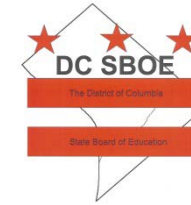




District of Columbia State Board of Education
DCSBOE



**Recommended Changes to the Graduation Requirements
A Strawman**

The purpose of this document is to provide a reflective on some of the comments submitted to the State Board of Education. In some cases, a recommendation was made based upon prevailing research and/or national trends, and in others, based upon feedback received.

	December 19, 2012 Proposal		February 13, 2013 Strawman	
Subject	Units	Notes	Units	
English	4.0	Maintains current unit requirement. The content covered should align with the Common Core State Standards.	4.0	Maintains proposed requirement. The content covered should align with the Common Core State Standards.
Mathematics	4.0	Maintains current unit requirement. At a minimum, students are to complete Algebra II or its equivalent. Students may earn credit for high school mathematics courses taken in middle school if their rigor can be verified. The content covered should align with the Common Core State Standards.	4.0	Alt 1: Retain current policy of Algebra II as highest expectation, whereas a student can take math up to Algebra II, but are not required to take a course above Algebra II. A student can graduate with Algebra I, Algebra II, Geometry and another math course that is not necessarily considered "above" Algebra II (statistics, modeling, or pre-calc). Alt. 2: Algebra II plus one advanced course beyond Algebra II. This may be considered for the Diploma of Distinction or another alternative pathway.
Science	4.0	Maintains current unit requirement. To satisfy this requirement, students must take Biology and two (2) other laboratory courses, which may include physics, chemistry or engineering.	4.0	Maintains current unit requirement. To satisfy this requirement, students must take Biology and two (2) other laboratory courses, which may include physics, chemistry or engineering or other standards-based lab science.
Social Studies	4.0	Maintains current unit requirement. To satisfy this requirement, students must take courses in: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• World history (1.0)• United States history (1.0)• Washington, DC history (0.5) The remaining 1.5 units may be selected from subjects such as:	4.0	Maintains proposed unit requirement. To satisfy this requirement, students must take courses in: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• World history (1.0)• United States history (1.0)• US government/civics (0.5)• Washington, DC history (0.5)

		government/civics, global studies, economics or financial literacy.		The remaining 1.0 unit may be selected from subjects such as: African-American history, global studies, economics or financial literacy.
World Language	2.0*	To satisfy this requirement, students must take two (2) years of the “same” language. Students may earn units for high school language courses taken in middle school, online or in study abroad programs, if their rigor can be verified.	2.0*	To satisfy this requirement, students must take two (2) consecutive years of the “same” language. Students may earn units for high school language courses taken in middle school, online or in study
Visual/Performing Arts	0.5*	Participation in dance, art, theater/drama, or other structured visual/performing arts courses may satisfy this requirement. Students may also earn credit for participating in courses, training, or performances outside of school, such as the youth ballet.	0.5*	Maintains proposed requirement.
Music	0.5*	Participation in chorus, band or orchestra programs may satisfy this requirement. Students may also earn credit for participating in courses, training, or performances outside of school, such as the DC Youth Orchestra.	0.5*	Maintains proposed requirement.
Music & Visual/Performing Arts Elective	1.0*	To satisfy this requirement, students may select from either music or visual/performing arts courses. Participation in dance, art, theater/drama, or other structured visual/performing arts courses, as well as chorus, band or orchestra programs may satisfy this requirement.	1.0	Maintains current requirement. Participation in the arts is known to lead to higher test scores and lowers the risk of truancy and dropping out.
Electives	3.5	This may include an established and verified study abroad program.	3.5	Maintains proposed requirement.
Physical and Health Education	2.5*	This requirement is consists of three (3) components: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Physical Education (2.0 units, +1.0) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Credit may be earned through a PE class, participation in a team sport or Junior ROTC. Participation in a team sport can satisfy up to 0.5 of the PE requirement. Health Education (0.5 units) Physical Activity (225 minutes per week) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students must engage in at least 225 minutes of physical activity each week (or 67.5 hours per semester, in alignment with the Healthy Schools Act). 	2.5*	This requirement is consists of three (3) components: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Physical Education (2.0 units) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Credit may be earned through a PE class only, unless otherwise specified by the LEA. Health Education (0.5 units) Physical Activity (225 minutes per week) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students are encouraged to engage in at least 225 minutes of physical activity each week (or 67.5 hours per semester, in alignment with the Healthy Schools Act). Physical activity may be earned through a PE class, participation in a team sport or Junior ROTC. Participation in a team sport can satisfy up to 0.5 of the physical activity requirement.
Community Service	100 hours	Maintains current requirement. Students must perform 100 hours of community service prior to graduation.	100 hours	Maintains proposed requirement.

College & Career Readiness		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> At least 2.0 units must be earned through courses that appear on the approved “College Level or Career Prep” list (AP, IB, CTE, and/or dual-enrollment college level courses). These units can be used to satisfy any of the requirements. Students must complete a Thesis / Culminating Project in their junior or senior year. It may be completed within a required or elective course or separately. 		
Diploma of Distinction				<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Recommendations to be determined. Students must complete a Thesis / Culminating Project in their junior or senior year. It may be completed within a required or elective course or separately.
Alternative Pathways				<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Further Recommendations to be determined. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Students with Disabilities Career Tracks (STEM, CTE, political affairs) <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Question: could students could supplement/supplant specific other requirements?
TOTAL UNITS REQUIRED	26.0	26.0 Units + 100 hours of community service + Physical Activity + Thesis / Culminating Project	26.0	
		<i>* Requirement may be met through demonstration of proficiency</i>		<i>* Requirement may be met through demonstration of proficiency</i>

Calendar of Events

- **Working Session** – February 13, 2013 @ 4:30pm – Discussion of Proposed Graduation Requirements & Rulemaking
- **Public Meeting** – February 20, 2013 @ 5:30pm
- **School Leaders' Roundtable** – February 27, 2013 @ 5:00pm
- **Working Session** – March 6, 2013 @ 4:30pm – Discussion of Proposed Graduation Requirements & Rulemaking
- **Working Session** – March 13, 2013 @ 5:00pm – Discussion of Proposed Graduation Requirements & Rulemaking (only if required)
- **Public Meeting** – March 20, 2013 @ 5:30pm – Proposed Graduation Requirements and Rulemaking – Vote (subject to change)
- **Working Session** – April 3, 2013 @ 5:00pm – Discussion of Proposed Graduation Requirements & Rulemaking
- **Public Meeting** – April 17, 2013 @ 5:30pm – Proposed Graduation Requirements and Rulemaking – Vote (if delayed)



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Graduation Requirements
Summarized Testimony
January 2013

College and Career Readiness

- **Charlotte Frazier, DCPS graduate**

Ms. Frazier also commends the SBOE for allowing dual-enrollment courses to count towards high school graduation.

- **Shelby Hill, Director, Bridges...from school to work, a Marriott Foundation Program**

Ms. Hill would like to see the Career planning section include topics on communication and public interaction.

- **Robert Holm, Director, On-Ramps to Careers**

Stronger bridges between the successful employers and professionals should be encouraged.

- **Roger Dubois Jackson, Jr. Music Director, Luke C. Moore Academy**

Mr. Jackson finds that the new requirements are a better fit for students who want to attend college.

- **Rachel Skerritt, Principal, Eastern Senior High School**

Ms. Skerritt likes the idea of 2 College and Career Readiness credits but thinks that the strict limitations around which courses fall into this category (AP, IB, or CTE) may hinder some students, particularly those with IEPs. She suggests this requirement be moved to a diploma of distinction.

- **Dr. Sean B. Yisrael, Principal, Roosevelt STAY High School**

Overall, the current graduation requirements are satisfactory for basic post-secondary plans. However, additional life skills classes should be included.

Dr. Yisrael does not believe an online course should be required.

Community Service

- **Norman Nixon, Jr., Beta Level Leader, Mayor's Youth Leadership Institute**
- **Shanta Bryant, Youth City Council Member, Mayor's Youth Leadership Institute**
- **Norman Nixon, Sr., Director, Mayor's Youth Leadership Institute**

The young leaders believe that attending community meetings should count towards the community service requirement, or at least for a portion of the total requirement.

- **Janel Young, DC Resident, (but Southern MD, HS School Counsellor)**

Ms. Young is also in favor of a community service requirement, but how asks it should be tracked.



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Competency & Flexibility

- **Robert Cane, Executive Director, Friends of Choice in Urban Schools**

Mr. Cane believes that while there is flexibility within the proposal, the increased credits may remove flexibility as students have to spend more time meeting the requirements.

Mr. Cane also believes that this “one-size-fits-all” document interferes with a school’s ability to be innovative in education.

- **Davis Kennedy, Publisher/Chris Kain, Managing Editor, The Northwest Current Newspaper**

The Northwest Current supports the flexibility contained within the graduation requirements that permit students to demonstrate mastery through orchestra, team sports, study abroad or online instruction.

The Northwest Current supports and shares concerns that the requirements are too loose and offer no guidance on what will qualify as proficiency.

- **Erich Martel, Retired DCPS HS Teacher**

Mr. Martel believes that competency-based systems are a red-herring for the following reasons:

- High school subjects or courses consist of content, information that must be learned to the point of mastery, as demonstrated on teacher or school system tests.
- The problem is not that students are forced to sit for two semesters in class when they could master the material in a few weeks or months, but it is because they are ready to learn and are forced to be in classes where student peer disruption wastes valuable learning time.
- A well-rounded high school education is what prepares students to succeed in gaining admission to college and then graduating, and not competency credits alone.
- “Competency-based system” means getting credit for courses by doing something other than meeting the specific requirements of a course.
- Most academic courses (English, math, history, government, science and health) already require written demonstration of mastery.

- **Jack McKay, DC, ANC 1D03**

Community outreach and public participation is required as we move towards a competency-based system – where the focus of a student’s education is on achieving specific skills that may be acquired through learning or performance outside the classroom.

Math

- **Collected Comments from:**

Jeff Cooper Managing Director & COO Cesar Chavez Public Charter School
Martha Cutts, Head of School, Washington Latin Public Charter School
Alexandra Pardo, Executive Director Thurgood Marshall Academy



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Susan Schaeffler, Founder & CEO KIPP DC

Math

The requirements should adopt the language of the Common Core Standards, establishing clear definitions of what should be included in an “Algebra I” course.

- **Melanie Duppins**

At least 3.0 math units should be at Algebra 1 or above (not all 4.0). This allows for students to take at least one semester and up to one year of skill-building remedial math if they enter high school behind.

Diploma of Distinction/ Multiple Pathways (see Special Education)

- **Isaac Cosby Hunt III Manager of Teaching & Learning, Center for Inspired Teaching Adjunct Professor, the University of the District of Columbia**

Mr. Hunt supports a diploma of distinction that includes completion of a quality senior thesis but is not mandatory for a standard diploma.

Mr. Hunt supports a longitudinal analysis of a graduating high school class.

- **Davis Kennedy, Publisher/Chris Kain, Managing Editor, The Northwest Current Newspaper**

The Northwest Current supports tiered diplomas.

- **Nathan Saunders, President, Washington Teachers’ Union**

Along with a strong implementation plan, to satisfy increased graduation requirements, additional academic and socio-emotional supports should be made available.

Further, thought should be given to students who have opted for a career or trade pathway.

- **Janel Young, DC Resident, (but Southern MD, HS School Counsellor)**

Ms. Young is in favor of a “Diploma of Distinction” as high achieving students should be recognized for their efforts. As a suggestion, minimum cumulative GPA of 3.5 or higher and all Honors, AP or IB courses in the core subjects should be considered as criteria.

Financial Literacy

- **Cynthia Cole, Candidate, MAT-Secondary Social Studies Program, University of the District of Columbia**

Financial literacy should be included as a graduation requirement for social studies.

- **Roger Dubois Jackson, Jr. Music Director, Luke C. Moore Academy**

Mr. Jackson supports inclusion of financial literacy.

- **Janel Young, DC Resident, (but Southern MD, HS School Counsellor)**



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Ms. Young would like to see Financial Literacy or Personal Finance become a graduation requirement for a 0.5 credit.

Music and Visual/Performing Arts

- **Collected Comments from:**
Jeff Cooper Managing Director & COO Ceasar Chavez Public Charter School
Martha Cutts, Head of School, Washington Latin Public Charter School
Alexandra Pardo, Executive Director Thurgood Marshall Academy
Susan Schaeffler, Founder & CEO KIPP DC

Visual & Performing Arts

The DCSBOE is urged to retain 1.0 credit for each Visual & Performing Arts and Music. This additional 1.0 credit would put a financial and an operational facilities strain on schools. In addition, increases in the art and music requirement would negatively impacts students' college admission as students who are electing to take rigorous AP courses in math, English, history, or sciences will be forced to take fewer of these courses in order to increase requirements in this area.

- **Roger Dubois Jackson, Jr. Music Director, Luke C. Moore Academy**

Further, the additional music requirements are beneficial as being a part of a performing group teaches to be organized, on time, committed, confident and a host of other skills that are needed to grow in the world in which we live in today.

- **Louise Kennelly, Executive Director of the DC Arts and Humanities Education Collaborative**

Ms. Kennelly supports the increase of art and music requirements for graduation and for awarding credit for proof of proficiency.

- **Ariana Paredes-Vincent, Student, School Without Walls**

Geography should be a high school requirement. Meanwhile, only 1.0 credit should be required for Visual/Performing Arts and Music.

- **SHAPPE**

As post-secondary institutions do not require two years of fine arts, they do not believe there is an academic rationale for it that cannot be met through the electives. More, schools may not be able to offer such a rich complement of courses; instead school "hubs" offering those classes can be considered.

- **Rachel Skerritt, Principal, Eastern Senior High School**

Shrinking school budgets and limited resources may make it hard to meet staffing requirements for increased music, art and PE requirements.

Physical Education & Health

- **Collected Comments from:**



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Jeff Cooper Managing Director & COO Ceasar Chavez Public Charter School
Martha Cutts, Head of School, Washington Latin Public Charter School
Alexandra Pardo, Executive Director Thurgood Marshall Academy
Susan Schaeffler, Founder & CEO KIPP DC

PE & Health

Tracking physical activity creates an undue burden on schools; schools should not be responsible for tracking students' physical activity as it will be done with little fidelity, schools do not have the resources to track hours, students lacking financial resources to participate in afterschool athletic activities may be at a disadvantage from financially abled peers who can take private dance, gymnastic, or karate lessons, students already meet this requirement in physical education classes or their daily school interactions.

It is recommended that the physical education and health education requirement remain at 1.5 credits instead of the proposed 2.0 credits. Further, sparse facilities for physical education at many charter high schools make increasing the requirements for PE a significant issue. Students would be better served by taking another class to build their college resume and exercising outside of school hours, than spending two more semesters in a PE class without proper facilities.

- **Shana Bartley**

Instead of 2.0 units of physical education, it should be reduced to 1.5 units, with another 1.0 units distributed to between health education and sexual education, for a total of 2.5 credits.

- **DeOjinae Bell, Youth Staff, Young Women's Project**

Instead of 2.0 units of physical education, it should be reduced to 1.5 units, with another 1.0 units distributed to between health education and sexual education, for a total of 2.5 credits.

- **Carly Braxton, Senior Manager of Government Relations, American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation, and Dance**

Ms. Braxton does not support allowing team sports to count towards the physical education units; it is unlikely that the standards would be supported.

- **La'Reshia Conner, Senior, Theodore Roosevelt SHS**

Ms. Conner supports the move from 1.5 to 2.0 units in PE, but recommends the extra 0.5 credit for health education, making it 1.0 credit for health. This would secure 0.5 credits for health and 0.5 credits for sex education.

- **Jay Cooper, Policy Director, DC Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy**

Mr. Cooper supports the proposed increase in Physical and Health Education graduation requirements from 1.5 credits to 2.0 credits and suggests that 0.5 credits be for health education and 0.5 credits be for sex education.

- **Rachele Delle Fratte, Student, School Without Walls**

Agrees with the increase to 2.0 credits of Physical and Health Education



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- **Margaux Delotte-Bennett, MSW, LGSW, P.O.W.E.R. Program Director, Prevention, Outreach, Wellness, Education & Risk Reduction & Sasha Bruce Youthwork, Inc.**

Instead of 2.0 units of physical education, it should be reduced to 1.5 units, with another 1.0 unit distributed to between health education and sexual education, for a total of 2.5 credits.

- **Charlotte Frazier, DCPS graduate**

Ms. Frazier believes that the prescribed physical activity requirements will be difficult to measure.

- **Sarah Gaudreau, Project Director, Female Condom Initiative**

Ms. Gaudreau supports the proposed increase in Physical and Health Education graduation requirements from 1.5 credits to 2.0 credits, but encourages increased sex education.

- **Julie A.F. Gibbons, MD Candidate, the George Washington University, School of Medicine and Health Sciences**

Ms. Gibbons recommends increasing the health education requirement from 0.5 to 2 units over a 4-year period, in line with the National Health Education Standards.

- **Nadia Gold-Moritz, Executive Director, Young Women's Project**

Instead of 2.0 units of physical education, it should be reduced to 1.0 unit. Consequently, health education and sexual education should receive 1.0 unit each. Also, Ms. Gold-Moritz urged the DCSBOE to devote 0.5 units to health education and 0.5 units to sexual education.

- **Sabrina Griffin, Youth Staff, Young Women's Project**

Instead of 2.0 units of physical education, it should be reduced to 1.5 units, with another 1.0 unit distributed to between health education and sexual education, for a total of 2.5 credits.

- **Kirsten Hawkins, MD, MPH, FAAP, Chief, Section of Adolescent Medicine, MedStar Georgetown University Hospital**

There should be an increase in required sex education.

- **Alyia Hicks, Student, School Without Walls**

For PE, 1.0 unit is enough to develop good exercising skills and habits. At the same time, reducing the required units for electives is advised as the electives offered do not interest many students. Increasing community service hours should also be considered.

- **Terrisha Jackson, Senior, School Without Walls**

After conducting a research project with her fellow students, she concluded that the health education requirement must be increased from 0.5 to 1.0 and include comprehensive sex education.

- **Ellese Melton, Bell Multicultural HS/Advanced Trainer, Young Women's Project (YWP) on the Peer Health and Sexuality Education Campaign.**



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Ms. Melton recommends an extra 0.5 credit for health education, making it 1.0 credit for health. This would secure 0.5 credits for health and 0.5 credits for sex education.

- **Kelly Nwogu, Senior, Wilson SHS/ Peer Educator, on the Peer Health and Sexuality Education (PHASE) Team, Young Women's Project (YWP)**

Ms. Nwogu recommends an extra 0.5 credit for health education, making it 1.0 credit for health. This would secure 0.5 credits for health and 0.5 credits for sex education. The classes should be taken in the 9th and 10th grades.

- **Daniel F. O'Neill, MBA, MD-MPH Candidate, the George Washington University, School of Medicine and Health Sciences**

Mr. O'Neill supports increasing the DC health education requirement for graduation from 0.5 to at least 2.0 units, as per the National Health Education Standards.

- **Ariana Paredes-Vincent, Student, School Without Walls**

Ms. Paredes-Vincent agrees with the inclusion of out-of-school physical activity requirements, but it seems to be difficult to measure.

- **Avery Ross, Youth Staff, Young Women's Project**

Instead of 2.0 units of physical education, it should be reduced to 1.5 units, with another 1.0 unit distributed to between health education and sexual education, for a total of 2.5 credits.

- **Eric Scarlett, Student, School Without Walls**

He supports the changes in the PE requirements to help expose students to physical activity and sports. He also supports additional college readiness courses should be taken. However, he does not support the thesis as it may be too difficult for some students and if its rigor is not enforced or there is no credit associated with it, students may not take it seriously.

- **Nancy L. Schoenfeld, Esq., Executive Director, American Academy of Pediatrics, District of Columbia Chapter**

The DC AAP believes the current recommendation to require D.C. high school students to complete only 0.5 Carnegie Units is insufficient and urges the State Board to raise the health education requirement from 0.5 units to the national standard of 2.0 units over a 4-year period, but at a minimum, no less than 1.0 unit over a 4-year period.

- **National Association for Sport and Physical Education**

There should be no substitutions, waivers or exemptions for physical education courses.

- **SHAPPE**

If participation in a team sport can satisfy 0.5 of PE Requirement, what are the criteria for participation and who will certify that the requirement has been met? What is the definition of physical activity? Who will verify that the requirement has been met?



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- **Kerry Sylvia, DCPS Teacher**

Ms. Sylvia believes that the physical activity requirement may not be implemented well. Also, she does not support the use of JROTC as a way to earn PE credits.

- **Richard Trogisch, Principal, School Without Walls**

Mr. Trogisch finds that the increased physical education requirement would be difficult to meet if they require additional gym time as they are unable to get additional time in the gym they share with George Washington University.

He asks how students can obtain or prove that students have 225 hours of physical activity.

- **Krishna K. Upadhy, MD, MPH, Chair, Adolescent Health Work Group of DC Chapter of American Academy of Pediatrics, Executive Committee Member, Chesapeake Chapter of Society for Adolescent Health and Medicine**

Ms. Upadhy supports increasing the DC health education requirement for graduation from 0.5 to at least 2.0 Units, as per the National Health Education Standards.

- **Briana Walden, Youth Staff, Young Women's Project**

Instead of 2.0 units of physical education, it should be reduced to 1.5 units, with another 1.0 units distributed to between health education and sexual education, for a total of 2.5 credits.

- **Janel Young, DC Resident, (but Southern MD, HS School Counsellor)**

Ms. Young wanted more information on the physical activity requirement, how will it be mandated, monitored and how those hours be recorded and verified.

Science

- **Toby M. Horn, PhD., Co-Director CASE, Carnegie Academy for Science Education, Carnegie Institute for Science**

Ms. Horn supports approval of the Next Generation Science Standards.

- **Ariel Trahan, Manager, Environmental Education Programs, Anacostia Water Shed Society, and President, C.C. Environmental Education Consortium.**

Ms. Trahan supports the Next Generation Science Standards and wants for an Environmental Literacy Plan.

Social Studies

- **Collected Comments from:**

Jeff Cooper Managing Director & COO Ceasar Chavez Public Charter School
Martha Cutts, Head of School, Washington Latin Public Charter School
Alexandra Pardo, Executive Director Thurgood Marshall Academy
Susan Schaeffler, Founder & CEO KIPP DC



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Social Studies [Note: these comments refer to a prior recommendation of the Board]

The DCSBOE is encouraged to retain 4.0 credits of social studies and not combine US history and US government into one course.

- **Brett M. Burnham, Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) Candidate, Center for Urban Education at UDC**

US Government needs to be restored to the graduation requirements.

- **Dianne Dunlap**

Ms. Dunlap does not believe that art and music should be added at the expense of courses that are in the area of Social Studies. She believes that US government should receive 1.0 units and civics should receive an additional 0.5 units.

- **Daniel C. Edelson, Ph.D., Vice President for Education, National Geographic Society**

Supports inclusion of four social studies/geography credits for graduation in the District of Columbia

- **Susan Griffin, Executive Director, National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS)**

Ms. Griffin supports inclusion of US government.

- **Madison Kantzer**

Ms. Kantzer supports the inclusion of US government as a required course.

- **Davis Kennedy, Publisher/Chris Kain, Managing Editor, The Northwest Current Newspaper**

The Northwest Current supports requiring US government.

- **Erich Martel**

DC History and US government should be required.

- **SHAPPE**

Since students lack knowledge about the world and world history, it is recommended that students have 4.0 credits of social studies. There are concerns about the elimination of US history as a requirement. SHAPPE asks how the recommendation will further the goal of integrating greater opportunities for global awareness in every school for every student.

- **Rachel Skerritt, Principal, Eastern Senior High School**

Ms. Skerritt recommends that US government be included as a mandatory social studies class.

- **Kerry Sylvia, DCPS Teacher**

US Government needs to be restored to the graduation requirements.

- **Richard Trogisch, Principal, School Without Walls**



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Students should be able to take World History I and AP World History to fulfill the social studies graduation requirement instead of a listed elective. Otherwise, it might disrupt what classes students take.

- **Dominique Watson**

African American history should be made a required course for graduation.

Special Education

- **Anne L. Abbott, Policy Analyst, DC Alliance of Youth Advocates**

More attention is needed on ensuring students across the academic spectrum are helped, not hindered, by the graduation requirements.

Ms. Abbott suggests that non-profit agencies offering other services are an untapped resource for providing non-academic supports.

- **Lindsey Anderson**

Ms. Anderson believes that students with disabilities should not be waived from requirements, but offered substitutes for higher-level courses. The number of required units should remain the same for all students, giving students options and alternative to satisfy requirements. Students with disabilities should also receive a diploma.

- **Carol A. Grigsby**

Ms. Grigsby supports the implementation of diploma requirements that don't dictate specific classes but allow students, especially students with disabilities, some level of flexibility so that they may receive a diploma instead of a certificate.

- **Jessica Den Houter, MSW LICSW, KIPP DC: College Preparatory**

Student with disabilities (Formal IEPs) should be allowed to have substitution options around courses, but number of units should remain the same. Even with these substitutions, the students should still receive a diploma.

- **Eileen Magan, Policy Specialist, The Arc of the District of Columbia**

Ms. Magan supports the implementation of 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.

- **Rossene Minard, Peer Specialist, Office of Consumer and Family Affairs, Department of Mental Health**



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Ms. Minard believes that students with disabilities should not be waived from requirements, but offered substitutes for higher-level courses. The number of required units should remain the same for all students, giving students options and alternative to satisfy requirements. Students with disabilities should also receive a diploma.

- **Zafra Stork, DC Resident**

Ms. Stork believes that students with disabilities should not be waived from requirements, but offered substitutes for higher-level courses. The number of required units should remain the same for all students, giving students options and alternative to satisfy requirements. Students with disabilities should also receive a diploma.

- **Marvin Tucker**

The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) do not reflect the needs of special education students as students with special needs will be unable to meet the CCSS in addition to the proposed graduation requirements.

Mr. Tucker believes that it is improper that charter schools do not accept neighborhood students.

- **Ms. Shawn R. Ullman, Staff Attorney, University Legal Services**

With the same rigorous requirements of all other students, but more flexibility in how they get there, students with disabilities should have the same opportunity as students without disabilities to graduate, further their education, and get a job.

Thesis

- **Collected Comments from:**
Jeff Cooper Managing Director & COO Ceasar Chavez Public Charter School
Martha Cutts, Head of School, Washington Latin Public Charter School
Alexandra Pardo, Executive Director Thurgood Marshall Academy
Susan Schaeffler, Founder & CEO KIPP DC

Thesis

While a state level thesis requirement has merit, the practical implications and implementation is of great concern. Unless OSSE defines what constitutes a thesis project and make it mandatory across LEAs, this requirement may do little for student achievement and college readiness. Without a state-wide definition a school may consider student writing a thesis for a do-now activity as meeting the requirement. Still, another LEA may require a 10-page thesis essay. The vast discrepancies and implementations make it impossible to include in state graduation requirements. For full fidelity, the assignment would not only need to be defined, but so would grade expectations and rubrics. Creating this level of policy gravely deviates from LEAs ability to instruct and implement instruction. Anything short of such strict implementation renders the requirement futile.



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Lastly, it is unclear how a school will be reviewed to ensure they are meeting whichever guidelines would be set. It is the understanding of our schools that English courses aligned to the Common Core Standards will naturally teach students how to write a thesis. If OSSE begins to legislate the outcomes of teaching under Common Core Standards then LEA instructional autonomy would cease.

- **Melanie Duppins**

The culminating college-level project should be allowed as an alternative to the IB/AP coursework requirement. Students could do both if they wanted to, but I think you should only require one or the other (at the students' discretion). If that can't happen, at minimum, I think you should drop the IB/AP requirement to 1 unit.

- **Charlotte Frazier, DCPS graduate**

Ms. Frazier opposes the return of a thesis requirement.

- **SHAPPE**

What is the definition of a thesis or culminating project, who will decide if the submission has met the criteria? Why is this which would normally be a standard or course requirement elevated to a separate graduation requirement?

- **Rachel Skerritt, Principal, Eastern Senior High School**

She supports a thesis/culminating project we want more information regarding the specific requirements.

- **Keisha Warner, M.Ed.**

The thesis requirement should be a component of the English requirement, instead of a standalone requirement. Instead of requiring additional classes, current offerings should be made more rigorous/high-quality to prepare students for their next academic step.

World Language

- **Claudia Bezaka**

Due to the different scheduling schemes that exist in schools, the course sequences must be uninterrupted. Language courses must be taken back to back with no gaps in order to develop proficiency.

- **SHAPPE**

Students may earn credit for languages taken in middle school, studies abroad or on line if rigor can be verified (We will need a clear and transparent process for verification).

- **Rachel Skerritt, Principal, Eastern Senior High School**

Ms. Skerritt supports 2 years of world language, but suggests that resource constraints may prevent a continuous 2 years of the same language.



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Overall Proposal

- **Monica Almond, YEP-DC**

Ms. Almond wants to ensure that the passing grades are correlated with content mastery.

- **Marty Davis, ANC Commissioner/Former Ellington Principal**

A media campaign about why the graduation requirements are important should be considered, to infuse value into a diploma.

The diploma should be packaged for consumption, and partnerships with large corporations should be considered. Mr. Davis had additional recommendations, such as:

- For athletics, time in season on a sports team counted as PE, exempt from PE class.
- Work with business, employers – what level of math do we actually need?
- Add critical thinking, creativity?
- Need to include sports consumer companies to see how we broaden to our middle schools.
- DC Scores.
- A career diploma/career track + internship (instead of thesis? But an academic paper?)
- A math conference – what do business leaders want? A general conference on how to better connect students to college/career?
- Some kids can double track/double major

- **Charlotte Frazier, DCPS graduate**

Increasing the number of credits required to graduate may hurt disadvantaged students as they have less access to out-of-school programs.

- **Kelly Givens (DCPS)**

Ms. Givens finds that the graduation requirements reflect what is needed for preparation for college, but on some of the other questions, wants to know more about the implementation of the new requirements and their impact on students. When the changes come about, will teachers get support they need to teach the new classes? Will the students have the needed supplies and supports they need to accomplish these new requirements?

- **Roger Dubois Jackson, Jr. Music Director, Luke C. Moore Academy**

Mr. Jackson finds that students have trouble mastering content in 4-week courses worth 0.5 units and suggests that they be longer.

Mr. Jackson believes that students should be offered a monetary reward and recognized for their efforts.

Mr. Jackson supports the online course requirement.

- **Eugenia Johnson, Concerned District Resident**



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Ms. Johnson believes that added security through the use of technology should be deployed to keep aware of student attendance in school.

- **David Pickens, Executive Director, DC School Reform Now**

Mr. Pickens commends the SBOE for engaging the public about the graduation requirements.

Time must be taken to make everyone aware of the new graduation requirements.

- **Ram Uppuluri, Sr. Policy Advisor, Friends of Choice in Urban Schools (FOCUS)**

Mr. Uppuluri shared that it is the position of FOCUS that the graduation requirements do not apply to public charter schools pursuant to the School Reform Act of 1995. Already, the Public Charter School Board (PCSB) has adopted the same core graduation requirements for charter schools that apply to District of Columbia Public Schools DCPS Schools (DCPS). Mr. Uppuluri stated that non-standard requirements, such as community service, a thesis, or additional hours in some areas, such as the arts, and health, should be left to the discretion of individual schools to afford maximum flexibility.

Mr. Uppuluri also shared that the proposal should be withheld until further consideration can be given to new emerging concepts in education reform, such as competency-based standards as opposed to seat-time standards, as a measure of student proficiency.



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Internal Conversations/Dialogue

Q: The rationale states that mathematical skills "helps people navigate the everyday world of saving, investing..."; however, financial literacy is listed as an elective under Social Studies. Why would financial literacy not be under mathematics if that's what the rationale states?

A: It is traditional for Financial Literacy to be considered more of an economics course, and therefore a social science instead of a math course. Right now, the Common Core State Standards for math do not include financial literacy concepts other than some basic concepts in elementary school and when it is used to teach other concepts in high school. A number of states are adding financial literacy since the Wall Street situation, so we could consider making it a requirement rather than an option. We just have limited credits and I am not sure what would go.

Q: The rationale refers to "existing research" supporting the inclusion of a course beyond Algebra II. Can someone please provide me this research?

A: The gist of the argument is that it students deeply master information when they have the opportunity to use it and let it gel. Students who take a course beyond Algebra II end up retaining their algebra II knowledge. However, they need not take pre-calculus. They can take a modeling or applications class, or statistics.

Q: The rationale notes that the CCSS which DC has adopted suggests only 3 years of mathematics, but the proposal continues to require 4.0 units. Why?

A: The Common Core lays out a vision for what students should know, rather than an established amount of time. The premise of a standards based system is that the objectives remain constant, while to meet the objectives is variable. So what is most important is that students master the content.

More, the Common Core sets the floor, not the ceiling, of what we want students to do. The fourth year of math is typically aligned with post-secondary college or career goals, and often focuses on applications to the real-world.

Science

Q: Clarification needed as to whether computer lab or computer programming courses would satisfy this requirement. The rationale states that the goal is to prepare students "for the new technology/innovation economy." Clarification would be helpful.

A: Unfortunately, computer science education has just not reached the tipping point to be emphasized in schools, despite how critical it is to the new economy. More, the infrastructure to support such a course or courses is limited. I recommend reading this article from TIME magazine (July 2012) very informative on the issue: <http://techland.time.com/2012/07/16/can-we-fix-computer-science-education-in-america/>. All in all, it may be worthwhile considering Computer Science as a way to meet the Math or Science requirements.

Social Studies

Q: The Board decided to keep a 4.0 unit requirement after originally proposing 3.0. Why is this?

A: Educators were very compelling - as is the data that US citizens know very little about our history.



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Q: We're requiring .5 units of "Washington, DC history". Of the 50 states and commonwealths and other US territories (Puerto Rico, Guam, American Samoa, etc.), how many require a history unit specific to that state, commonwealth, or territory?

A: From a cursory review, the following states require local/state history for high school graduation: Alaska, Arizona, Colorado, Iowa, Kansas, Maryland, Mississippi, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, Ohio, Oklahoma, Virginia, and Washington. Most of them are 0.5 credits, though some also merely require state history to be taught as part of another class, like US history.

World Languages

Q: Under the proposal, students can "earn units for high school language courses taken in middle school, online or in study abroad programs, if their rigor can be verified." What if a student grows up speaking two languages? Say, English and Spanish, for instance. Does the student get to 'test out' of Spanish and therefore take no foreign language course at any time?

A: Agreed that this is unclear. It must be clarified in the rules.

Music

Q: Does a music theory class qualify for a music unit? Or does only music performance count?

A: Our assumption is that yes, it would count. The idea is to allow music performance to count, but not restrict credit to only performance.

Q: What is the average combined music and arts requirement nationally? Is 2 units aligned with national trends and/or the CCSS?

A: Most states require 1.0 credit, or include art/music in their electives requirements (among art, music, world language, career/tech, etc.).

Electives

Q: Electives are being reduced to 3.5 units, about exactly 1 semester (a student will need to take 3.25 units per semester if they meet the minimum proposed 26 units). This would mean that if a student elects to earn their electives through an "established and verified study abroad program", the student will get no other elective courses outside of the 1 semester abroad. Is that the intent of the Board?

A: Students are not precluded from taking additional electives, but it should be noted that 0.5 credits would equate to a one-semester course. It would be really hard for a student to study abroad too often as study abroad programs may not permit a student to meet their other requirements. Effectively, students would be limited in how frequent they can go abroad. Anyways, right now, a student can take 7 electives over their high school career, in addition to the 4 art/music/visual arts courses.

Q: With only 3.5 elective units, a student will get to elect less than 1 class per semester over 4 years to meet the minimum requirements. Is that the intent of the Board?

A: The intent is to allow a lot of choice within the requirements. For example, within social studies there is choice, as with art and music. There will also be choice within mathematics assuming students meet the threshold of Algebra I or its equivalent. And of course, schools have flexibility to make curricular choices about HOW to address the standards.



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Physical and Health Education

Q: Can I get a list of all of the team sports for boys and girls available at each high school? I'm interested in if there are sufficient team sports available to satisfy requirements.

A: We do not have this available at this time.

Q: Do individual sports (shot put, diving/swimming, cross country) count as "team sports"?

A: Yes, they would be as you join the track and field teams, swim teams, etc.

Community Service

Q: I understand the 100 hours of community service. Does it make sense to require a certain minimum number of hours (say, 20 hours) per year to ensure that spring of senior year isn't a mad dash to fulfill all 100 hours?

A: It's up to the school and student to figure it out. We do want some flexibility.

College & Career Readiness

Q: Can I get a breakdown of the AP, IB, and CTE courses available at each DCPS high school? I want to ensure each school offers a sufficient number of courses for students to satisfy the proposed requirements.

A: We do not have this at this time.

Total Units Required

Q: How will the District fund an additional 8.3% increase in payments to public charter schools to fund the increase in graduation requirements?

A: Schools are funded on a per student basis. The Council would have to decide if the amount merited an increase. Both DCPS and charters would get the same per student amount.



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Conversation with Dan Gordon

Math

Q: Would students have to take a fourth math course ABOVE the level of Algebra II, or could a student graduate having taken Algebra I, Geometry, Algebra II and another math class that may not necessarily be beyond Algebra II?

A: Students would be required to take math up to Algebra II, not above Algebra II. A student can graduate with Algebra I, Algebra II, Geometry and another math course that is not necessarily considered "above" Algebra II. A student could take statistics or modeling and would not have to take pre-calculus.

Q: If the answer to #1 is that Algebra II can be the highest-level math course of a graduate, would students be able to count a course that was BELOW Algebra I as one of the four required courses?

A: No, students can only receive high school credit for Algebra I and above.

Science

Q: Is the list of lab courses ("which may include physics, chemistry or engineering") an illustrative or exhaustive list?

A: Illustrative. With examples of what's available, we could add more courses

Social Studies

Q: Is the list of Social Studies electives ("such as government/civics, global studies, economics or financial literacy") an illustrative or exhaustive list?

A: Illustrative.

World Language

Q: Regarding the asterisk that indicates World Language units could be "met through demonstration of proficiency," does the Board mean that a student (e.g., an ELL) could demonstrate fluency in a language other than English and then receive the required two units in World Language?

A: Can a native Spanish speaker could get credit for world languages by demonstrating fluency in Spanish? Under the current proposal, the answer would be yes, although that isn't really the spirit of the rule. Rulemaking will have to make this clearer.

PE/Health

Q: Does "Participation in a team sport can satisfy up to 0.5 of the PE requirement" mean that sports can account for a total of 0.5 of the 2.0 PE units? Or can sports count towards 0.5 of the PE units every sports season/semester/year/etc.?

A: I agree that this is not clear. Our initial intent is that a student can earn 0.5 units per season. This has gotten pushback, so there has been discussion of shifting to 0.5 total. What do you recommend?

Q: In the bullet about PE, the first sentence includes JROTC but the second sentence does not. Does that indicate some difference between how sports and JROTC would count? If so, what is that difference?



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A: There was no intention to suggest a difference, so that needs cleaning up. It was intended to be uniform for JROTC, sports and a PE class. (Credit should be given to Board Member Douglass for putting the JROTC forward.)

Q: Does the Board have a position about whether physical activity during a PE class (or sport or JROTC) could also count towards the physical activity requirement, or is this sort of double-counting not what the Board has in mind?

A: The idea was that students should be participating in physical activity throughout the school year, regardless of whether they are enrolled in a PE course. If they engage in physical activity that day, they should count it (whether or not it is in a course). If they are not doing physical activity on a given day/week they should not (again, whether or not they are in a course - as not all days of PE class involve activity as I understand it). That answer seems complicated! We need to make this simpler.

Miscellaneous

Q. On one hand, the draft removes "Carnegie" from "Carnegie Units," signaling that seat time no longer is required. But only some of the requirements have an asterisk indicating that they "may be met through demonstration of proficiency." Does the Board intend to retain seat hour requirements for the non-asterisked areas, or is the intent to create flexibility to begin competency-based approaches to awarding units in those areas as well?

A: I think this part deserves more work and I'd appreciate your input. I also want to talk to Rich Pohlman and Jennie Niles about this. Maybe we should have a small face to face on this issue?

The intent is to begin the transition towards a competency-based system. We are leading with the areas that seem most straightforward, and perhaps less controversial. However, when I spoke to Kaya and Peter about this last year, they encouraged us to push further. I am open to this - I just need a deeper understanding of what this looks like. The OSSE team is drafting regulations around this and exploring what other states have done to open up all credits to demonstrations of proficiency.