



## Research Brief

### Graduation Requirements

**Question:** Should students graduate early or should the graduation requirements be changed?

**Summary of Findings:**

Since the publication of *A Nation at Risk* in 1983, where it was declared that schools were becoming "mediocre," most states began to require that prior to high school graduation, students must take more credits in core classes and/or pass competency tests. In a recent speech at the National Education Summit, Bill Gates stated that high schools are obsolete, "...even when they're working as designed-(the schools) cannot teach all our students what they need to know today" ( Let's first identify the problem). Senioritis is also a prevalent problem. Once seniors have been accepted into a college and/or have established their post graduation plans, this stretch in school can seem like a monumental waste of time to the students. According to NASSP in their April 2005 report, *What Counts: Defining and Improving High School Graduation Rates*, the goals of high schools should be to prepare students for the world after high school and doing what is in the best interests of students. In order to keep students in school and engaged, high schools throughout the country have tried various programs such as students taking courses in high school and college simultaneously, offering a myriad of advanced placement courses, graduating students when they have completed the required credits, and increasing the number of required credits to graduate. There is no definitive research recommending one type of program over another or the maximum number of units that students should take. There should be a "priority on student mastery rather than just completion of seat time ..." (What Counts: Defining and Improving High School Graduation Rates).

On the next page are two examples of different unit requirements that accommodate three and four year graduation programs.

Requirements 4 year College & Career Prep	Required Credits-24	Additional Information
English	4	
Math	3	1 credit Algebra 1 Series of courses equivalent to Algebra 1 or Higher-level math courses
Science	3	2 credits with labs
Social Studies	3	1 World History 1 American History 1/2 Economics



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		1/2 American Government
Practical/Performing Arts	1	
Health/Life Management	.5	
PE	1	
Foreign Language	0	2 are required for college entrance
Electives	8.5	

Requirements 3 year College & Career Prep	Required Credits-18	Additional Information
English	4	
Math	3	<u>College</u> Algebra 1 or higher <u>Career Prep</u> 1 credit Algebra 1 Series of courses equivalent to Algebra 1 or Higher-level math courses
Science	3	2 credits with labs
Social Studies	3	Any courses
Foreign Language	2	2 in the same language
Electives	3	

#### Online Resources:

- A Cure for Senioritis  
This is a very brief of review of the graduation requirements from 3 states. It also includes some ideas to help deal with senioritis.  
<http://www.kimberlyswygert.com/archives/002869.html>
- Graduation Requirements May Increase  
This is a synopsis of the proposal made to Missouri's State Board of Education to increase the required credits to graduate high school from 22 to 24.  
<http://springfield.news-leader.com/news/today/20050424-Graduationrequi.html>
- Learning to Earn: More stringent high school graduation requirements may reduce students' chances of earning a diploma. But higher standards also improve their ability to find a job  
A descriptive overview of the outcomes from the first wave of minimum competency exams.  
[http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\\_m0MJG/is\\_3\\_3/ai\\_104835537](http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m0MJG/is_3_3/ai_104835537)



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- Let's first identify the problem  
This article briefly describes issues facing schools, beginning with society not really knowing what they want from schools.  
<http://www.educationreportcard.com/columns/2005-04-24>
- More hysteria over early graduation in Florida  
This article has a variety of responses and perspectives about Florida's plan for early graduation.  
<http://www.kimberlyswygert.com/archives/001561.html>
- Reality of increased graduation requirements  
A brief descriptive article about the different types of diplomas that can be earned is given in this article.  
[http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\\_qa3696/is\\_200306/ai\\_n9287462](http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qa3696/is_200306/ai_n9287462)
- Tougher Requirements for Graduation Unlikely  
This article outlines the required courses high school students should take in Iowa in order to get into the state's 3 universities.  
<http://desmoinesregister.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20041206/NEWS02/412060361/1004>
- What Counts: Defining and Improving High School Graduation Rates  
Type in the title, then press Search. A PDF document.  
This is a full document on the recommendations that NASSP put forward in April 2005, regarding assessment of graduation rates, especially since the advent of NCLB.  
[http://www.nassp.org/s\\_nassp/index.asp](http://www.nassp.org/s_nassp/index.asp)

#### Schools & Districts

- Broward County Schools, Florida  
<http://www.browardschools.com/schools/grad.htm>
- Curriculum requirements for a South Carolina high school diploma  
<http://www.myscschools.com/BacktoSchool/gradreq.htm>
- ESA graduation requirements-Louisiana  
<http://www.esacadiana.com/Graduation%20Requirements.htm>
- Granada Hills Charter High School-California  
[http://www.granadahillshighschool.com/graduation\\_requirements.jsp](http://www.granadahillshighschool.com/graduation_requirements.jsp)



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- High School graduation requirements-Pennsylvania  
<http://www.myscschools.com/BacktoSchool/gradreq.htm>
- Lubbock High School, Texas  
Early graduation description  
[http://www.lubbockhigh.com/pages/westerner\\_ways/graduation.asp](http://www.lubbockhigh.com/pages/westerner_ways/graduation.asp)
- Mobile County High School Curriculum, Alabama  
[http://curriculum.mcpss.com/HS\\_Curr.htm](http://curriculum.mcpss.com/HS_Curr.htm)
- Salem High School, Indiana  
Example of the state's Core 40 program  
<http://www.salemschools.com/~shshome/shsinfo/core.htm>

Date: 5/9/05

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