

# WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT THE NEW GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS



MESA 51 SCHOOL DISTRICT



## OVERVIEW

### **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.

In May 2013, a new state law was passed requiring school districts to meet or exceed new Colorado graduation guidelines starting with ninth graders in 2017-18. Using those guidelines, we are now able to create our own locally-developed graduation requirements. Using a state menu of college and career-ready demonstrations, we can create a list of options our students will use to demonstrate competency in four subjects that reflect Colorado standards and 21st century skills in order to graduate from high school.

It is never too early for students to begin conversations about life after high school. Students in middle and high school must think about their passions and interests and plan for their future. These new requirements will provide a road map to help students and their families plan for success after high school.

These requirements will mean changes for our students, our district, and our board of education. That is why we are asking for help from our schools, community, and local business leaders to help inform the revisions and help our students prepare for success in the 21st century.

This toolkit provides resources related to creating, communicating, and implementing these upcoming graduation requirement revisions. It follows years of work from the district on the initiative "Transforming into a 21st Century District."



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# PREPARING STUDENTS FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

## **Why do we need new graduation requirements?**

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

## **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.
- 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.

## **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 earn a passing grade.
- More than one-third of Colorado high school students take an Advanced Placement exam, often earning college credit.



## COLORADO BY THE NUMBERS

### Few jobs will require only a high school education.

Colorado ranks 48th in available jobs for high school graduates or dropouts.

### 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.

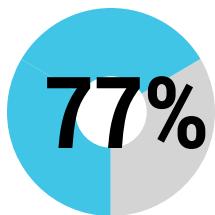
**Between 2010 and 2020, new Colorado jobs requiring post secondary education and training will grow by 716,000 – compared to only 268,000 new jobs for high school graduates who have no additional training.**

This means that jobs requiring additional training beyond high school are growing three times as fast as jobs requiring only a high school diploma.

**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.

Source: Georgetown University, Job Growth and Education Requirements, 2013



Three quarters of high school students graduate.  
(\*2014 graduation statistics, CDE)

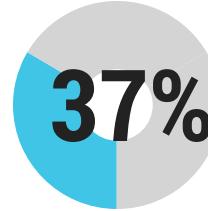


More than half of Mesa 51 graduates enroll in college (53.6%).  
(\*2013 Legislative Report on the Postsecondary Progress and Success of HS Graduates)



Combined cost to the state and students in 2012-13 for remedial courses was \$56.1 million.

(\*2013 Legislative Report on Remedial Education, CDHE)



More than one third of graduates need remedial classes in college.

(\*2013 Legislative Report on Remedial Education, CDHE)



# MENU OF COLLEGE AND CAREER-READY DEMONSTRATIONS

## GRADUATION REQUIREMENT CHANGES

A new state law requires school districts to meet or exceed new Colorado graduation guidelines starting with ninth graders in the 2017-18 school year. Using the state menu of college and career-ready demonstrations below we will begin to develop our own college graduation requirements. Following the new requirements, students will demonstrate competency in four subjects that reflect Colorado standards and 21st century skills in order to graduate from high school in one of four ways:

**Earn minimum scores  
on state and national  
tests**

**Complete challenging  
learning projects guided  
by a faculty mentor**

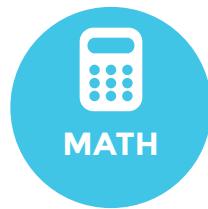
**Pass college-level  
courses taken during  
high school**

**Earn  
professional  
certifications**

### DEMONSTRATION



**ENGLISH**



**MATH**



**SCIENCE**



**SOCIAL  
STUDIES**

|                           |                |                |                |                |
|---------------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| ACT                       | ≥18            | ≥19            | TBD            | -              |
| AP                        | ≥3             | ≥3             | ≥3             | ≥3             |
| ASVAB                     | ≥50            | ≥50            | -              | -              |
| CMAS                      | -              | -              | TBD            | TBD            |
| Capstone Project          | Individualized | Individualized | Individualized | Individualized |
| College Course Completion | C-             | C-             | C-             | C-             |
| Industry Certificate      | Individualized | Individualized | Individualized | Individualized |
| IB                        | ≥3             | ≥3             | ≥3             | ≥3             |
| PARCC                     | ≥4             | ≥4             | -              | -              |
| SAT                       | 430            | 460            | -              | -              |



## HOW WE GOT HERE

The state's graduation guidelines have been in development since 2007. They reflect Colorado's updated expectations for students and education, 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.

### 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.

### 2012

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

### 2015

- State board of education will update the 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.

### 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.

### 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.



# ENABLING INNOVATION: PERFORMANCE BASED LEARNING

Next year, school districts across the state will begin to update their graduation requirements to reflect the realities facing graduates in the 21st century. The new graduation requirement framework will allow each district to define what competency looks like in their schools. This shift, coupled with the implementation of uniform standards and aligned assessments, will allow Mesa to implement new innovations that will help transform us into a 21st century district. We are excited to begin piloting Performance Based Learning initiatives at select school sites during the 2015-16 school year. Our hope is that we are able to uncover best practices that will allow us to begin to scale district wide in the near future.

## **What is Performance Based Learning?**

Performance Based Learning starts by defining the competencies required of our graduates. These competencies are statements describing what graduates should know and be able to do by the time they leave our schools. Performance Based Learning has also been described as competency based, proficiency based, or outcomes based.

Currently, we define “competency” largely by seat time and GPA – so if a student receives passing grades in their coursework, and come to school the minimum amount of days, they are allowed to move on to the next grade. This progression happens in a very regimented and predetermined way, kindergarten through twelfth grade. We see two main problems with this system:

- It holds back students who could be excelling
- It moves on students who haven’t mastered many grade-level concepts

Performance Based Learning on the other hand, is a little more like progressing through levels like a video game. Once you meet all the goals and overcome all the obstacles on one level, you are allowed to move on to the next – at your own pace. This approach focuses on what students actually know and can do with what they know, so parents and teachers can feel confident that they have a solid understanding of concepts they’ll need in future classes.



# ENABLING INNOVATION: PERFORMANCE BASED LEARNING

## What are the benefits?

Aside from those listed earlier, Performance Based Learning will:

- Minimize student boredom and frustration by allowing students to progress through curriculum at their own pace.
- Make education more innovative: Many promising education innovations work hand in hand with Performance Based Learning, such as blended learning and personalized instruction – ensuring each and every student is receiving the guidance and support they need, exactly when they need it.
- Encourage student ownership of learning: Currently, we use grade letters and GPA as means to incentivize students to do well in school. But for struggling students, tying performance in all subject areas into one overall pass-fail decision can cause them to withdraw. When students are allowed to excel in subjects they are good at, it builds their confidence in their abilities, and encourages them to take ownership of their learning, which makes their learning more relevant and memorable.

## What's next?

Colorado education department officials drafted recommended competencies that local districts could adopt or revise. They have been bringing teachers and leaders together to talk about the challenges and opportunities different districts are facing and to share best practices. Mesa 51 will finalize our graduation framework, and will begin to implement Performance Based Learning pilots throughout the district. Next year will be a year of big changes – but ones we are excited for and prepared to tackle!



# NEXT STEPS

Starting with ninth graders in fall 2017, our school district will begin implementing revised local high school graduation requirements that meet or exceed the Colorado Graduation Guidelines approved in May 2013 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. Below are the steps we will all be taking as we move closer to this implementation deadline.

## Phase 1: Review local high school graduation requirements

|          | 2015 Spring and Summer   | District | Schools | Community |
|----------|--|----------|---------|-----------|
| Underway | Implement Colorado Academic Standards—including embedded 21st Century Skills—for all students.   | ◆        | ◆       |           |
|          | Initiate Individual Career and Academic Plans (ICAP) for incoming ninth graders.   | ◆        | ◆       |           |
|          | 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.  | ◆        | ◆       |           |
|          | Determine district action steps and timeline.  | ◆        |         |           |
|          | Consider alignment for practices and policies.   | ◆        |         |           |
| To Do    | DISCUSS comparison of local high school graduation requirements to state guidelines, and Colorado menu of college and career-ready demonstrations. | ◆        | ◆       |           |
|          | ADOPT revisions in 2015-2016 to meet or exceed state guidelines, including a local menu for students to demonstrate college and career readiness.  | ◆        | ◆       |           |
|          | PREPARE to implement in 2017-18 with ninth graders.  | ◆        | ◆       | ◆         |
|          | ENGAGE with employers, community members, students, and parents to identify values and priorities for district graduation.                         | ◆        | ◆       | ◆         |



## NEXT STEPS

**Phase 2:** Local school board adopts revisions to meet or exceed state graduation guidelines  
Decide on menu of options for students to demonstrate college and career readiness

| To Do | 2015 - 2016   | District | Schools | Community |
|-------|---|----------|---------|-----------|
|       |   |          |         |           |
|       | CONSIDER state board of education's potential expansions to the Colorado menu of college and career ready demonstrations.   | ◆        | ◆       | ◆         |
|       | ENGAGE community and staff members in conversation about the skills students will need to be successful after they graduate.  | ◆        | ◆       | ◆         |
|       | 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 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.   | ◆        |         |           |
|       | PILOT Performance Based Learning Initiatives in select school sites (wider roll-out based on results).  | ◆        | ◆       |           |

**Phase 3:** Prepare to implement starting in 2017-2018 with ninth graders

| To Do | 2016 - 2017  | District | Schools | Community |
|-------|--|----------|---------|-----------|
|       |  |          |         |           |
|       | 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.   | ◆        | ◆       | ◆         |



## NEXT STEPS

**Phase 4:** Implement starting with ninth graders in 2017-2018

| 2017 - 2018 |  | District | Schools | Community |
|-------------|--|----------|---------|-----------|
| To Do       |  |          |         |           |
|             | 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 - 2020 |  |          |         |           |
| To Do       |  |          |         |           |
|             | 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 - 2021 |  |          |         |           |
| To Do       |  |          |         |           |
|             | IMPLEMENT revised local high school graduation requirements for all high school students, including a local menu for students to demonstrate college and career readiness.                       | ◆        | ◆       |           |
|             | GRADUATE first class to use revised high school graduation requirements.   | ◆        | ◆       | ◆         |