



*Achieve with us.*

---

415 Michigan Avenue, NE- Washington, D.C. 20017  
202-636-2950- fax 202-636-2996- website: www.arcadc.net- email: ArcDC@arcadc.net

**Written Comments of Eileen Magan, Policy Specialist  
ATTN: Jesse B Rauch, DC State Board of Education  
RE: Proposed Revised Graduation Requirements  
January 23, 2013**

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written comments on the Proposed Revised Graduation requirements. My name is Eileen Magan. I am the Policy Specialist at The Arc of the District of Columbia, Inc. (The Arc of DC) and a District resident. The Arc of DC is celebrating its 63<sup>rd</sup> year of serving DC residents with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families through supports and advocacy. Our goal is to ensure that people with disabilities have the opportunity to live, learn, work, and spend their leisure time alongside their neighbors as valued members of the Washington, DC community.

Foremost, we commend the DC State Board of Education for recognizing that time in-seat is not an accurate measure of academic success, nor whether a student has acquired the skills they need to succeed. High standards and expectations to master relevant coursework are the foundation of a quality education, and we appreciate that these proposed graduation requirements focus on achieving specific skills that students can creatively and critically apply in the real world.

However, in order for DC to become a truly inclusive environment, these high standards and access to meaningful classes must be extended to students with disabilities as well. Too often, the required general education coursework is so prescriptive that it does not fit the post-secondary goals of students, especially those with disabilities. As a result, in the District of Columbia, many students have no option but to take less rigorous coursework, which disqualifies them from earning a diploma. The Arc of DC finds that students who exit high school with a certificate rather than a diploma are put at a significant disadvantage as they pursue post-secondary opportunities. Certificates are not recognized by federal student financial aid programs, colleges and many employers.

Therefore, we urge the DC State Board of Education to implement diploma requirements that don't dictate specific classes but allow students, especially students with disabilities, the flexibility to choose from a menu of higher-level courses in the subjects of English, Mathematics, Social Studies, Science and World Language. Higher-level courses should address a variety of post-secondary outcomes, such as post-school employment or technical training, not necessarily just the route of traditional post-secondary education. This will ensure that every student with a disability who is able to earn a high-school diploma will be afforded this opportunity in the most inclusive setting possible.

The Arc of DC looks forward to continuing to be active partners with the DC State Board of Education, working together to improve outcomes for youth with disabilities and their families. Please contact us if you have any questions about our comments or would like to discuss any item further.