



Oregon

Kate Brown, Governor



OREGON
DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION

Oregon achieves . . . together!

Colt Gill

Director of the Oregon Department of Education and
Deputy Superintendent of Public Instruction

SB 1572: High School Diploma Requirements
Senate Education Committee
Thursday, February 6, 2020

Chair Wagner and members of the Committee, I am Colt Gill, Director of the Oregon Department of Education (ODE) and Deputy Superintendent of Public Instruction. Thank you for the opportunity to submit information on Senate Bill (SB) 1572. My hope is that this information will provide clarity around what current graduation requirements are and possible outcomes of implementing SB 1572.

Before I begin, I want to express my commitment and that of the Department to work with the Legislature to address what I understand to be some of the underlying reasons for this legislation. The larger policy considerations the bill reflects, such as moving authority from the State to each individual school district to define graduation requirements, is a matter that the Legislature has the authority to decide. That is not the role of the Department. In your consideration and decision-making on this bill, it is nonetheless important that I convey up front a number of potential unintended impacts on students if the Legislature were to pass SB 1572 as written. These include:

- Without clear, statewide graduation requirements, a student in one district may face a separate and unique set expectations and requirements from a student in another district.
- If the diploma requirements look different in each district, it will impact the ability of post-secondary institutions and employers to interpret what an Oregon Diploma signifies in terms of knowledge and skills.
- Career Related Learning Experiences, while present as a component of CTE completer courses, would not be expected as an opportunity for all students. The rigor and expectations for student learning in mathematics would also be a matter for each school district to decide.
- Removing the Personalized Learning Education Plan and Profile requirements of all students, including historically underserved and underrepresented, are losing the opportunity to work with comprehensive School Counselors, educators, advisors and parents to collaboratively develop, document and review their educational and career goals and post high school transitions (i.e. college, workforce, military, apprenticeship, other).
- It is unclear how this bill would affect the transition and placement plans for students in Special Education as they align their IEPs with the Education Plan and Profile in determining placement in academic classrooms.
- Lastly, statewide irregularity in graduation requirements may impact Oregon's adherence to federal law under the Every Student Succeeds Act.

BACKGROUND

[ORS 329.451\(2\)\(a\)](#) provides the State Board of Education with the authority to establish high school graduation requirements and procedures. The State Board used this authority, with input from a wide variety of education partners and support from ODE, to establish the Essential Skills in [OAR 581-022-2115](#), three of which must meet established proficiency expectations [see sections 16(a-c)] as well as other graduation requirements [OAR 581-022-2000](#).

The requirements adopted by the State Board of Education were designed to better prepare each student for success in college, work, and citizenship. The State Board endeavored to ensure that Oregon's high school graduates are ready to compete in a global economy.

Throughout the decision making process, the State Board reached out to stakeholders for feedback and suggestions. Educators, school board members, students, parents, business leaders, community members - all had the opportunity to weigh in and provide feedback on the Board's multi-month decision making process. Over 300 school and community meetings were held around the state to discuss the requirements and over 7000 Oregonians completed surveys or provided written feedback on the changes. All of this feedback was instrumental in the Board's final decisions.

Diploma: ORS 329.451 gives the State Board authority to establish requirements and sets some basic unit of credit requirements. Specifically, students must meet all requirements established by the State Board and complete:

- Twenty-four total credits;
- Three credits of mathematics; and
- Four credits of English.

Under the authority of ORS 329.451, the State Board has set requirements for the diploma [in OAR 581-022-2000](#). Requirements include:

- Unit of credit requirements that are in excess of those required by the statute (581-022-2000(6));
- Students must demonstrate proficiency in the Essential Skills adopted by the State Board as provided in OAR 581-022-2150 (581-022-2000(7)); and
- Students must develop an education plan and profile (581-022-2000(9));
- Students must build a collection of evidence to demonstrate extended application (581-022-2000(10));
- Students must participate in career-related learning experiences (581-022-2000(11)); and

- Students must complete twelve years of school except where otherwise allowed (581-022-2000(15)).

Modified Diploma: The statute defines some parameters for who is eligible to earn the modified diploma and then gives the State Board authority to establish the requirements for a modified diploma. The State Board has adopted requirements for the modified diploma in OAR 581-022-2010.

Extended Diploma: Requirements for the extended diploma are set in statute and the State Board does not have authority to add additional requirements.

Alternative Certificate: Requirements for the alternative certificate are to be established by the board of each school district or public charter school.

SB 1572 ANALYSIS

(1) SB 1572 removes the State Board’s authority to set requirements for the diploma, sets all diploma requirements in statute, and reduces diploma requirements to units of credit and changes current credit requirements.

Under SB 1572 students would earn a diploma solely by satisfying unit of credit requirements. The unit of credit requirements in the bill are almost but not quite identical to the current diploma rule. The current rule requires more than the proposed legislation in the following areas:

- Math – Both the rule and the bill require three credits of math. However, the rule further specifies that those three credits must be Algebra I or higher;
- English – Both the rule and the LC require four credits of English. However, the rule requires that at least one of those credits include the equivalent of one unit of Written Composition; and
- Social Sciences – The bill requires three credits of history, geography, economics, or civics. The rule requires three credits of history, geography, economics, and civics and specifies that economics includes personal finance.

There are other places where essential skills are located in Oregon Administrative Rule:

- Meeting the Essential Skills for reading and writing in English is one way for a student to earn the State Seal of Biliteracy. (OAR 581-021-0584).
- Districts may grant credit to a student if the student demonstrates defined levels of proficiency or mastery of recognized standards (e.g., state academic content standards and Essential Skills, industry-based or other national or international standards) (OAR 581-022-2025).

(2) The proposed bill directs the State Board to adopt recommendations for additional requirements that could be imposed by districts. By removing the authority for setting diploma requirements from the State Board of Education, and allowing for more discretion by districts, it becomes more difficult to ensure that the diploma standard meets minimum requirements for federal law. The current legislation may not a per se be in violation of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), it puts Oregon at greater risk for running afoul of ESSA requirements. This is a new requirement for the State Board.

(3) The proposed bill directs the State Board to develop recommendations for a process whereby a district or charter school could award a diploma to a person who has completed high school but was not awarded a diploma because the person failed to satisfy a requirement that is no longer in effect. If a district chose to implement the State Board’s recommendation, some former students would be eligible to get their diploma. For example, a student who finished high school but did not demonstrate proficiency in the Essential Skills could be awarded a diploma under this provision. This is a new requirement for the State Board.

(4) The proposed bill removes rulemaking authority of the State Board with respect to 329.451(2)(d) governing waivers for students in certain circumstances.

(5) The proposed bill repeals language requiring accommodations for students using work samples to demonstrate proficiency in the Essential Skills. Because the bill removes the authority of the State Board to require students to demonstrate proficiency in the Essential Skills in order to earn the diploma, the language requiring accommodations is no longer needed in order to obtain a diploma. However, Essential Skills still exist in rule for other purposes (see above).

IMPLEMENTATION DISCUSSION

- The current language will allow districts to independently set their graduation requirements. The bill directs the State Board to develop recommendations for graduation requirements that are beyond those listed in statute. However, a district is not required to implement these recommendations. This creates a lack of standardization that would lead to a barrier for students who enter a new district and have been following a separate and unique set of requirements from another district. If the State Board and ODE’s ability to provide regulatory guidance on regular, modified, and/or extended diplomas is removed there will be an impact on students with disabilities, mobile youth, and families who transition between districts. Statewide irregularity in graduation requirements will adversely impact mobile students and will impact the statewide currency/consistent rigor of the Oregon Diploma. If the diploma requirements look different in each district it will impact the ability of post-secondary institution’s and employer’s ability to interpret what an Oregon Diploma signifies in terms of skills and knowledge.

- Statewide irregularity in graduation requirements may impact Oregon’s adherence to ESSA regulations.
- By removing the Personalized Learning Education Plan and Profile requirements all students, including historically underserved and underrepresented, are losing the opportunity to work with comprehensive School Counselors, educators, advisors and parents to collaboratively develop, document and review their educational and career goals and post high school transitions (i.e. college, workforce, military, apprenticeship, other). Essential to this work is the students’ awareness and exploration of their personal and career interests as it connects to their coursework planning, academic placement and postsecondary plans (career, college, community engagement).
- Removing the Extended Application would remove the requirement for students to apply and extend their knowledge beyond the classroom to personal and career interests and post high school goals. This rich diploma requirement is designed to ensure that a student has experience with deeper learning relevant to their interests. Removing this requirement would reduce the rigor and relevance of the diploma and these are two critical factors for keeping students engaged in school.
- Career Related Learning Experiences, while present as a component of CTE completer courses, would not be expected as an opportunity for all students. The removal of this requirement means that students outside the parameters of CTE coursework would not reliably have the opportunity to engage in work based learning. Removing this requirement would reduce the rigor and relevance of the diploma and these are two critical factors for keeping students engaged in school.
- The State Board meets almost every month so they are able to be responsive to needs to clarify requirements or guidance. If the only authority to establish requirements around graduation, both in terms of the graduation requirements themselves and how they are implemented and administered, exists with the legislature the cycles for policy changes are not responsive enough for the dynamic nature of educating a diverse student population across 197 districts.
- It is unclear how this bill would affect the transition and placement plans for students in Special Education as they align their IEPs with the Education Plan and Profile in determining placement in academic classrooms.
- The current Oregon Diploma Requirements were set in 2007 with the goal that *each student demonstrates the knowledge and skills necessary to transition successfully to his or her next*

steps: advanced learning, work and citizenship. The State Board spent several month in the process to develop the requirements, they held over 300 school and community meetings were held around the state to discuss the requirements and over 7000 Oregonians completed surveys or provided written feedback on the changes. Since 2007, the graduation requirements were implemented in a scaffolded approach that brought on new requirements for each incoming class over several years. The State Board has also updated the graduation requirements periodically over the last 12 years based on district and student needs and in response to legislation. This [State Board Oregon Diploma Decision Paper](#) outlines the Board's many considerations and aims and should be a valuable resource as the Legislature considers changing the current requirements.

- On May 30, 2019 I received a letter from Senator Hass, Senator Roblan, and Representative Smith Warner (attached). This letter request that I convene a group of stakeholders to review OAR 581-022-2115 to address concerns around the Essential Skills requirement for graduation, specifically to address issues around students' accessibility to alternative assessments. I responded to the letter (attached) and agreed to undertake this convening. Neither correspondence set a date for such action. Subsequent to this request, the Legislature passed the Student Success Act (SSA) and Governor Brown signed the Act into law. My attention and efforts have necessarily been focused on the implementation of the SSA over the months since its passage. I do intend to follow-through on the Legislator's request as soon as my time can be shifted from the initial implementation stages of the SSA. In the meantime, students are provided access to multiple alternative assessments (along with many allowable accommodations and modifications) to demonstrate mastery of the essential skills:
 - The Oregon Summative Assessment (Smarter Balanced)
 - The ACT
 - The SAT
 - ACT Aspire
 - Accuplacer
 - Asset
 - Compass
 - GED
 - IB Exams
 - Plan
 - AP Exams
 - The PSAT
 - ACT Workkeys
 - Local District Work Samples

I welcome your questions and will strive to answer them in a timely manner. Oregon's Diploma requirements are consequential to our students, their future, and the future of the state. My hope is to provide you with all the information you need to make a thoughtful decision.