

What are the graduation guidelines?

As required by state statute (in section 22-2-106, C.R.S.), in May 2013, the Colorado State Board of Education adopted a comprehensive set of guidelines to be used by each school district's board of education in establishing requirements for students to receive a high school diploma. These guidelines call for students to demonstrate minimum academic competencies, demonstrate 21st century skills and successful completion of an Individual Career and Academic Plan (ICAP) by the time of high school graduation.

Who was involved in creating Colorado's graduation guidelines?

The Graduation Guidelines Council was originally convened in 2007 and then reconvened in June 2012. The council is comprised of 18 members; 12 K-12 representatives; three higher education representatives; and three workforce and community representatives who created the guidelines adopted by the State Board of Education.

How much flexibility do districts have in establishing graduation requirements for their students?

Each local school district's board of education has the authority to establish its own high school graduation requirements that meet or exceed the minimum expectations outlined in the graduation guidelines.

How were the targets in the graduation guidelines set?

The state's guidelines include minimum Colorado college and career ready determinations in English, math, science and social studies. Minimum scores on the Transitional Colorado Assessment Program (TCAP) were identified based on the minimum scores needed for a student to qualify as proficient on those assessments. TCAP scores are included as a guide to inform early adoption of graduation guidelines for district consideration. Minimum scores on other assessments were benchmarked on the minimum scores accepted by institutions of higher education for no need for remediation or for recognition of college credit and minimum scores for consideration of officer training in the military.

What happens if a student does not meet these targets?

It is anticipated that additional reflections of mastery will be added to the options for districts and schools to offer students. Local school districts have the authority to adapt demonstrations of competency to accommodate for the unique needs of students with disabilities.

Will charter schools need to adhere to the graduation guidelines?

Yes. Charter schools must meet the local graduation requirements of their authorizers unless they seek waivers of those requirements by their authorizers. If they seek a waiver of the local requirements, charter schools would still need to adopt graduation requirements that meet or exceed the state's guidelines.

What is the timeline for implementation?

During the 2013-14 academic year, local boards of education are encouraged to review the state board approved graduation guidelines and consider adopting local graduation requirements that meet or exceed them. The state's guidelines include minimum Colorado college and career ready determinations that districts *may* use as guideposts for the entering 9th graders of 2014 (set to graduate in 2018) and *must meet or exceed* for the entering sixth graders of 2014 (set to graduate in 2021). Adoption of graduation requirements by each school district's board of education during the 2014-15 academic year must indicate the minimum academic competencies needed for students to demonstrate postsecondary workforce readiness and the types of measure the district uses to determine attainment.

What about students that meet the requirements early?

Districts have flexibility to provide students with a longer or shorter time period in which a student meets or exceeds graduation requirements. Local school districts may permit students longer or shorter time to earn their diploma.

What resources will be provided to identify 21st century skill mastery and other competency measures?

CDE will engage with districts and key stakeholders to convene work groups to provide mastery recommendations for 21st century skills, ICAP, capstones, industry certificates and special populations (gifted and talented, students with disabilities and English language learners). It is anticipated that these groups will convene no later than fall 2013 to begin their work with recommendation resources provided by summer 2014. 21st century skills are also embedded in the Colorado Academic Standards.

What are next steps in connecting students and families to graduation guidelines?

Beginning with the graduating class of 2021, districts must provide information to students and their families no later than the 6th grade (2014-15) about the requirements for high school graduation and successful entry into college and careers. It is recommended that districts also share with each student their academic readiness for graduation beginning in elementary school. The ICAP is a tool that can be leveraged to assist with this communication and provide districts and schools a current resource to utilize.

How do graduation guidelines align with the Postsecondary and Workforce Readiness (PWR) endorsed diploma?

The PWR endorsed diploma is a voluntary option for schools to offer students beginning in the 2014-15 academic year. The PWR endorsed diploma is intended to signal to colleges and universities, the workforce and military that a student is ready for the next step after high school without need for remediation or significant retraining.

What else might be helpful to know?

Colorado's Graduation Guidelines will continue to evolve as new assessments and mastery criteria are identified. This will provide districts with increasingly flexible options to offer students as possible pathways. The Colorado State Board of Education will refine and update the Colorado college and career ready determinations over time. Additionally, the board of education and the Colorado Department of Education will annually provide indicators of college and career readiness in order to help parents, schools, districts and local board members prepare students for life after high school.

What research informed these graduation guidelines?

Research about other state high school graduation policies and participation in cross-state discussions on competency-based approaches informed our observations. More than 40 meetings with interested Colorado educators and constituents also occurred to solicit feedback and shape the development of a coherent recommendation about successful high school graduation.

With the help of Colorado Department of Higher Education, the Department of Defense and emerging wage data from the Colorado Department of Labor and Employment, the requirements for minimum college, military and career completion success are higher than many of our high school students can currently meet. Base academic entrance requirements are now almost indistinguishable among sectors, which requires math, literacy and critical thinking expertise. The armed forces have raised minimum academic cut scores for enlisted personnel on-track for preferred career jobs, which approximately correlate to an ACT of 17.

Current admissions requirements for students to enter a Colorado public college or university, ready to take a credit bearing course, are an ACT no lower than 18 for English, 19 for math, 470 on the SAT or a C- on a college course for credit.

How will implementation of the graduation guidelines be monitored?

Districts may be asked as part of their assurance statements to verify implementation of graduation guidelines by their local board and district. It is not anticipated that documentation beyond the assurances will be collected.

Where can I learn more?

- CDE Secondary Initiatives website: www.cde.state.co.us/SecondaryInitiatives/GraduationGuidelines.htm