



Community-Informed Recommendations for Equitable Graduation Outcomes

Report on SB 744 to the Senate Education Committee
Oregon Department of Education
September 22, 2022

Senate Bill 744 Topics We Will Discuss

1. Background & Purpose
2. Engagement
3. Review/Study
4. Determinations
5. Recommendations
6. Next Steps

*“K-12 education needs to be transformative, preparing children to become cooperative members of their communities.”
— Oregon Resident*

Look for engagement process quotations throughout the presentation!

Purpose of the SB 744 Report

This report is shared in response to the requirements set forth in [SB 744 \(2021\)](#).

(5)(a) Not later than September 1, 2022, the department shall provide a report to: (A) The interim committees of the Legislative Assembly related to education; and (B) The State Board of Education.

- This report includes information from extensive and diverse engagement, a study, an analysis, and a set of determinations and recommendations all called for in the bill.
- This is not a request for rule changes or a legislative concept. ODE will await any further direction from the Legislature, the State Board of Education, and/or the Governor before taking action on any portion of these recommendations.



Important Clarifications

Academic knowledge and skills remain required to receive a diploma in Oregon. Oregon retains stringent requirements for teaching and assessment of reading, writing, math and all other content areas within high school courses, high school credit requirements are not changed.

Oregon's high school graduation credit requirements are among the most demanding in the country; at present, no state requires more credits to graduate
(Education Commission of the States, 2019).

Families and educators shared that their children and students experience inequitable outcomes because they have had inequitable access to high quality instructional programming across their entire public education experience.

Background

1. Most recent changes to high school diploma requirements were from 2008-2013
2. Senate Bill 744 passed in 2021
3. Historic opportunity to engage diverse community members on diploma policy development
4. Process designed to be equitable, accessible, inclusive, and transformative.
5. SB 744 called for ODE to develop two specific determinations and generate recommendations

“I believe that all students can reach the graduation requirements. The question should be do these requirements seem meaningful to all students.”

— Oregon Administrator

Equity is the effort to provide different levels of support based on an individual's or group's needs and strengths in order to achieve fairness in outcomes.

1. Oregon is stronger because of its incredible diversity.
2. Not all people, or all communities, are starting from the same place. We need to make sure communities most impacted by inequities have access to resources, power, and opportunity.
3. Our work toward equity isn't zero sum, meaning that increasing access to student or group of students does not mean restricting access for others - equity benefits everyone.
4. Our goal is to make sure every student has equitable opportunities to succeed in school and has access to accurate, comprehensive, and relevant curriculum and instruction.

Named Diploma Requirement Inequities

*“I believe it is critical that Oregon continues to wrestle with the reality that traditional high school does not work for a significant number of students. **The core issue is how can we build accountability for outcomes, but flexibility in how those outcomes are obtained?** The significant percentage of students whose lives are impacted by trauma or poverty or homelessness will struggle disproportionately with an inflexible educational model.”*

— Oregon Superintendent

1. Experiences of systemic bias, including **limited access to adequate educational resources and educational guidance**, and support from practitioners, such as school counselors and teachers.
2. Disparities in the methods students use to **demonstrate proficiency** in the reading, writing, and math in relation to the Assessment of Essential Skills requirements lead to use of **time-intensive methods** by disadvantaged students that may result in reduced course and classroom learning opportunities.
3. Disparities in **award rates** of Oregon modified diplomas and in the **postsecondary enrollment and employment rates** for students who are awarded these diplomas.



Engagement Process & Results

3,500

diverse students, community members, families, educators, and representatives of higher education and workforce and industry

- 56% identified as belonging to a community or group that has been historically marginalized
- 33% identified as parents or guardians of Oregon high school graduates;
- 22% identified as working in or having worked in an Oregon school;
- 18% identified as being a parent of a student who will be in high school in the next few years; and
- 11% identified as either current or recent high school graduates.



Themes Raised by Community Members

Value of multiple pathways

Inequities in educational outcomes are caused by many factors beyond high school diploma requirements

Recognition of students' individual strengths, different learning styles, and the variety of environments that students are in

Culturally appropriate supports

Math, reading, and writing as core to learning (and math as a barrier)

Desire to further explore credit requirements and how proficiency in the above subjects is assessed

Desire to explore if multiple diploma options is serving students well, particularly for students with disabilities

Additional skills and knowledge needed after high school

Skills Valued by Community Members

1. Foundational skills
2. Financial literacy
3. Life skills
4. Languages and language arts
5. Careers and trades
6. Employability skills and miscellaneous

*“All students should receive a good foundation in the basics to the best of their capabilities, but **the most important part of attending high school is to discover inspiration to pursue what interests them.**”*

— Oregon Resident

Workforce and Industry Valued Skills



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1. Work ethic
2. Professionalism
3. Communication skills
4. Life skills
5. Collaboration

“Critical thinking demonstration; collaboration; work ethic; time management; anti-racist, anti-hate, diverse, multicultural ways to see all people in the world, empathy and self-awareness.”

— Oregon Workforce Representative

Higher Education Valued Skills

1. Critical thinking and information literacy
2. Knowledge and skills in traditional/basic academic subjects
3. Communication skills
4. Career-related learning skills
5. Life skills

“[High School] should involve more diverse writing experience, not just exposition. Math and basic literacy are emphasized to such a degree that much of what inspires students to excellence is being squeezed out of the high school experience. In my opinion we need less emphasis on final assessments and accountability criteria, and more emphasis on creating a climate that motivates exploration and self development.” — Oregon Postsecondary Professor

Educator Feedback



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1. A relevant, attainable, and meaningful single Oregon diploma
2. Ensuring that students understand and have a voice in the diploma decision-making process
3. Careful planning and implementation of multiple pathways to a single diploma
4. Educator concerns about a single diploma

“Knowing what a student can do with their diploma would be . . . powerful, especially if they are required to do some kind of career pathway. If a student knew what those pathways would allow them to do in their future, [it] would be even more powerful.”

— Oregon Administrator



Review

Review Process

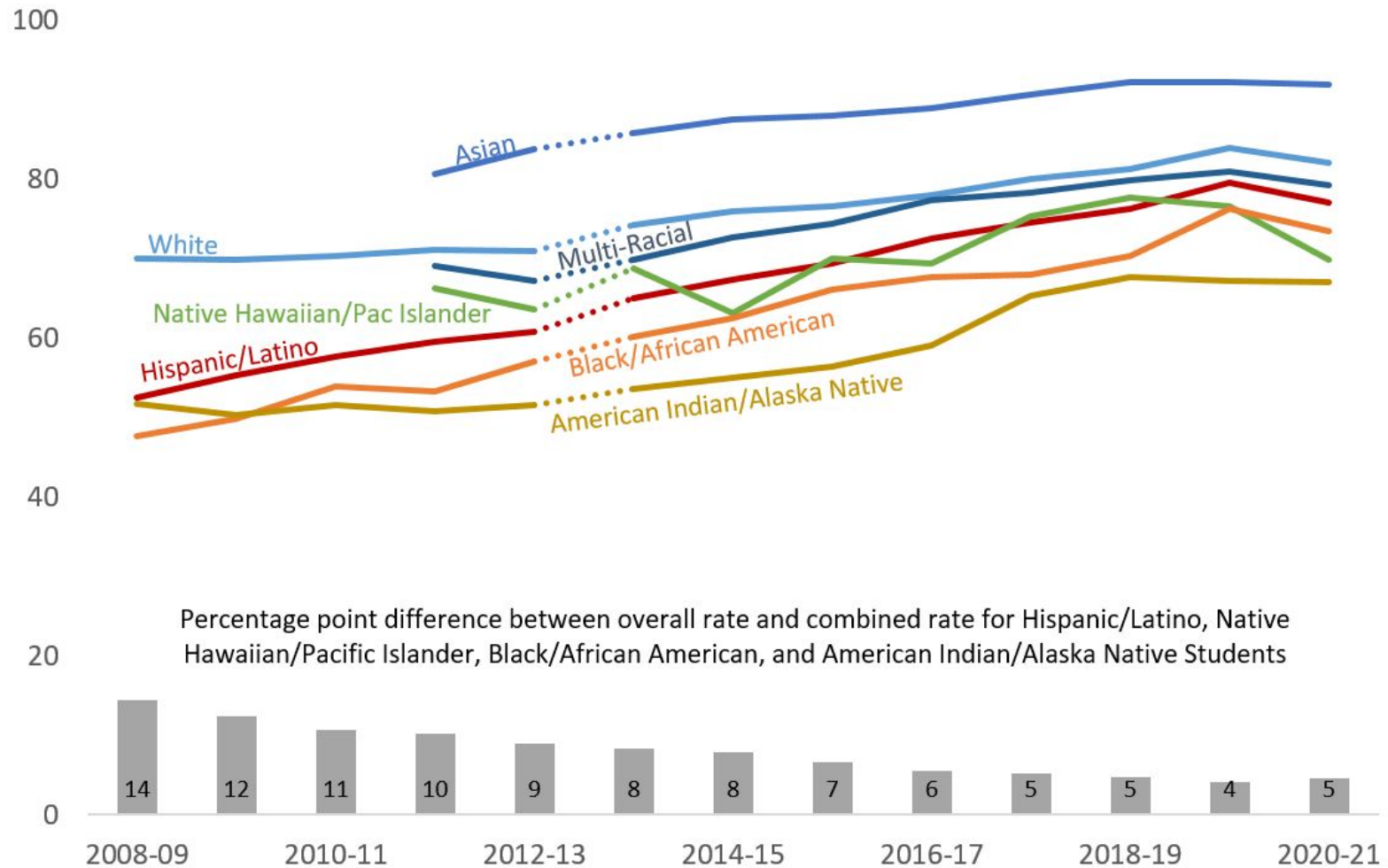
Investigation and analysis of:

1. Graduation data
2. Assessment of Essential Skills
3. Inequities and disparities
4. Diploma policies in other states and national trends

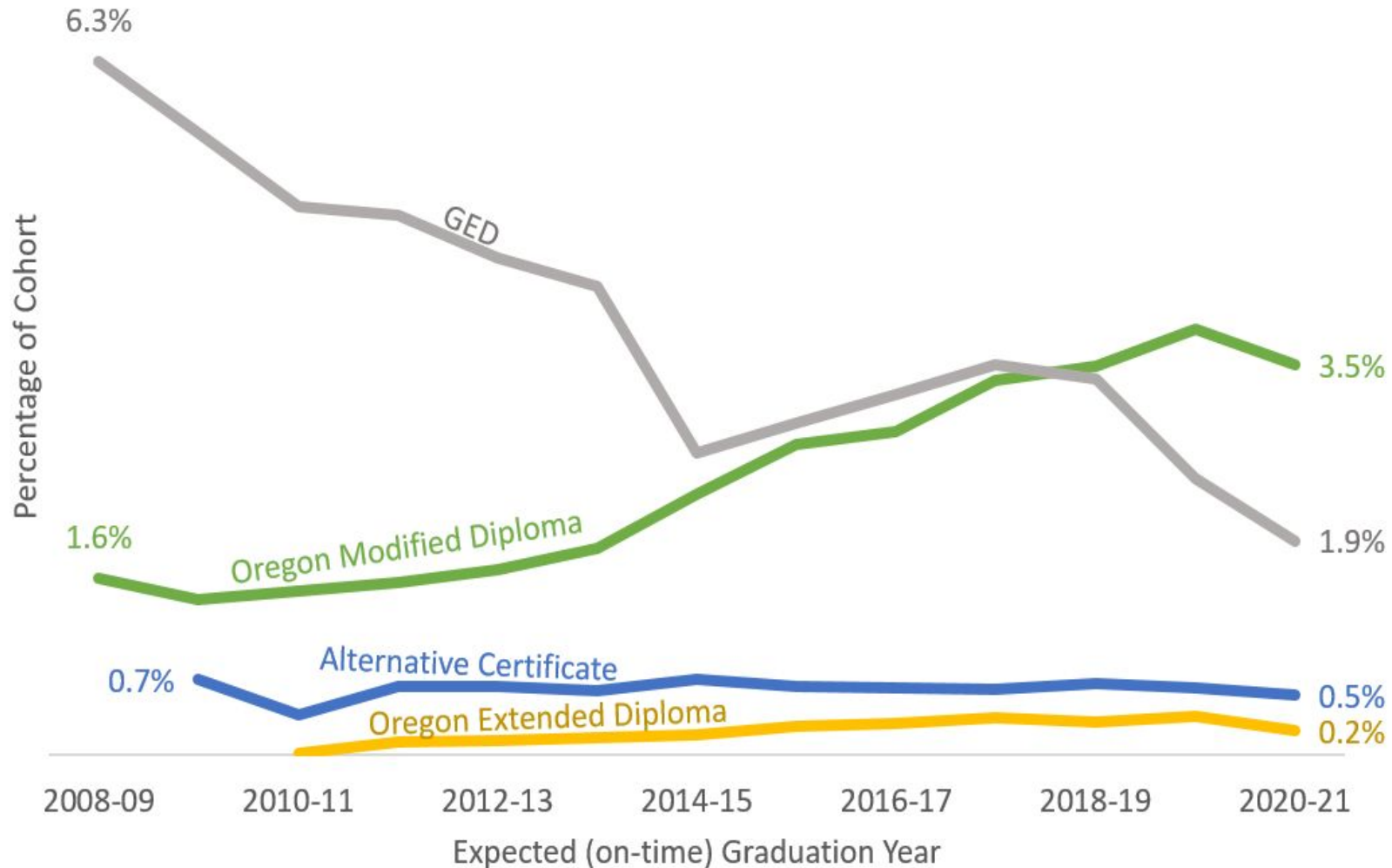
“[An] Oregon diploma should mean access to wherever they want to go even if they took different pathways.”

— Oregon Counselor

Oregon's Four-Year Graduation Rates by Race/Ethnicity



Percentages of Students Awarded a Modified Oregon Diploma/Extended Oregon Diploma or Alternative Certificate, or a GED (Four-Year Rates)



“Most of my students and their families do not understand the difference between a modified and a standard and are scared that it will affect them after graduation if they don't have the standard. But the requirements for the standard are above their abilities. I'm confused why, when we already had inequity among graduation rates, etc.; our state decided to split graduation types, etc. in the first place.”

— Oregon Educator

What the literature says about the causes for graduation disparities:

Exclusion and inequities have been present from the start - our schools were not designed to welcome, include, and serve all students.

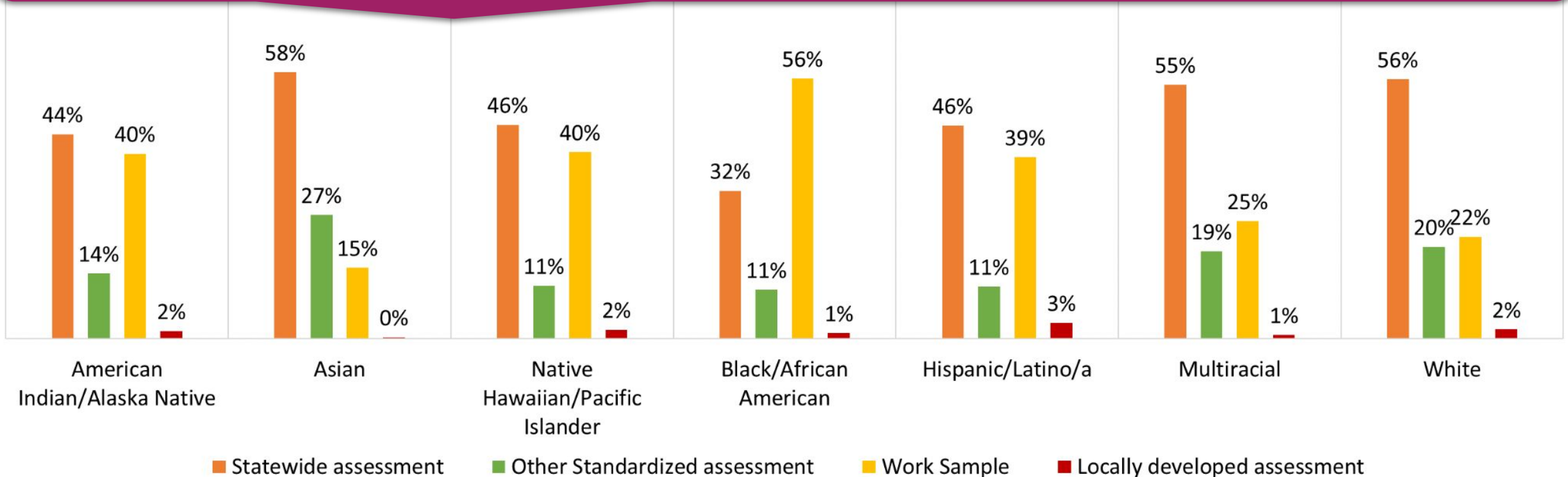
What engagement revealed about potential reasons for graduation disparities in Oregon:

1. Traditional mathematics pathway that limits access to multiple courses in mathematics,
2. Assessment of Essential Skills requirements,
3. Lack of flexibility in diploma criteria,
4. Diploma requirements that are not always relevant and responsive to post-high school plans, and
5. Lack of understanding of requirements for different diplomas.

How Math Essential Skills are Met

“I do not believe that there should be a secondary validation system. Let's trust the teachers that we hire to work with our children to determine if they have demonstrated the learning in their classes at a level that is proficient.”

— Oregon Administrator



Diploma Policies in Other States & National Trends

States are moving away from high school exit examinations, with many states issuing retroactive diplomas to make amends for the inequities that the practice created for students during implementation:

- Only 11 states had graduation exit examinations in place for English language arts and math in 2020 (FL, LA, MA, MD, MI, NJ, NM, NY, OH, TX, and VA).
- Twelve states recently ended graduation exit examinations (AR, AZ, CA, GA, ID, IN, MN, NV, OK, RI, SC, and WA).
- One state placed an exit examination moratorium (PA).
- Seven states delivered retroactive diplomas (AK, AZ, CA, GA, NV, SC, and TX).
- One state was planning a new series of graduation examinations (CO).



Determinations

Determinations



In response to SB 744, Section 1 (3)(e), ODE submits the following determination:

Determination 1: *ODE has determined that the skills and knowledge expected by business, industry, and postsecondary education do not fully align with the current requirements for the Oregon high school diploma.*

In response to SB 744, Section 1 (3)(g), ODE submits the following determination:

Determination 2: *ODE has determined that the requirements for Oregon high school diplomas have been applied inequitably to different student populations.*



Recommendations

Recommendations Built from Engagement, Informed by Data and National Trends

1. **Center accountability on systems, not students.** Place accountability on systems to provide the educational resources needed to make requirements feasible for students.
2. **Reflect student and community assets.** Equity in graduation requirements demands that Oregon's diploma process honors and recognizes student, family, and community culture, assets, and strengths (especially communities who have been historically marginalized
3. **Prepare students for their futures.** Diploma requirements must be designed so students are prepared to thrive in the ever complex and changing world after graduation.
4. **Create coherence and clarity.** Diploma requirements should be accessible, with clear expectations and steps to achieving a diploma identified.

Engagement Required for Any Implementation

The **recommendations are born of the input gathered through engagement and the study**. People who participated in engagement raised these issues and ideas.

- Diverse representation of Oregon's students, families, educators, community, business & industry, and higher education would all need to be re-engaged for deeper input around the specific recommendations that came forward.

The recommendations in the SB 744 report **lead to no immediate action**.

- Legislature, Governor, and State Board must determine what action, if any, to take, and on what timeline.

The recommendations all point to **additional study of impacts and further engagement being needed** to adjust, inform, and guide any changes.

- Resources must be identified and provided to support any move toward implementation.

The recommendations are in a list, but **none should be implemented independently**

- Oregon's system of graduation requirements are interrelated, requiring a careful, coherent, and systematic implementation process.

Recommendation

- ① **Align the mathematics credit requirements** with other content area credit requirements by referencing the Oregon mathematics standards without prescribing a specific course as a starting point.

Comparison with current requirement:

- Retains the current 3-credit math requirement for an Oregon Diploma.
- Removes math course limitations and the specification for Algebra 1.

Potential impact:

- Provides students the opportunity to pursue more relevant math course sequences aligned with the 2022 Oregon State Mathematics Standards.
- Allows students to learn math that is meaningful for their postsecondary preparation life and careers.
- Reduces course repetition rates and related opportunity costs.

Recommendation

2

Add a 1.0 credit requirement for a Future Planning course (within the existing 24 credit requirements) that includes financial planning, interviewing, resume building, Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and Oregon Student Aid Application (ORSAA) completion, and other post-secondary preparation that will impact future success.

Comparison with current requirement:

- Adds an additional 1.0 credit requirement for a future planning course, within the overall 24 credits.

Potential impact:

- Helps ensure that students graduate with the life skills needed to be ready for independent living in postsecondary contexts.
- Helps ensure that students graduate with resources and skills needed to navigate college and/or career options.

Recommendation

3

Expand the Education Plan and Profile requirement to include a two-year post-graduation plan; establish increased support and accountability for schools to provide instructional time and support for students to complete the Education Plan and Profile; revise the Education Plan and Profile to function as a means of tracking all graduation requirements.

Comparison with current requirement:

- This is an extension of an existing requirement, along with provision of additional resources.
- Accountability shift from the student to the school and community, and ODE commits to providing increased guidance and support.

Potential impact:

- Provides students with a plan that helps guide their pursuit of postsecondary goals.
- Leads to further discussions regarding how to better support students after graduation.

Recommendation

4

Retain, but update the list of Essential Skills and definitions and then integrate these skills into the Future Planning course credit, the Extended Application diploma requirement, and the Career Related Learning Experience diploma requirement as well as throughout the educational experiences across K–12.

Comparison with current requirement:

- Skills will be updated to reflect current needs expressed by K-12 educators, workforce, industry, and higher education partners.

Potential impact:

- Focuses education on skills students need to navigate the 21st Century.
- Provides students with curricula, instruction, feedback, and resources aligned with these skills while their learning is underway.

Recommendation

- 5 Maintain focus on math, reading, and writing proficiency through **demonstration of knowledge and skills in courses; remove the duplicative requirement** for all students to demonstrate proficiency again through a separate assessment (Assessment of Essential Skills). **Develop reporting for systems accountability** that publicly reports targeted staffing and post-secondary outcomes.

Comparison with current requirement:

- Students continue to demonstrate proficiency in foundational academic subjects through courses.
- Eliminates requirement for duplicative demonstration of proficiency through state-approved assessment.
- Eliminates the Assessment of Essential Skills student-level data collection.

Potential impact:

- Removes an unnecessary barrier to graduation that has resulted in no clear benefit for students.
- Situates accountability for graduation on systems, versus exclusively on students, in Oregon.

Recommendation

6

Revise the Extended Application requirements so they align with the updated Essential Skills list and definitions; establish increased support and accountability for schools to provide instructional time and support for students to complete the Extended Application.

Comparison with current requirement:

- Require districts to report adherence to each respective diploma requirement separately within Division 22 to ensure that all requirements receive appropriate attention and monitoring.

Potential impact:

- Helps ensure that all students have multiple means of showing what they know and can do by practicing the skills they will need in the future.
- Provides opportunities for students to practice these skills in relevant and engaging ways through completion of a specific project or program.

Recommendation

7

Revise the Career-Related Learning Experiences requirement so it aligns with the revised Essential Skills list and definitions, and academic standards and/or continuing technical education (CTE) skill sets; establish increased support and accountability for **schools to provide instructional time and support** for students to complete the Career-Related Learning Experiences.

Comparison with current requirement:

- Align Current Career-Related Learning Experiences requirement, Essential Skills, academic standards, and CTE skill sets.

Potential impact:

- Ensures that all students have opportunities for career exploration and flexibility in learning, particularly those who do not have as much access to career-related networks.
- Gives students opportunities to practice valued skills in context of career exploration relevant to fields of interest.

Recommendation

8

Use practices and examples from around the nation on diploma pathways to **make a single Oregon Diploma accessible to all students.**



Comparison with current requirement:

- Focus on relevant pathways to support all students in attaining a single Oregon Diploma, if that can be accomplished without reducing services and options.

Potential impact:

- Could increase opportunities for every student for wider opportunities after high school.
- Simplifies graduation policies to support family and student understanding of diploma options and pathways.
- Negative impacts are possible, this recommendation needs additional vetting.

“Despite [extended diplomas and alternative certificates] not being recognized as ‘as ‘real diplomas’ by the state or potential employers, many of these students are still able to be placed in meaningful, gainful and appropriate employment opportunities that contribute to the community and a sense of personal well-being. My hope is there would be some way to document these outcomes...” — Oregon Resident

“I know that alternate types of diplomas can negatively impact students' acceptances to colleges. It seems encouraging them may be a flawed attempt to provide options while actually being a trapdoor to long term disparities that are even harder to recover from if BIPOC students take them.” — Oregon Resident



Next Steps

Next Steps

- This report delivers a community informed study and includes a set of **determinations and recommendations** called for in the bill.
- This is **not a request for rule changes or a legislative concept**.
- **Current Diploma requirements exist in ORS and OAR.** Any steps toward implementation require action of the Legislature, Governor, and State Board of Education.
- Prior to any implementation ODE would request further and deeper engagement with students, families, educators, business & industry, and higher education on the specific recommendations.



Gratitude & Acknowledgements

- ODE staff / policy experts
- Oregon's Kitchen Table from Portland State University
- Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC)
- State and local organizations and groups
- Education Service Districts (ESDs)
- Community members



“All students should receive a good foundation in the basics to the best of their capabilities, but the most important part of attending high school is to discover inspiration to pursue what interests them.”
— Oregon Resident





Thank you.

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