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.

GRADUATION GUIDELINES | FACT SHEET

Industry Certification

An industry certification is a credential recognized by business and industry at the local, state or national level. It could be an assessment, an examination or a license that is administered and recognized by an industry third-party or governing board. Industry certifications measure competency in an occupation, and they validate the knowledge base and skills that show mastery in a particular industry. Districts determine which certifications to authorize for students.

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

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C O L O R A D O
Department of Education

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WHY THIS OPTION

- **For the student**: Industry certifications allow students to demonstrate mastery of knowledge and/or skills. They can increase job prospects, marketability to employers and employability, as well as options for postsecondary education.
- **For districts**: Certifications provide additional options for students because districts can tailor graduation requirements to meet the unique needs of students and the local community. This opportunity promotes increased student engagement.
- **For employers/industry**: Industry certifications demonstrate evidence of competencies, thus supporting hiring practices and filling employers specific demand for knowledge, skills and abilities.
- **For Colorado/local community**: Industry certifications connect skill sets of the workforce to workforce demand. This intentional connection addresses the skills gap while increasing an individual’s earning potential.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

The unique needs and resources of each district will dictate the implementation of industry certifications as an approved component of a district’s graduation requirement.

1. **Assess the need**: Perform a high-level assessment of the need and capacity to implement certifications as a component of the district’s graduation requirement. Collaborate and coordinate among administration, faculty and staff, students and parents, as well as postsecondary and industry partners.
2. **Design an implementation plan**: Create a diverse oversight committee, establish a process framework and create a shared vision and purpose; then identify possible certifications, create a validation process, identify accountability metrics, create a communication plan, and create an internal staff training plan.
3. **Align industry certifications with current programs and consider partnerships with industry**: Explore connections with Career and Technical Education (CTE), concurrent enrollment, local business and industry, state agencies (including the Colorado Department of Labor and Employment and the Colorado Workforce Development Council), and sector partnerships.

COST

Costs for industry certifications and culminating exams vary by industry and by school. Depending on the agreement, students can earn postsecondary credits while in high school and work towards an industry certificate with little cost.

For examples of board policies, district plans, rubrics and examples of implementation strategies, visit www.cde.state.co.us/postsecondary/graduationguidelines.