor’s degree, or take college-level courses for credit.

Already, more than one-third of Colorado high school students enroll in career and technical education courses that translate to real-world skills, and nearly 90 percent of those students get jobs in their field within one year. One in five 11th graders and graduating seniors in Colorado takes college courses in high school, at no cost if they earning a passing grade. And more than one-third of Colorado high school students take an Advanced Placement exam, often earning college credit.

We want the families to be involved as we discuss how to best prepare our students for their futures. We want to hear your voice. Watch for opportunities to participate in community conversations about our school district’s graduation guidelines.

If you would like more information, please contact: [insert information]

Sincerely,

[insert name]
Superintendent



Drop-in articles (Continued)

For staff

High school graduation expectations are going to change

As you know, Colorado has long held schools accountable for performance. Added to that is teacher and principal accountability with the new statewide educator evaluation system. The next step is student accountability.

That's because more than any other time in Colorado's history, life beyond high school is different from what it used to be.

Most jobs in our state require more than a high school diploma. By 2020—less than six years from now—three out of every four jobs will require education or training beyond high school. That adds up to 3 million jobs.

Our graduates who want to work in Colorado will need in-demand skills that meet business, industry, and higher education standards.

We already are making great strides by implementing Colorado Academic Standards—clear, high expectations for what students should know and be able to do. A new state law now links academic standards to high school graduation.

The goal is to ensure that all of our students can succeed after high school no matter which path they choose—jobs, military, or higher education.

To assist school districts in revising local graduation requirements, work groups of educators, parents, and students from across the state are developing implementation recommendations, best practices, and tools and resources. The work of these committees will support school districts with capstone projects, 21st Century Skills, Individual Career and Academic Plans (ICAP), industry certificates, special populations, assessments, and concurrent enrollment.

In our district, staff leadership is working with our board of education to create a list of options that our students will be able use to demonstrate competency (or show what they know) in subjects that reflect Colorado standards and 21st century skills—English and math—in order to graduate from high school. The changes will begin in three years—with ninth-graders in fall 2017.

Students would have the option to:

- Earn minimum scores on state and national tests
- Complete rigorous learning projects guided by a faculty mentor
- Pass college-level courses taken during high school
- Earn professional certifications

For example, high school students might choose to participate in an internship or apprenticeship, earn credentials that count toward a two-year associate's degree or four-year bachelor's degree, or take college-level courses for credit.

As we begin the process of revising graduation requirements, it's critical that we hear your voice. There will be opportunities for you to join in community conversations. Watch for more information in the months ahead.

Sincerely,

[insert name]
Superintendent



Drop-in articles (Continued)

For community members

High school graduation expectations are going to change

More than any other time in Colorado's history, life beyond high school is different from what it used to be.

Most jobs in our state require more than a high school diploma. By 2020—less than six years from now—three out of every four jobs will require education or training beyond high school. That adds up to 3 million jobs. Our graduates who want to work in Colorado will need in-demand skills that meet business, industry, and higher education standards.

That's why the state and all Colorado school districts recently adopted new academic standards—clear, high expectations for what students should know and be able to do at every grade level.

A new state law now links academic standards to high school graduation. The goal is to ensure that all of our students can succeed after high school no matter which path they choose—jobs, military, or higher education.

The change in statewide graduation guidelines means that students must show what they know in subjects that reflect Colorado standards and 21st century skills—English and math—in order to graduate from high school. This change will begin in all Colorado school districts in three years—starting with ninth-graders in fall 2017.

We are working with our board of education to create a list of options that our students will be able use to show what they know in high school.

Students would have the option to:

- Earning minimum scores on state and national tests
- Completing rigorous learning projects guided by a faculty mentor
- Passing college-level courses taken during high school
- Receiving professional certifications

For example, high school students might choose to participate in an internship or apprenticeship, earn credentials that count toward a two-year associate's degree or four-year bachelor's degree, or take college-level courses for credit.

We want the community to be involved as we discuss how to best prepare our students for their futures. Watch for opportunities to participate in community conversations about our school district's graduation guidelines.

If you would like more information, please contact:
[insert information]

Sincerely,

[insert name]
Superintendent



PowerPoint presentation for community and staff conversations

How to use this slide presentation

This template presentation is intended to help school districts provide an overview of Colorado Graduation Guidelines during community and staff conversations.

Presentation overview:

- Introduction
- The why?
- The what?
- The how?
- Next steps statewide
- Next steps for our school district
- Community discussion
- Wrap-up

Consider pairing the presentation with handouts on pages 14-17 of this toolkit:

- Colorado menu of college and career-ready demonstrations
- Data landscape
- Colorado by the numbers
- Background and history

Presentations are available at:

www.cde.state.co.us/postsecondary/graduationguidelines



Community and staff conversations



Introduction

About community engagement

Timeline for meeting planning

Sample invitation

Sample agenda

Sample meeting evaluation form

Sample thank you note



Introduction

Then. Many Colorado school districts hosted community conversations in recent years to discuss preparing students for postsecondary education and the workforce—when state law required districts to adopt revised Colorado Academic Standards and embedded 21st Century Skills in 2009.

The standards set fewer, clearer, and higher expectations for students, outlining the broad themes, ideas, and concepts students must master in 10 academic subjects to be successful in school and in life.

Now. State law requires school districts to meet or exceed the Colorado Graduation Guidelines starting with ninth-graders in 2017-18. It is a good time for follow-up conversations about your community's expectations for the skills students will need to be successful after they graduate from high school and the value of a high school diploma. These conversations will help inform revisions to local high school graduation requirements.

Participants could include staff, parents, students, community leaders—and representatives from higher education, business, service clubs, faith organizations, etc.



About community engagement

Community engagement is an approach to decision making that features:

- Dialogue
- Discovery of values
- Potential for common ground
- Ownership as a goal

Community engagement is not:

- Telling
- Selling
- Yelling

When? Community engagement is best used for:

- Questions that do not have a “yes” or “no” answer
- Problems that have no right or wrong solution
- Policy-level concerns

You should engage the community when:

- You are wrestling with a major issue
- A major policy change must be made
- Your decision will impact a large part of the community

Engage the community BEFORE the decision is made!

Who should you engage?

- School staff
- Students
- Parents
- Accountability committees
- Higher education
- Business community
- Service club members
- Community leaders

Source—Colorado Association of School Boards



Timeline for meeting planning

Here is a step-by-step list of what to do initially—and when—to help with your community conversations.

One month before meeting

- Select a time, date, and location for meeting.
- Determine who from the district will present information and who will facilitate.
- Develop agenda and handouts.
- Invite 15 to 20 community members and staff by email or phone.

Week before meeting

- Email a reminder notice and agenda to participants.
- Arrange for refreshments and meeting supplies, including audio/visual equipment.
- Make copies of the agenda and handouts (or surveys, evaluation forms, etc.).
- Print name tents or tags for participants.
- Print sign-up sheet.

Day of meeting

- Post a sign on front door welcoming participants and giving directions to room.
- Set up the room (tables and chairs, name tents, refreshments).
- Do an audio/visual check.

Day after meeting

- Debrief what worked and what needs to be tweaked.
- Send a thank you letter or email to those who attended.



Sample invitation

Please join us from **(time)** to **(time)** on **(day, date)** at **(location)** for a one-hour conversation about how to ensure that our high school graduates are prepared to enter college and the workforce.

State law requires school districts to meet or exceed the Colorado Graduation Guidelines starting with ninth-graders in 2017-18. It is a good time for more conversations about our community's expectations for the skills students will need to be successful after they graduate from high school.

We will discuss what knowledge and experiences are most important, what we are doing now to meet those objectives, and how we can enhance all students' educational opportunities.

These conversations also will help inform upcoming revisions to our high school graduation requirements. State law requires that when Colorado students enter ninth-grade starting in fall 2017, they must begin to demonstrate competency—or show what they know—in English and math in order to graduate from high school.

Please let us know by **(date)** whether you will be able to attend. Call us at **(phone number)** or email us at **(address)** with your response or any questions.

Thanks in advance for your participation.

Sincerely,

Name
School Board President
School District Name

Name
Superintendent
School District Name



Sample agenda

Welcome and introductions

- Thank people for coming
- Ask people in room to introduce themselves
- Explain the purpose of this conversation
- Introduce “PowerPoint presentation for community and staff conversations” available on page 23 of this toolkit

Brief presentation on graduation guidelines, goal of conversation

- Show PPT

Group discussion

- Ask participants to complete a skills inventory worksheet
- Lead discussion on guiding questions, such as:

What skills do students in our community need to be successful in the 21st century?

What skills do our graduates need to be successful in the work place?

What skills do our graduates need to succeed in college?

How well are we preparing our students now?

What else should we be doing?

How will the community know that we are successfully preparing our graduates?

How can the community support the success of all students?

Wrap-up

- Thank participants
- Explain next steps
- Ask participants to complete an evaluation form



Sample meeting evaluation form

Thanks for attending today's conversation! We value your opinions.

Today's conversation about high school graduates was:

Very useful

Somewhat useful

Not useful

The best thing about the conversation was _____

One thing that could have been improved was _____

Questions I still have are _____

Other ideas I would like to share _____

Name (optional) _____



Sample thank you note

Thank you for taking the time to participate in our community conversation about successful high school graduates. It was an informative discussion and will help as we move forward to revise our high school graduation requirements.

We will keep you updated about future community conversations and the results of your feedback as the effort progresses.

Feel free to contact us if we can provide additional information. Thanks again!

Sincerely,

Name
School Board President
School District Name

Name
Superintendent
School District Name



Online resources

Online resources referenced in this toolkit

Colorado Department of Education

Colorado Academic Standards

www.cde.state.co.us/standardsandinstruction/coloradostandards

Graduation Guidelines

www.cde.state.co.us/postsecondary/graduationguidelines

Postsecondary Readiness

www.cde.state.co.us/postsecondary

Presentations are available

www.cde.state.co.us/postsecondary/graduationguidelines

Colorado Association of School Boards

CASB

www.casb.org

Matching state Graduation Guidelines with your community's values PPT presentation

www.cde.state.co.us/sites/default/files/GraduationGuidelinesPresentation.pdf

Colorado Department of Labor & Employment

Community workforce data

www.colmgateway.com

Next Steps: Learn the Latest about Graduation Guidelines

Graduation Guidelines

www.cde.state.co.us/postsecondary/graduationguidelines

See superintendent and principal tools or subscribe to CDE's Scoop newsletter

www.cde.state.co.us/communications

