

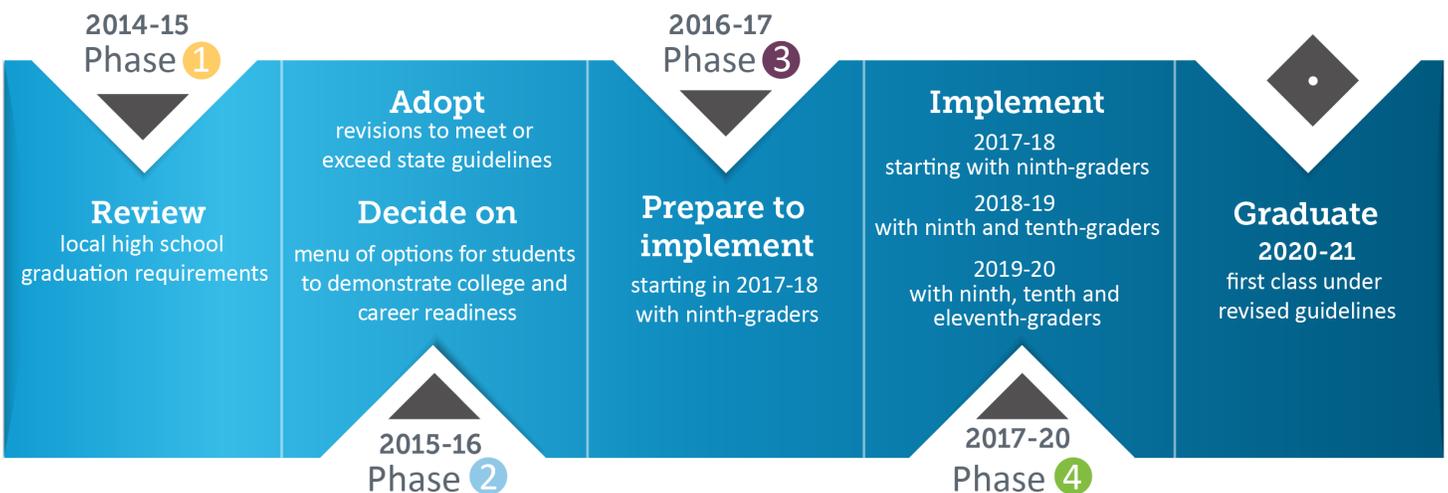
Graduation Guidelines Engagement Toolkit



To help school district administrators and local school boards begin engaging, planning for implementation and communicating about:

- Colorado Graduation Guidelines
- Menu of college and career-ready demonstrations

Colorado Graduation Guidelines



COLORADO
Department of Education

Overview

Colorado Graduation Guidelines mean changes for students, school districts, and local boards of education

Life beyond high school is different from what it used to be. Most jobs in Colorado now and in the future require training or education beyond high school. Students who graduate and work in Colorado will need in-demand skills that meet business, industry, and higher education standards.

Colorado Graduation Guidelines provide a road map to help students and their families plan for success after high school. Students in middle and high school must think about their passions and interests and plan for their future.

The guidelines have two purposes, the first is to articulate Colorado's shared beliefs about the value and meaning of a high school diploma. The second is to outline the minimum components, expectations, and responsibilities of local districts and the state to support students in attaining their high school diploma.

The guidelines mean changes for students, school districts and local boards of education. Ninth-graders in fall 2017 will be the first class to demonstrate competency—or show what they know—in English, math, science, and social studies in order to graduate from high school.

The state board of education adopted the guidelines in May 2013. The guidelines include a state menu of college and career-ready demonstrations. Local school boards and districts may select from this menu to create a list of options their students will use to demonstrate competency in four subjects that reflect Colorado standards and 21st century skills in order to graduate from high school.

Work groups of educators, parents and students statewide are continuing conversations to identify implementation recommendations, best practices, and tools and resources. The goal is to support school districts and school leaders in implementing career and college ready demonstrations such as capstone projects, 21st century skills, individual career and academic plans (ICAP), industry certificates, special populations, assessments, and concurrent enrollment.

Fundamental shifts in Colorado's high school graduation guidelines—and local policies and practices—are intended to ensure that all students are prepared for success in a globally competitive workforce:

Today

Carnegie Units and seat time
Fixed time and place

Tomorrow

Competencies and standards-based education
Flexible time and place



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Note—a detailed implementation toolkit will become available in **summer 2015**.

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How to use this toolkit

Who is this toolkit for?

This toolkit is designed for use by:

- Local school board members
- Superintendents
- School district administrators

Within graduation guidelines the roles of these stakeholders are:

- Local school board members: adopt local graduation requirement policies that meet or exceed Colorado's graduation guidelines.
- Superintendents and administrators: implement and align learning opportunities, instructional practices, professional development, and communications with locally adopted graduation requirements.

What is the purpose of this toolkit?

Superintendents have asked the Colorado Department of Education for resources to help district administrators and local school board members:

- Understand the Colorado Graduation Guidelines.
- Begin to implement changes in 2017-18 starting with ninth-graders.

This toolkit follows up years of work by the Graduation Guidelines Council. The state's graduation guidelines have been in policy since 2007.

They reflect Colorado's updated expectations for students and educators, and were informed by considerable input from stakeholders across the state:

- K-12 education representatives—local school board members, administrators, teachers and counselors
- Parents and students
- Business and community leaders
- Community college and higher education representatives
- Department of Labor and Employment experts
- Military personnel

The graduation guidelines also were informed by nearly 50 in-person stakeholder meetings across the state and in-depth conversations with nearly all of Colorado's 178 superintendents.

This draft toolkit:

- Assembles essential information.
- Recommends next steps for school districts.
- Offers resources to carry out next steps.



To-dos



At-a-glance timeline

Phase 1 to-do list

Phase 2 to-do list

Phase 3 to-do list

Phase 4 to-do list

Guiding questions for district leaders

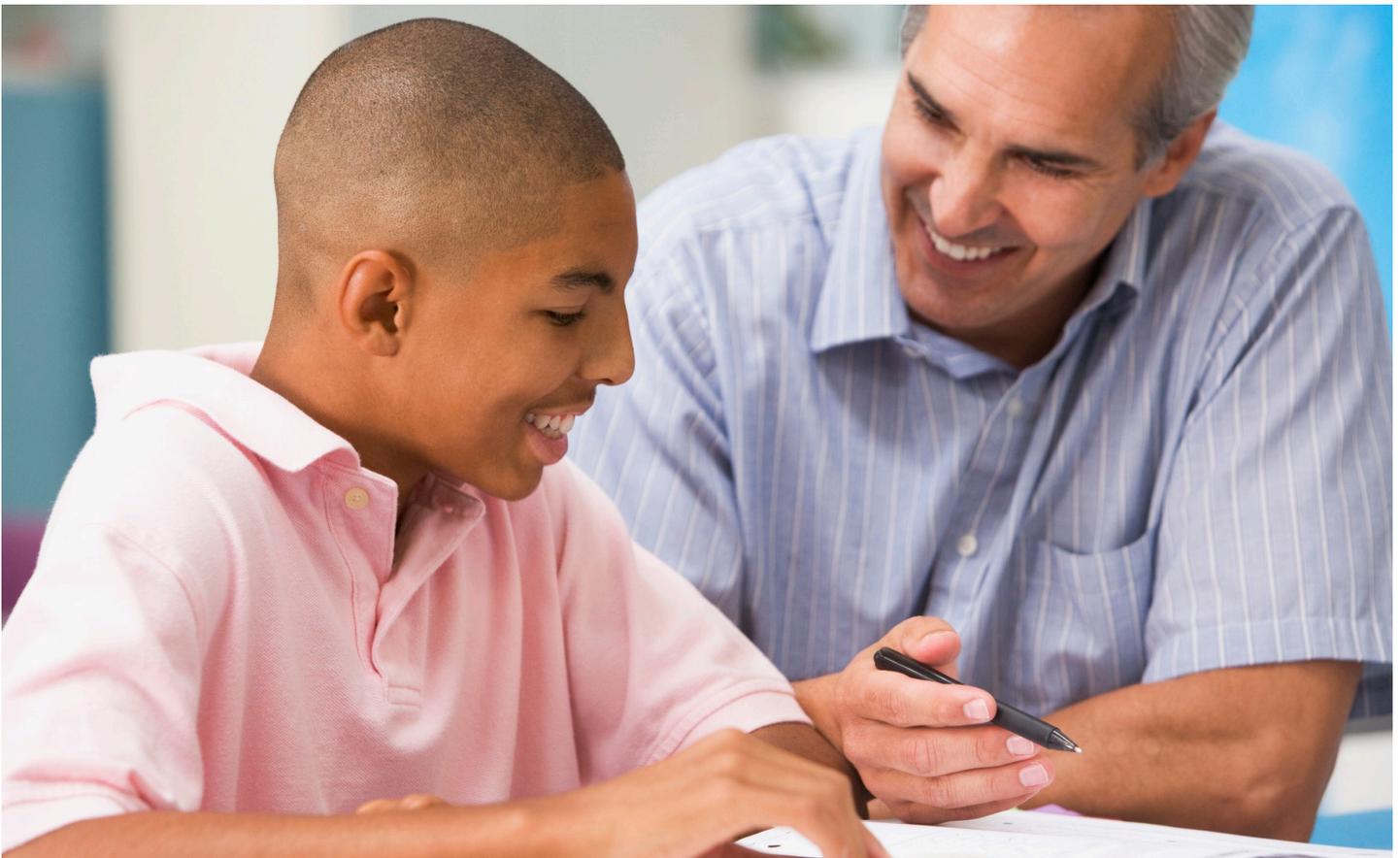
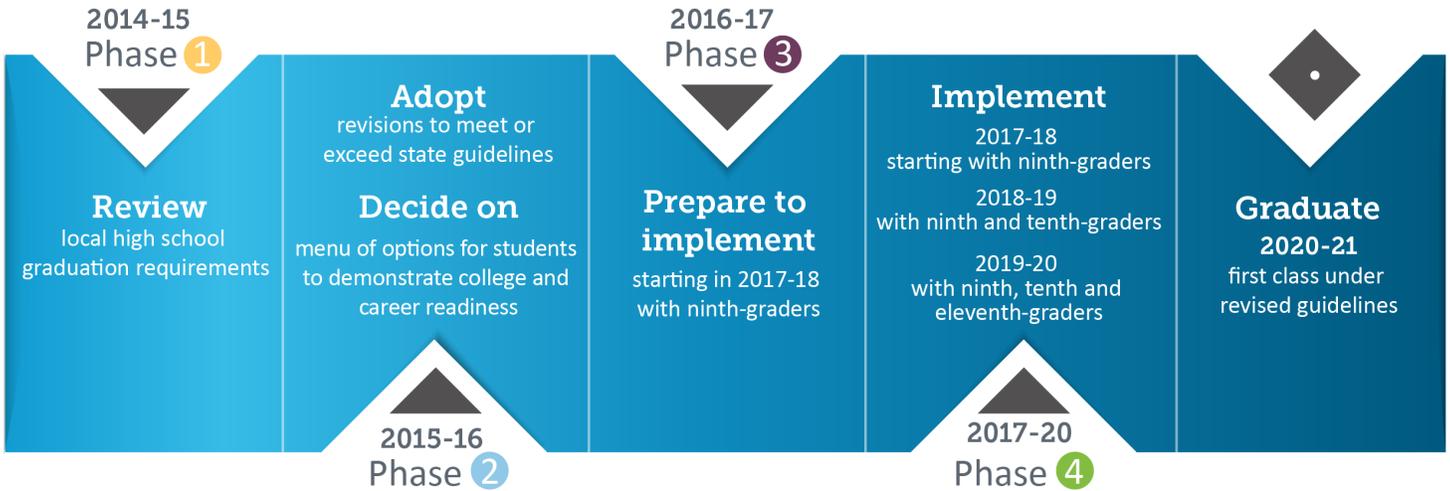
Local school board responsibilities

Sample local school board work session agenda to discuss Colorado Graduation Guidelines



At-a-glance timeline

Colorado Graduation Guidelines



Within three years—when 2014-15 sixth-graders start ninth-grade in fall 2017—Colorado school districts will begin implementing revised local high school graduation requirements that meet or exceed the Colorado Graduation Guidelines approved in May 2013 by the Colorado State Board of Education. This includes offering a list of options that students may use to demonstrate their readiness for college and careers in order to graduate from high school.



1

Phase 1 To-do list

2014-15:
Review
local high school graduation requirements

Under way:

- ✓ **IMPLEMENT** Colorado Academic Standards—including embedded 21st Century Skills—for all students.
- ✓ **INITIATE** Individual Career and Academic Plans (ICAP) for incoming ninth-graders.

Superintendents collaborate with district administrators to:

- REVIEW** Colorado Graduation Guidelines and Colorado menu of college and career-ready demonstrations.
- COMPARE** local high school graduation requirements to state guidelines.
- IDENTIFY** areas of alignment for practices and policies.

Superintendents collaborate with their school boards to:

- DISCUSS** comparison of local high school graduation requirements to state guidelines, and Colorado menu of college and career-ready demonstrations.
- CONSIDER** areas of alignment for practices and policies.
- DETERMINE** district action steps and timelines.
- ADOPT** revisions in 2015-16 to meet or exceed state guidelines, including a local menu for students to demonstrate college and career readiness.
- PREPARE** to implement starting in 2017-18 with ninth-graders.
- ENGAGE** with employers, community members, students, and parents to identify values and priorities for district graduation.

2

Phase 2 To-do list

2015-16:
Local school boards adopt
revisions to meet or exceed state graduation guidelines

Decide on
menu of options for students to demonstrate college and career readiness

Superintendents and local boards:

- CONSIDER** state board of education's potential expansions to the Colorado menu of college and career-ready demonstrations (*expected in summer 2015*).
- ENGAGE** community and staff members in conversations about the skills students will need to be successful after they graduate from high school.
- DECIDE** on a list of options students may use to demonstrate college and career readiness in order to graduate from high school.
- ADOPT** revisions to local high school graduation requirements to meet or exceed the Colorado Graduation Guidelines, including a local menu for students to demonstrate college and career readiness.
- COMMUNICATE** revisions and menu of college and career-ready demonstrations to students (*as early as sixth-grade*) and parents.
- CONNECT** with district charter schools about graduation guidelines adoption.



3

Phase 3 To-do list

2016-17:

Prepare

to implement starting in 2017-18 with ninth-graders

District administrators:

- PREPARE** to implement revised local high school graduation requirements starting in 2017-18—with ninth-graders—including a local menu for students to demonstrate college and career readiness.
- CONTINUE** to communicate revisions and menu of college and career-ready demonstrations to students (as early as sixth-grade) and parents.

4

Phase 4 To-do list

2017-18:

Implement

starting with ninth-graders

District administrators:

- IMPLEMENT** revised local high school graduation requirements starting with ninth-graders, including a local menu for students to demonstrate college and career readiness.
- CONTINUE** to communicate revisions and menu of college and career-ready demonstrations to students (*as early as sixth-grade*) and parents.

2018-19:

Implement

with ninth and tenth-graders



2019-20:

Implement

with ninth, tenth, and eleventh-graders

District administrators:

- CONTINUE** to phase in revised local high school graduation requirements with ninth, tenth, and eleventh-graders, including a local menu for students to demonstrate college and career readiness.
- CONTINUE** to communicate revisions and menu of college and career-ready demonstrations to students (as early as sixth-grade) and parents.
- ASSESS** implementation.
- ADJUST** if necessary.

2020-21: **Graduate** first class under revised graduation guidelines

District administrators:

- IMPLEMENT** revised local high school graduation requirements for all high school students, including menu for students to demonstrate college and career readiness.
- GRADUATE** first class to:
 - Use revised local high school graduation requirements.



Guiding questions for district leaders

Initial guiding questions

Suggested discussion participants:

- Local school board members
- Superintendent
- Cabinet (*e.g., directors of communications, curriculum, assessment, counseling, etc.*)
- Middle and high school principals
- Middle and high school counselors
- Teachers

- What requirements must our current students meet to earn a high school diploma from our district?
- How do our current local high school graduation requirements compare to the Colorado's graduation guidelines?
- Which of our current requirements meet or exceed the state guidelines?
- What additions do we need to meet the state guidelines?
- Which of our current requirements no longer are needed? What do we want to keep or eliminate?
- What processes do we have in place or should we consider options to bring community members, workforce, and higher education to discuss input for our diploma planning process.
- Using student achievement data, in what ways do students currently demonstrate their readiness for college and careers based on the Colorado menu of college and career-ready demonstrations?
- Are there other requirements beyond the state's guidelines that we should consider adding to our local high school graduation requirements (*e.g. world languages, music, art, health, etc.*)?
- How would we like to incorporate the state's civics requirement for high school?

Guiding questions for district leaders (continued)

Additional guiding questions

Learning opportunities

- How might learning opportunities for students be different with an emphasis on student competencies—showing what they know— vs. earning passing grades in high school?
- What options for students would we like to provide that currently are not available in our district?
- What changes and resources would we need to make to provide those options?

Instructional practices

- How might instructional practices be different with an emphasis on students mastering content vs. earning passing grades in high school?
- Do our current instructional practices support this change?
- What teaching methods might need to change?
- How might we include demonstrations of mastery earlier than 12th-grade to facilitate student transitions?

Professional development

- How will we develop a collective understanding of the emphasis on students mastering content vs. earning passing grades—the concept and rationale, benefits to students, etc.?
- What professional development is needed to help staff make necessary changes to instructional practices?

Communications

- What opportunities for discussion will we provide for our staff, community, students, and parents?
- How and when will we communicate approved changes to staff, community, students, and parents?

Local school board responsibilities

Within three years—when 2014-15 sixth-graders start ninth-grade in fall 2017—Colorado school districts will begin implementing revised local high school graduation requirements that meet or exceed the Colorado Graduation Guidelines approved in May 2013 by the Colorado State Board of Education. This includes offering a list of options that students may use to demonstrate their readiness for college and careers in order to graduate from high school.

Each local school board has the authority to establish local high school graduation requirements that meet or exceed the Colorado Graduation Guidelines.

Local high school graduation policies must:

- Complete student demonstrations of:
 - Completion of Individual Career and Academic Plans (ICAP)
 - Proficiency in 21st Century Skills (embedded in Colorado Academic Standards)
 - Academic proficiency in four subjects—English, math, science, and social studies—using options local school boards and districts select from the approved Colorado menu of college and career-ready demonstrations.
- Allow students multiple, equally rigorous and valued pathways to demonstrate competency of the knowledge and skills necessary for postsecondary education and meaningful careers.
- Align with:
 - Colorado Academic Standards adopted in 2009 (revised in 2010 to include Common Core State Standards in math and English/language arts)
 - Colorado Career and Technical Education Standards adopted in 2009
 - Colorado English Language Proficiency Standards adopted in 2009
 - Postsecondary and workforce readiness definition adopted in 2009
- Recognize and acknowledge the importance of education in world languages, comprehensive health, physical education, music, dance, performing arts, visual arts, and career and technical education in strengthening students' learning in other subjects and supporting their ability to succeed in the 21st century.

Local high school graduation policies may:

- Permit students longer or shorter time periods to earn their diploma.
- Address students with disabilities and flexibility within the district's policies for graduation.



Sample local school board work session agenda to discuss Colorado Graduation Guidelines

Suggested discussion participants:

- Local school board members
- Superintendent
- Cabinet (e.g., directors of communications, curriculum, assessment, counseling, etc.)
- Middle and high school principals
- Middle and high school counselors
- Teachers

Agenda

- Share history, concept, rationale, benefits to students, and implementation timeline for state graduation guidelines.
- Review current local high school graduation requirements.
- Discuss how current local high school graduation requirements compare to Colorado's graduation guidelines.
- Discuss what changes are necessary to meet the state guidelines.

Questions for local board members:

What else do you need to know?

What process will we follow for reviewing and adopting revised high school graduation requirements?

How will we engage the community and staff in conversations about the skills students need to be successful after they graduate from high school?

How will we engage parents and students in this process?

Who needs to be included in the conversation (e.g. parents, business community, community college representatives, etc.)?

What is our timeline for community involvement and adoption?

What are the key messages we want to communicate to staff, students, parents, and the community?

How will we engage workforce and higher education in this process?



Resources in this toolkit



Colorado menu of college and career-ready demonstrations

Data landscape

Colorado by the numbers

Background and history

Additional communications resources

Key messages and talking points

Drop-in article for students and families, staff, and community

PowerPoint presentation for community and staff conversations



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.



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Department of Education

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

Colorado menu of college and career-ready demonstrations

How to use this menu

School districts. Local school boards and districts may select from this menu to create a list of options their students will use to demonstrate competency—or show what they know—in four subjects that reflect Colorado standards and 21st century skills in order to graduate from high school. School districts may offer some or all of the state menu options, and at least one per subject area.

Students. Ninth-graders in fall 2017 will be the first class to select from their district’s list of options to demonstrate competency. Students could fulfill one or more of the following options any time during their high school career. They could:

- Earn minimum scores on state and national tests
- Complete rigorous learning projects guided by a faculty mentor
- Pass college-level courses taken during high school
- Earn professional certifications

Beginning in 2014-15 graduation guidelines implementation begins with:

- Individual Career and Academic Plan (ICAP)
- Colorado Academic Standards
- 21st Century Skills

DEMONSTRATION	MINIMUM SCORE REQUIRED			
	English	Math	Science	Social studies
ACT	18	19	TBD	–
AP	3	3	3	3
ASVAB (military entrance)	50	50	–	–
CMAS	–	–	TBD	TBD
Capstone project	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD
Concurrent enrollment	C-	C-	C-	C-
Industry certificate	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD
IB	3	3	3	3
PARCC	4	4	–	–
SAT	430	460	–	–

TBD =The Colorado Department of Education is working with district representatives to provide implementation guidance. And the state board of education will update the menu to fill in the gaps in the Summer of 2015.

NOTE: *Students with disabilities have flexibility to meet the guidelines as determined by district policy.*

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Colorado menu of college and career-ready demonstrations (continued)

About demonstrations in the menu

Earning minimum scores on state and national tests

- **ACT.** The ACT is a national college admissions exam. It measures four subjects—English, math, reading, and science. The highest possible score for each subject is 36.
- **AP.** Students can take college-level courses (Advanced Placement) in high school settings. AP exams are administered each year in May. They test students' ability to perform at a college level. Scores range from 1 to 5 (highest)
- **ASVAB.** The Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery is an annual test that students can take to determine their eligibility for careers in the military. Students who take the ASVAB are not required to enlist in the military.
- **CMAS.** The annual Colorado Measures of Academic Success measure students' progress toward meeting Colorado Academic Standards and 21st century skills in four subjects: English language arts, grades 3-11; math, grades 3-8, and algebra I, geometry, and algebra III; science, grades 5, 8, and 12; and social studies, grades 4, 7, and 12.
- **PARCC.** The Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers is part of CMAS and used only for English language arts and math. PARCC scores range from x to x—with x being the highest.
- **IB.** International Baccalaureate® exams assess students who are enrolled in the official IB Diploma Programme. Courses are offered only at authorized IB World Schools. Scores range from 1 to 7(highest).
- **SAT.** The SAT is a national college admissions exam. It measures five subjects—English, history, math, science, and languages. The highest possible score in both English and math is 800.

Completing rigorous learning projects guided by a faculty mentor

- In a culminating **Capstone project** students demonstrate their knowledge and skills related to a specific topic in the portfolio, a student exhibits individual effort, progress, and achievements over time—compared to a set of clearly defined outcomes.

Passing college-level courses taken during high school

- **Concurrent enrollment.** Students enroll in courses at community colleges, online colleges, technical, two-year colleges, or four-year colleges in Colorado while still attending high school. A passing grade counts toward both high school graduation and college credit. There is no tuition fee for high school students who pass college courses. Credits could help students get a start on earning an industry certificate, a two-year associate's degree or a four-year college degree.

Receiving professional certifications

- **Industry certificate.** Students who earn an Industry Certificate demonstrate a knowledge base and skills that show mastery in a particular industry. Students may take courses while still attending high school. Completion counts toward professional certifications such as auto mechanics, computer programming, construction management, nursing, welding, and much more. It also may count toward a two-year associate's degree or a four-year college degree.

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.



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Data landscape



Few jobs will require only a high school education. Colorado ranks 48th in available jobs for high school graduates or dropouts.



48th



Many jobs will require additional training beyond high school. Colorado ranks third in the proportion of 2020 jobs that will require a bachelor's degree.

3rd



Between 2010 and 2020, new Colorado jobs requiring postsecondary education and training will grow by 716,000—compared to only 268,000 new jobs for high school graduates who have no additional training. This means that jobs requiring additional training beyond high school are growing three times as fast as jobs requiring only a high school diploma.

716,000



In 2020, 74 percent of all jobs in Colorado—3 million jobs—will require education beyond high school.

- 26 percent will require a high school diploma or less.
- 32 percent will require some college, an associate's degree or certificate.
- 29 percent will require a bachelor's degree.
- 12 percent will require a master's degree or higher.

74%



Why Colorado Graduation Guidelines?

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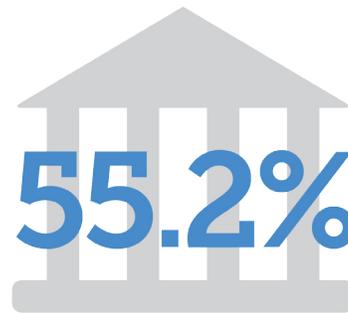
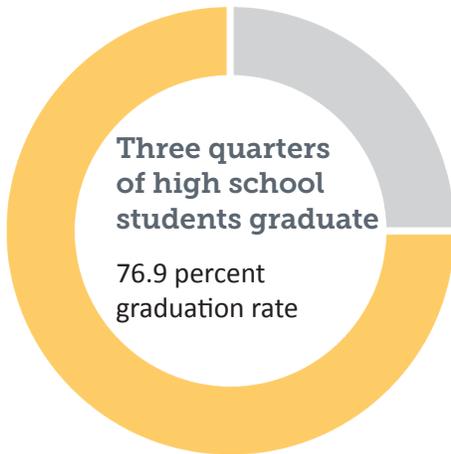


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Colorado by the numbers

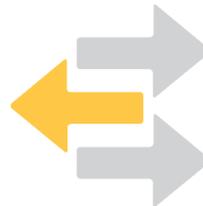
Current statistics



More than half of high school graduates enroll in college
(55.2 percent)

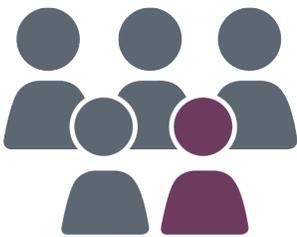


More than 10,664 students drop out of high school (2.5 percent)
\$3.8 billion lost lifetime earnings
Source: Alliance for Education Excellence



More than one-third of high school graduates need remedial classes in college
37 percent remediation rate

Promising Practices



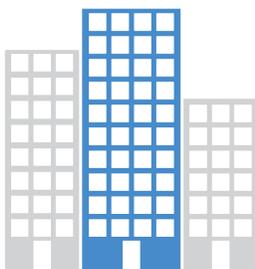
1 in 5 Colorado eleventh-graders and graduating seniors participate in dual enrollment, taking college courses in high school (22 percent)

NEW!
85 percent of students who are enrolled in dual enrollment classes enroll in college



Twenty-five percent of high school students take an Advanced Placement exam

36.1 percent earned a score of 3 or higher (on a 1-to-5 scale)



More than one-third of high school students participate in career and technical education courses (38 percent)

Why Colorado Graduation Guidelines?

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Background and history

The state's graduation guidelines have been in development since 2007.

They reflect Colorado's updated expectations for students and educators, and were informed by considerable input from stakeholders—a process that included nearly 50 in-person stakeholder meetings across the state and in-depth conversations with nearly all of Colorado's 178 superintendents. Here is who weighed in:

- K-12 education representatives, including rural and charter schools—local school board members, administrators, teachers, counselors, and parents
- Business and community leaders
- Community college and higher education representatives
- Department of Labor and Employment experts
- Military personnel

2007

- Legislature passes House Bill 07-1118 requiring the development of state high school graduation guidelines for school districts to meet or exceed.
- 18-member Graduation Guidelines Council forms to develop recommendations for the state board of education to consider.

2008

- Graduation Guidelines Council presents initial recommendation to state board of education.
- Legislature extends timeline to adopt revised state high school graduation guidelines to May 2013—allowing time for revised Colorado Academic Standards to be developed.
- Graduation Guidelines were reinforced and integrated into CAP4K policy.

2012

- A reconstituted Graduation Guidelines Council forms to build on initial recommendation of 2007 council.
- Forty-eight stakeholder meetings are held across the state to gather input.

2013

- State board of education adopts Colorado Graduation Guidelines proposed by the council, including the Colorado menu of college and career-ready demonstrations.
- Graduation guidelines work groups convene by topic area to begin a two-year statewide discussion of career and college-ready demonstrations.

2015

- State board of education will update the Colorado menu of college and career-ready demonstrations based on input from graduation guidelines work groups in order to complete the college and career-ready demonstration menu.

Key messages and talking points

How to use these messages

Consider selecting from these key messages and talking points—or the “in a nutshell” overview—to communicate about the state’s graduation guidelines during presentations, meetings, conversations, and in written materials. Select the messages that you think will resonate most with your audience. Consider customizing them with examples, stories, and compelling data specific to your staff and community.

In a nutshell

Life beyond high school is different from what it used to be. Most jobs in Colorado now and in the future require training or education beyond high school. There are fewer jobs for high school graduates now than at any other time in Colorado’s history. Students who graduate and work in Colorado will need in-demand skills that meet business, industry, and higher education standards.

Students in middle and high school must think about their passions and interests, and plan for their future.

The Colorado Graduation Guidelines are a road map to help students and their families plan for success after high school.

The goal of the graduation guidelines is to ensure that students don’t get left behind in Colorado’s changing economy.

The guidelines mean significant changes for students. Ninth-graders in fall 2017 will be the first class to demonstrate their readiness in English, math, science, and social studies through the graduation guidelines menu.

The Why?

Most jobs in Colorado will require additional training or education beyond high school.

- Jobs that require training beyond high school are growing three times as fast as jobs that require only a high school diploma.
- By 2020, three out of four jobs in Colorado will require education or training beyond high school. That adds up to 3 million jobs.
- Already, Colorado employers cannot find enough workers to fill jobs in some manufacturing, health, technology, and science-based industries. They say that students are not prepared to be successful in thousands of available jobs in our state.
- Additionally, nearly 40 percent of students entering college are unprepared for college-level work.

Few jobs in Colorado are open to high school graduates who have no additional training.

- Students with only a high school diploma will be qualified for just one in four jobs by 2020.

- Our state ranks in the bottom three nationwide for jobs open to dropouts—or high school graduates with no additional training or education.

Middle and high school is the time when students should start planning for life after high school—which may include jobs, military service, or college.

It is essential for students to talk with their families about their passions and interests, to think about their careers, and to understand the world of work.

Students may choose options in high school to learn skills they will need to succeed after graduation.

High school students might choose options, such as participating in an internship or apprenticeship, earning credentials that count toward a two-year associate’s degree or four-year bachelor’s degree, or taking college-level courses for credit.

The Colorado Graduation Guidelines are a road map to help students and their families plan for success after high school.

Early results are promising.

For example:

- More than one-third of Colorado high school students enroll in career and technical education courses that translate to real-world skills—and nearly 90 percent of those students get jobs in their field within one year.
- One in five 11th graders and graduating seniors in Colorado takes college courses in high school—at no cost if they earning a passing grade.
- More than one-third of Colorado high school students take an Advanced Placement exam, often earning college credit.



Key messages and talking points (continued)

The What?

Colorado is the last state to align graduation expectations for all students. Beginning in 2021, students must demonstrate competency—or show what they know—in four subjects that reflect Colorado standards and 21st century skills before they can graduate. Their school diploma will prove they are ready to enter work, military, or college.

Changes will begin within three years. Ninth-graders in fall 2017 will be the first class to demonstrate their readiness in English, math, science, and social studies through the graduation guidelines menu. They may select from a list of options to demonstrate competency. Students could fulfill one or more of these options any time during their high school career by:

- Earning minimum scores on state and national tests
- Completing rigorous learning projects guided by a faculty mentor
- Passing college-level courses taken during high school

The How?

Each local school board has the authority to establish local high school graduation requirements that meet or exceed the Colorado Graduation Guidelines.

Local school boards and districts:

- Have flexibility to align local graduation requirements by choosing options that work best for them.
- Choose from the Colorado menu of college and career-ready demonstrations to create a list of local options their students may use to demonstrate competency in four subjects that reflect Colorado standards and 21st century skills in order to graduate from high school. Districts may choose to offer some or all of the state menu options, and at least one per subject area.
- Have the opportunity to determine their own high school framework, including whether to offer students a flexible timeline to demonstrate competency and to graduate from high school.

- Earning professional certifications

Colorado's graduation guidelines reflect our state's rigorous expectations for students and educators.

- The state's graduation guidelines are a meaningful link to improvements that Colorado has already made to set clearer, higher expectations for students and educators.
- The goal is for students to graduate from high school prepared to be successful in school and in life, earning a living wage and contributing to Colorado's economy.
- Colorado is committed to educating students so they enter the workforce with in-demand skills that meet business, industry, and higher education standards.

Toolkit Resources

- Guiding questions for district leaders—page 8
- Local school board responsibilities—page 10
- Colorado menu of college and career-ready demonstrations—page 13-14
- Sample local school board work session agenda to discuss Colorado Graduation Guidelines—page 11
- Community and staff conversations—revising local high school graduation guidelines (starting on page 25)
- Consider using key messages and talking points, data, and background starting on page x in this toolkit—and customize with local data.
- Online resources listed on page 32

Additional phase 2 CDE resources to become available:

- The state board of education will complete the Colorado menu of college and career-ready demonstrations based on input from graduation guidelines work groups. The updated menu will become available in summer 2015.
- A detailed implementation toolkit will become available in summer 2015.
- Recommendations regarding assessments as well as postsecondary workforce readiness (PWR) endorsed diplomas will become available in fall 2015.



Drop-in articles

How to use these articles

These sample articles are intended to help school districts communicate about upcoming revisions to their high school graduation requirements so they are aligned with statewide guidelines. Consider customizing your articles with local examples. For ideas about data to customize according to your district—such as the percentage of students who already take college courses in high school—refer to the early results included in “the why?” section of the “key messages” resource in this toolkit (see page 18).

For students and families

High school graduation expectations are going to change

More than any other time in Colorado’s history, life beyond high school is different from what it used to be.

Middle and high school is the time for students to start planning for life after high school. Will it be in a yet-to-be discovered career, military service, or college? It’s essential for students to talk with their families about their passions and interests, to think about careers, and to understand the world of work.

Most jobs in our state require more than a high school diploma. By 2020—less than six years from now—three out of every four jobs will require education or training beyond high school. That adds up to 3 million jobs. Our graduates who want to work in Colorado will need in-demand skills that meet business, industry, and higher education standards.

That’s why the state and all Colorado school districts recently adopted new academic standards—clear, high expectations for what students should know and be able to do at every grade level.

A new state law now links academic standards to high school graduation. The goal is to ensure that all of our students can succeed after high school no matter which path they choose—jobs, military, or higher education.

We are working with our board of education to create a list of options that our students will be able use to demonstrate competency (or show what they know) in four subjects that reflect Colorado standards and 21st century skills—English, math, science and social studies—in order to graduate from high school. The changes will begin in three years—with ninth-graders in fall 2017.

Students would have the option to:

- Earn minimum scores on state and national tests
- Complete rigorous learning projects guided by a faculty mentor
- Pass college-level courses taken during high school
- Earn professional certifications

For example, high school students might choose to participate in an internship or apprenticeship, earn credentials that count toward a two-year associate’s degree or four-year bachelor’s degree, or take college-level courses for credit.

Already, more than one-third of Colorado high school students enroll in career and technical education courses that translate to real-world skills, and nearly 90 percent of those students get jobs in their field within one year. One in five 11th graders and graduating seniors in Colorado takes college courses in high school, at no cost if they earning a passing grade. And more than one-third of Colorado high school students take an Advanced Placement exam, often earning college credit.

We want the families to be involved as we discuss how to best prepare our students for their futures. We want to hear your voice. Watch for opportunities to participate in community conversations about our school district’s graduation guidelines.

If you would like more information, please contact: [insert information]

Sincerely,

[insert name]
Superintendent



Drop-in articles (Continued)

For staff

High school graduation expectations are going to change

As you know, Colorado has long held schools accountable for performance. Added to that is teacher and principal accountability with the new statewide educator evaluation system. The next step is student accountability.

That's because more than any other time in Colorado's history, life beyond high school is different from what it used to be.

Most jobs in our state require more than a high school diploma. By 2020—less than six years from now—three out of every four jobs will require education or training beyond high school. That adds up to 3 million jobs.

Our graduates who want to work in Colorado will need in-demand skills that meet business, industry, and higher education standards.

We already are making great strides by implementing Colorado Academic Standards—clear, high expectations for what students should know and be able to do. A new state law now links academic standards to high school graduation.

The goal is to ensure that all of our students can succeed after high school no matter which path they choose—jobs, military, or higher education.

To assist school districts in revising local graduation requirements, work groups of educators, parents, and students from across the state are developing implementation recommendations, best practices, and tools and resources. The work of these committees will support school districts with capstone projects, 21st Century Skills, Individual Career and Academic Plans (ICAP), industry certificates, special populations, assessments, and concurrent enrollment.

In our district, staff leadership is working with our board of education to create a list of options that our students will be able use to demonstrate competency (or show what they know) in four subjects that reflect Colorado standards and 21st century skills—English, math, science and social studies—in order to graduate from high school. The changes will begin in three years—with ninth-graders in fall 2017.

Students would have the option to:

- Earn minimum scores on state and national tests
- Complete rigorous learning projects guided by a faculty mentor
- Pass college-level courses taken during high school
- Earn professional certifications

For example, high school students might choose to participate in an internship or apprenticeship, earn credentials that count toward a two-year associate's degree or four-year bachelor's degree, or take college-level courses for credit.

As we begin the process of revising graduation requirements, it's critical that we hear your voice. There will be opportunities for you to join in community conversations. Watch for more information in the months ahead.

Sincerely,

[insert name]
Superintendent



Drop-in articles (Continued)

For community members

High school graduation expectations are going to change

More than any other time in Colorado's history, life beyond high school is different from what it used to be.

Most jobs in our state require more than a high school diploma. By 2020—less than six years from now—three out of every four jobs will require education or training beyond high school. That adds up to 3 million jobs. Our graduates who want to work in Colorado will need in-demand skills that meet business, industry, and higher education standards.

That's why the state and all Colorado school districts recently adopted new academic standards—clear, high expectations for what students should know and be able to do at every grade level.

A new state law now links academic standards to high school graduation. The goal is to ensure that all of our students can succeed after high school no matter which path they choose—jobs, military, or higher education.

The change in statewide graduation guidelines means that students must show what they know in four subjects that reflect Colorado standards and 21st century skills—English, math, science, and social studies—in order to graduate from high school. This change will begin in all Colorado school districts in three years—starting with ninth-graders in fall 2017.

We are working with our board of education to create a list of options that our students will be able use to show what they know in high school.

Students would have the option to:

- Earning minimum scores on state and national tests
- Completing rigorous learning projects guided by a faculty mentor
- Passing college-level courses taken during high school
- Receiving professional certifications

For example, high school students might choose to participate in an internship or apprenticeship, earn credentials that count toward a two-year associate's degree or four-year bachelor's degree, or take college-level courses for credit.

We want the community to be involved as we discuss how to best prepare our students for their futures. Watch for opportunities to participate in community conversations about our school district's graduation guidelines.

If you would like more information, please contact: [insert information]

Sincerely,

[insert name]
Superintendent



PowerPoint presentation for community and staff conversations

How to use this slide presentation

This template presentation is intended to help school districts provide an overview of Colorado Graduation Guidelines during community and staff conversations.

Presentation overview:

- Introduction
- The why?
- The what?
- The how?
- Next steps statewide
- Next steps for our school district
- Community discussion
- Wrap-up

Consider pairing the presentation with handouts on pages 14-17 of this toolkit:

- Colorado menu of college and career-ready demonstrations
- Data landscape
- Colorado by the numbers
- Background and history

Download the presentation:

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



Community and staff conversations



Introduction

About community engagement

Timeline for meeting planning

Sample invitation

Sample agenda

Sample meeting evaluation form

Sample thank you note



Introduction

Then. Many Colorado school districts hosted community conversations in recent years to discuss preparing students for postsecondary education and the workforce—when state law required districts to adopt revised Colorado Academic Standards and embedded 21st Century Skills in 2009.

The standards set fewer, clearer, and higher expectations for students, outlining the broad themes, ideas, and concepts students must master in 10 academic subjects to be successful in school and in life.

Now. State law requires school districts to meet or exceed the Colorado Graduation Guidelines starting with ninth-graders in 2017-18. It is a good time for follow-up conversations about your community's expectations for the skills students will need to be successful after they graduate from high school and the value of a high school diploma. These conversations will help inform revisions to local high school graduation requirements.

Participants could include staff, parents, students, community leaders—and representatives from higher education, business, service clubs, faith organizations, etc.



About community engagement

Community engagement is an approach to decision making that features:

- Dialogue
- Discovery of values
- Potential for common ground
- Ownership as a goal

Community engagement is not:

- Telling
- Selling
- Yelling

When? Community engagement is best used for:

- Questions that do not have a “yes” or “no” answer
- Problems that have no right or wrong solution
- Policy-level concerns

You should engage the community when:

- You are wrestling with a major issue
- A major policy change must be made
- Your decision will impact a large part of the community

Engage the community BEFORE the decision is made!

Who should you engage?

- School staff
- Students
- Parents
- Accountability committees
- Higher education
- Business community
- Service club members
- Community leaders

Source—Colorado Association of School Boards



Timeline for meeting planning

Here is a step-by-step list of what to do initially—and when—to help with your community conversations.

One month before meeting

- Select a time, date, and location for meeting.
- Determine who from the district will present information and who will facilitate.
- Develop agenda and handouts.
- Invite 15 to 20 community members and staff by email or phone.

Week before meeting

- Email a reminder notice and agenda to participants.
- Arrange for refreshments and meeting supplies, including audio/visual equipment.
- Make copies of the agenda and handouts (or surveys, evaluation forms, etc.).
- Print name tents or tags for participants.
- Print sign-up sheet.

Day of meeting

- Post a sign on front door welcoming participants and giving directions to room.
- Set up the room (tables and chairs, name tents, refreshments).
- Do an audio/visual check.

Day after meeting

- Debrief what worked and what needs to be tweaked.
- Send a thank you letter or email to those who attended.



Sample invitation

Please join us from **(time)** to **(time)** on **(day, date)** at **(location)** for a one-hour conversation about how to ensure that our high school graduates are prepared to enter college and the workforce.

State law requires school districts to meet or exceed the Colorado Graduation Guidelines starting with ninth-graders in 2017-18. It is a good time for more conversations about our community's expectations for the skills students will need to be successful after they graduate from high school.

We will discuss what knowledge and experiences are most important, what we are doing now to meet those objectives, and how we can enhance all students' educational opportunities.

These conversations also will help inform upcoming revisions to our high school graduation requirements. State law requires that when Colorado students enter ninth-grade starting in fall 2017, they must begin to demonstrate competency—or show what they know—in four subjects (English, math, science, and social studies) in order to graduate from high school.

Please let us know by **(date)** whether you will be able to attend. Call us at **(phone number)** or email us at **(address)** with your response or any questions.

Thanks in advance for your participation.

Sincerely,

Name
School Board President
School District Name

Name
Superintendent
School District Name



Sample agenda

Welcome and introductions

- Thank people for coming
- Ask people in room to introduce themselves
- Explain the purpose of this conversation
- Introduce “PowerPoint presentation for community and staff conversations” available on page 23 of this toolkit

Brief presentation on graduation guidelines, goal of conversation

- Show PPT

Group discussion

- Ask participants to complete a skills inventory worksheet
- Lead discussion on guiding questions, such as:

What skills do students in our community need to be successful in the 21st century?

What skills do our graduates need to be successful in the work place?

What skills do our graduates need to succeed in college?

How well are we preparing our students now?

What else should we be doing?

How will the community know that we are successfully preparing our graduates?

How can the community support the success of all students?

Wrap-up

- Thank participants
- Explain next steps
- Ask participants to complete an evaluation form



Sample meeting evaluation form

Thanks for attending today's conversation! We value your opinions.

Today's conversation about high school graduates was:

Very useful

Somewhat useful

Not useful

The best thing about the conversation was _____

One thing that could have been improved was _____

Questions I still have are _____

Other ideas I would like to share _____

Name (optional) _____



Sample thank you note

Thank you for taking the time to participate in our community conversation about successful high school graduates. It was an informative discussion and will help as we move forward to revise our high school graduation requirements.

We will keep you updated about future community conversations and the results of your feedback as the effort progresses.

Feel free to contact us if we can provide additional information. Thanks again!

Sincerely,

Name

School Board President

School District Name

Name

Superintendent

School District Name



Online resources

Online resources referenced in this toolkit

Colorado Department of Education

Colorado Academic Standards

www.cde.state.co.us/standardsandinstruction/coloradostandards

Graduation Guidelines

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

Postsecondary Readiness

www.cde.state.co.us/postsecondary

PowerPoint presentation for community and staff conversations

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

Colorado Association of School Boards

CASB

www.casb.org

Matching state Graduation Guidelines with your community's values PPT presentation

www.cde.state.co.us/sites/default/files/GraduationGuidelinesPresentation.pdf

Colorado Department of Labor & Employment

Community workforce data

www.colmgateway.com

Next Steps: Learn the Latest about Graduation Guidelines

Graduation Guidelines

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

See superintendent and principal tools or subscribe to CDE's Scoop newsletter

www.cde.state.co.us/communications

