

Denver Public Schools
Graduation Requirements Advisory Work Group
Proposal for Revision of Graduation Requirements
For Students Graduating in the Class of 2010

“Enrollments in Colorado’s public colleges and universities are on the rise, validating reports that more students today aspire to college than at any other time, but so too is the demand for remedial (basic skills) courses in mathematics, writing and reading, suggesting that many college-bound students continue to be inadequately prepared in high school.”

*Excerpt from Remedial Education:
One-Third of Incoming College Students
Unprepared by K–12 Schools,
Colorado Commission on Higher Education*

We believe that over the next decade Denver can lead the nation’s cities in student achievement, high school graduation, college and career preparation, and college matriculation...we want to create composers and engineers; artists and scientists; multilingual citizens and leaders of our democracy.”

Michael Bennet, Superintendent
Denver Public Schools
Notation from “The Denver Plan”

The challenge and the opportunity imbedded in these two quotations both summarize and highlight the visionary work in which the Graduation Requirements Advisory Work Group has been engaged. This Advisory Work Group, composed of 36 district staff and community members, began meeting weekly on January 18, 2006. Many of the attachments to this document represent the research and rationale used by sub-committees through this process. As we look forward to the feedback that will be provided by Denver Public Schools leadership, we are providing this proposal as a draft for the revision of graduation requirements for students in the Denver Public Schools who are scheduled to graduate in the spring of 2010.

We believe that this proposal creates a structure within which we are preparing students to be successful in a future that looks very different than our past. In this proposal we are addressing the contemporary needs of our students and engaging them with the relationships, the rigorous learning experiences and a new relevancy to prepare them for success in their choices for learning and employment opportunities that extend well beyond the high school experience.

We are aware that the adjustment in the structural expectations for graduation, in terms of units of credit, will not be enough to ensure student success beyond high school. For this reason, we agree that the true measure readiness for extended study and career will lie in the student’s ability to demonstrate competency in each of the standards identified as expectations by our school district and state. The current and future redesign of coursework and course assessments is absolutely necessary to the ability of our students to demonstrate a greater level of success in college and in career.

Denver Public Schools
Proposal (3/15/06)
Graduation Requirements
For Students Graduating in 2010

The high school diploma awarded by the Denver Public Schools represents a high standard of quality in curriculum content, instruction and student learning and should be maintained as a document that reflects substantial effort by the student and the school district in preparation for the world of work and higher education.

The Personal Education Plan

Each student who enters a Denver Public Schools high school will develop a Personal Education Plan. This plan will set their intended course of study as they begin their journey toward graduation. The student and an academic adviser (this may be a teacher, counselor, dean administrator or other professional school staff member) will review and amend the P.E.P. each semester, prior to the development of a new class schedule (for students attending the 8th grade in the Denver Public Schools, the P.E.P. will be initiated during the spring semester of the 8th grade year). Schools may opt for an “advisement” class to provide for the P.E.P. This process will not only provide clear information and a focus on the future for the student, but brings a new purpose to the important articulation between middle school and high school staff members.

Declared Area of Focus

There is a very specific intention in this proposal to bring renewed meaning and focus to the experience of students in both the 11th and 12th grade years of study. One avenue toward this end is to require students to identify an area of academic interest. Every student, during the first semester of their Junior year, will declare an “Area of Focus.” The student will need to engage in at least 1.0 units of study, beyond the graduation requirement of a particular content area (but not necessarily beyond the required 240 semester hours), and develop a portfolio of their learning that demonstrates both the depth of their academic understanding and communicates their intended application of this understanding in life beyond high school graduation. This effort strongly supports a drive toward increased rigor and an experience during the senior year that is highly relevant to the continuation of their learning and life experiences.

A Set of Required Assessments

Students will be required to engage in a schedule of required assessments that take place between the 9th and 12th grade years. The proposed schedule is provided in this document. Students who perform at a proficient or above level in any area of the 10th grade C.S.A.P. will earn 0.5 units of credit to count toward their graduation requirement in the content area for which they are proficient.

An Increase in Required Units of Study

24 units of study (240 semester hours) shall be required in grades 9, 10, 11 and 12 for students to graduate from high school and receive a high school diploma. The content area requirements (identified as minimums for each content area) are as listed in this document.

Notation: Request for Legal Review

The Advisory Work Group is requesting a legal review of current and future adopted requirements for Special Education students to ensure that the policy is in full compliance with federal and state laws and statutes. There is great concern with members off the Advisory Work Group that the exceptions that are provided for students with IEP's will limit the potential that the student may be able to demonstrate as learners in the Denver Public Schools.

The course requirements stated are definitive. An individual school may not impose course requirements beyond those stated as a condition of graduation from high school, unless permission is granted by the Chief Academic Officer. The high school principal may waive a given requirement if, in the principal's judgment, it is determined to be in the best educational interest of the student.

A high school diploma from Denver Public Schools certifies that a student has fulfilled all graduation requirements in one of five course areas. A Personalized Education Plan is required for each course area:

- General Course of Study
- Achieving Personal Excellence (APEX)
- Combined General and IEP
- Work Experience and Study
- Individualized Education Program (IEP)

The Combined General and IEP, Work Experience and Study and the Individualized Education Program options are available only to students with identified special education needs or to students whose transcripts reflect one or more core academic or elective course credits as special education. A student's course of study is not reflected in a differentiated diploma, but rather in the student's transcript. Every student diploma will state, "This diploma is reflective of the student's course of study as recorded on an official transcript."

General or Combined General and IEP Course of Study Requirements

(Requirements are stated as minimums in each content area. Units of study completed beyond the required minimum in Language Arts, Social Studies, Science, and Mathematics will be considered Academic Electives)

(See Attachment A for current DPS Graduation Requirements—Board Policy IKF)

	Current Requirements	CCHE Requirements	Advisory Workgroup Proposal	Chief Academic Officer Proposal
Language Arts...	<p>40 semester hours (4 units)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 unit of Introduction to Literature and Composition 1 & 2 • 1 unit of American Literature 1 & 2 • 2 units of Language Arts 	4 years	<p>4 units (40 semester hours)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1.0 unit of Introduction to Literature and Composition 1 & 2 (9th grade) • 1.0 unit of American Literature 1 & 2 (10th grade) • 1.0 unit Upper Division Writing Academic Elective • 1.0 unit of other Language Arts (See Attachment B for sample course of study, additional course options, and rationale.) 	<p>4 units (40 semester hours)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1.0 unit of Introduction to Literature and Composition 1 & 2 (9th grade) • 1.0 unit of American Literature 1 & 2 (10th grade) • 1.0 unit Upper Division Writing Academic Elective or British Literature • 1.0 unit of other Language Arts (See Attachment B for sample course of study, additional course options, and rationale.)
Social Studies...	<p>25 semester hours (2.5 units), including 10 semester hours (1 unit) in American History, five semester hours (.5 units) in American Government, and five semester hours (.5 units) in Geography</p>	3 years (at least one of which must be US History or World Civilization)	<p>3 units (30 semester hours)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 0.5 unit of Geography (9th grade) • 0.5 unit of Research Methods in History (9th grade) • 1.0 unit of American History (year-long course) (11th grade) • 0.5 unit of American Government (11th grade) • 0.5 unit of other Social Studies (See Attachment C for sample course of study, additional course options, and rationale.) 	<p>3 units (30 semester hours)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 unit of Geography (9th grade) • 1.0 unit of US History (year-long course) (10th grade) • 0.5 unit of Civics (11th grade) • 0.5 unit of other Social Studies (See Attachment C for sample course of study, additional course options, and rationale.)

<p>Science...</p>	<p>30 semester hours (3 units), including 10 semester hours (1 unit) of Biology 1 & 2, which must include study of the nature of alcohol and narcotics, their effects upon the human system, and environmental concerns</p>	<p>3 years (two of which must be lab-based)</p>	<p>3 units (30 semester hours)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1.0 unit of Earth Science (year-long) (9th grade) • 1.0 unit of Biology (year-long) (11th grade) • 1.0 unit of a lab-based Science course <p>(See Attachment D for sample course of study, additional course options, and rationale.)</p> <p>Notes Incoming 2006–2007 freshman will not be required to take Earth Science in 9th grade. Earth Science and Biology are lab-based courses.</p>	<p>3 units (30 semester hours)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1.0 unit of Earth Science (year-long) (9th grade) • 1.0 unit of Biology (year-long) (11th grade) • 1.0 unit of Chemistry or Physics <p>Notes Incoming 2006–2007 freshman will not be required to take Earth Science in 9th grade. Earth Science, Chemistry, Physics and Biology are lab-based courses.</p>
<p>Mathematics...</p>	<p>30 semester hours (3 units), including 10 hours (1 unit) of algebra or its integrated equivalent and 10 hours (1 unit) of geometry or its integrated equivalent are required, except that the high school algebra requirement will be waived for a student who successfully completes one year of algebra in middle school. Such students will be required to complete only 20 semester hours (2 units) of mathematics in high school, including 10 semester hours (1 unit) of geometry. In no case will students receive high school credit for courses completed in middle school.</p>	<p>4 years (Algebra, Geometry, and Algebra II)</p>	<p>4 units (40 semester hours)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1.0 unit of Algebra I or equivalent (9th grade) <p>The high school algebra requirement will be waived for a student who successfully completes one year of algebra in middle school (or passes the 8th grade Algebra Test). In no case will students receive high school credit for courses completed in middle school.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1.0 unit of Geometry or equivalent (10th grade) • 2.0 units of higher math from an approved list <p>(See Attachment D for sample course of study, additional course options, and rationale.)</p>	<p>4 units (40 semester hours)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1.0 unit of Algebra I or equivalent (9th grade) <p>The high school algebra requirement will be waived for a student who successfully completes one year of algebra in middle school (or passes the 8th grade Algebra Test). In no case will students receive high school credit for courses completed in middle school.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1.0 unit of Geometry or equivalent (10th grade) • 1.0 unit of Algebra II • 1.0 unit of higher math from an approved list <p>(See Attachment D for sample course of study, additional course options, and rationale.)</p>

Academic Electives...	<i>None specified</i>	2 years	2.0 units (20 semester hours) Required Academic Electives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1.0 unit Fine Arts (music, art, drama) • 0.5 unit Career and College Success • 0.5 unit Technology Academic Electives include: additional units of Language Arts, Social Studies Science, Mathematics, Foreign Language, art, music, journalism, drama, computer science, honors, A.V.I.D., Gear-Up, Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, approved career and technical education courses.	2.0 units (20 semester hours) Required Academic Electives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1.0 unit Fine Arts (music, art, drama) • <u>1.0 from an approved list</u> Academic Electives include: additional units of Language Arts, Social Studies Science, Mathematics, Foreign Language, art, music, journalism, drama, computer science, honors, A.V.I.D., Gear-Up, Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, approved career and technical education courses.
World Languages...	<i>None specified</i>	2 years (same language both years)	2.0 units (20 semester hours) of same language	2.0 units (20 semester hours) of same language
Physical Education/Dance ... No Changes	10 semester hours (1 unit)	<i>None specified</i>	1.0 unit (10 semester hours) P.E. or Dance shall be earned or an equivalent shall exempt the student from this requirement. Equivalents shall include: Citywide Marching Band, ROTC, DPS Athletics or Cheerleading. Athletic sports that are sanctioned by the Denver Public Schools' Board of Education and meet the criteria below may exempt a student from the physical education graduation requirement. No grade or credit will be given for athletic participation and such exemptions will not reduce the total number of hours required to earn a diploma. Both semesters	1.0 unit (10 semester hours) P.E. or Dance shall be earned or an equivalent shall exempt the student from this requirement. Equivalents shall include: Citywide Marching Band, ROTC, DPS Athletics or Cheerleading. Athletic sports that are sanctioned by the Denver Public Schools' Board of Education and meet the criteria below may exempt a student from the physical education graduation requirement. No grade or credit will be given for athletic participation and such exemptions will not reduce the total number of hours required to earn a diploma. Both semesters

			of the physical education requirement may be exempted by athletic participation. Criteria governing physical education exemptions: A. The student must maintain academic eligibility for the entire season. B. One full sport season is required to exempt a student from five units of P.E. C. A student must be a high school freshman, sophomore or junior to qualify for the exemption. Seniors who have not yet met the physical education requirement are not allowed to take this exemption and must enroll in a physical education course.	of the physical education requirement may be exempted by athletic participation. Criteria governing physical education exemptions: A. The student must maintain academic eligibility for the entire season. B. One full sport season is required to exempt a student from five units of P.E. C. A student must be a high school freshman, sophomore or junior to qualify for the exemption. Seniors who have not yet met the physical education requirement are not allowed to take this exemption and must enroll in a physical education course.
Electives...	<p>85 semester hours (8.5 units) Classroom-Based Instruction Within the 220 semester hours (22 units) required for graduation, 85 semester hours (8.5 units) are available for electives. An extensive elective program is offered in the core curriculum subjects. In addition, students may choose electives in art, business/marketing, consumer and family studies, foreign languages, industrial/technology, music, physical education/dance, or special offerings.</p> <p>Community-Based Experience Within the 220 semester hours (22 units) required for a diploma, a minimum of 190 semester hours (19 units) in classroom-based instruction. Students may,</p>	<i>None specified</i>	<p>5.0 units (50 semester hours) may include Academic Electives (See Attachment E for sample course of study, additional course options, and rationale.)</p>	<p>5.0 units (50 semester hours) may include Academic Electives (See Attachment E for sample course of study, additional course options, and rationale.)</p>

	<p>therefore, earn and apply a maximum of 30 semester hours (3 units) of community-based experience toward graduation requirements. These experiences may include, but are not limited to, field or service experiences, work experience, and internships. All experiences must be approved and supervised by a certified Denver Public Schools teacher.</p>			
--	--	--	--	--

Community–Based Experience

Within the 24 units (240 semester hours) required for a diploma, a minimum of 22 units shall be earned in classroom-based instruction. Students may, therefore, earn and apply a maximum of 2 units (20 semester hours) of community-based experience toward graduation requirements. These experiences may include, but are not limited to, field or service experiences, work experiences and internships.

At least four years (eight semesters) of attendance is required for students to complete grades 9, 10, 11 and 12 except:

- students with a 3.0 GPA who have completed all core curriculum/elective requirements, 24 units of credit and all required assessments may graduate in seven semesters.
- students with a 3.5 GPA who have completed all core curriculum/elective requirements, 24 units of credit and all required assessments may graduate in seven semesters.

Achieving Personal Excellence (APEX)

Students will be awarded an APEX diploma if they meet all of the requirements in one through five in the general course of study, earn 35 hours of elective credit, and meet the requirements to earn an Associate of Arts (AA), Associate of Science (AS), or Associate of Applied Science (AAS) degree from a community college.

Work Experience and Study Requirements

Twenty-four units of credit will be required in grades 9, 10, 11 and 12 and/or through the first semester after the student's twenty-first (21st) birthday, from courses approved by the school principal and determined by the staffing team. Transcripts will reflect differences in program content. The content areas and work study requirements are as listed below (number of units are stated as minimums):

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. Language Arts | 3.0 units |
| 2. Social Studies | 2.0 units |
| 3. Science | 1.0 unit |
| 4. Mathematics | 1.0 unit |
| 5. Physical Education/Dance, Citywide Marching Band, or ROTC | 1.0 unit (unless otherwise specified by IEP) |
| 6. Electives | 1.0 unit in vocations and/or transition classes |
| | 7.0 units (may include work experience) |
| 7. Work Experience and Study | 6.0 units of work experience earned in special deduction coordinated work experience |

Individualized Education Program (IEP)

The Individualized Education Program (IEP) will constitute the course of study or substitute for the curriculum/content standard approved by the Board of Education. In making determinations for earning a diploma, assessment instruments will be selected and administered so as to best ensure that when an assessment is administered to a student with impaired sensory, manual, or speaking skills, the test results accurately reflect the student's aptitude or achievement level rather than reflecting the student's impaired sensory, manual, or speaking skills.

1. Students with severe and profound disabling conditions that interfere with their ability to meet the requirements for either of the above courses of study and have satisfied the requirements of an IEP shall graduate with a high school diploma.
2. Students must attend school regularly in grades 9, 10, 11 and 12 and/or through the first semester after the student's twenty first (21st) birthday, as determined by the IEP.

Transfer Students

A transfer student from outside the Denver Public Schools must meet the requirements to receive a diploma from the Denver Public Schools. All graduation requirements must be met prior to graduation, including attendance in the Denver Public Schools for at least two semesters, with a minimum of 5 units of credit earned.

E.L.A. Students

Standards for English Language Learners are consistent with those expected for all other students. For Language Arts, ELA students will be supported with a "double-block" in order to scaffold support for students appropriately. Please, see the district's English Language Acquisition programming for other information related to the instructional experiences of our English Language Learners.

Certificate of Attendance

Students who attend school regularly but do not meet the course of study requirements in any of the three course of study areas may be awarded a Certificate of Attendance.