



Board Meeting Date: 9/24/24

Title: Graduation Requirements

Type: Discussion

Presenter (s): Jody De St. Hubert, Director of Teaching and Learning; Paul Paetzel, Edina High School Principal; Jenny Johnson, Edina High School Assistant Principal; Mellanie Pusateri, Edina High School Physical Education and Health Area Lead

Description: Over the last two years a change in, and an addition to, legislation for the class of 2028 have impacted course offerings and graduation requirements in the state of Minnesota. The change is in the area of Social Studies and the addition is in Personal Finance. The combination of the change and the addition impacts what is required for graduation credits under Minnesota Statutes 2022, section 120B.024. This prompted the need for a review and a change to the current Edina Graduation Requirements.

In the spring of 2024, Policy 613 was updated to reflect the changes in the area of Social Studies approved by the school board on January 8, 2024. Legislative law now requires EPS to update Policy 613 to ensure the requirement for Personal Finance is included.

This topic was brought to a board discussion on August 20th. The board asked for additional information on parent perspectives, student perspectives, a root-cause analysis to determine why students take summer physical education classes, and further consideration on flexible options for the newly required Personal Finance semester credit for the class of 2028.

Recommendation: There is no recommendation at this time.

Desired Outcomes from the Board: Review the information in detail and come prepared with questions and comments. The questions and comments will inform updates to Policy 613 that will be later brought to the Policy Committee for review and the full school board for final review, feedback and action.

Attachments: [Policy 613](#)

[Graduation Requirements Board Workshop Discussion 8.20.24](#)

[9.24.24 Board Presentation](#)

[Student Thought Exchange Survey Questions and Responses](#)

[Family Thought Exchange Survey Questions and Responses](#)

Background Information:

I.R.O.D is a decision making model that engages individuals and groups in a process of gathering information and reactions, listing options and discussing the pros and cons of each option before coming to consensus on a decision. Prior to the 8.20.24 board discussion, the Edina High School Area Lead team engaged in an I.R.O.D. on graduation requirements. The Edina High School Area Lead team recommended:

- Add 1 semester credit for Personal Finance
- Leave 2 semester credits for Physical Education (PE)
- Raise requirements to 44 total semester credits for graduation

When this recommendation was presented to the board, a discussion occurred that indicated a need for more information to be gathered. The following information on parent perspective and student perspective was gathered through a Thought Exchange survey with an additional PLC focus group conversation. The direct Thought Exchange survey questions and responses are included in the attachments. The written content of the report is directly from the Thought Exchange AI synthesis of responses. The feedback gathered through this synthesis led to an understanding that there are different reasons why students take summer PE (and other flexible PE classes) and different reactions to reducing physical education credits in Edina.

Different Reasons for taking Summer Physical Education (and other flexible P.E. classes):

Thought Exchange summarized student input stating, “students generally chose summer PE or wellness courses for greater control over their schedules, to lighten their academic load during the school year, and to avoid aspects of in-person gym they found unappealing, such as the social environment or physical discomfort.”

Different Reactions to the Reduction of a Physical Education Credit:

Thought Exchange summarized students and family input stating, “while there is support for reducing or modifying PE requirements for athletes, many stress the importance of ensuring all students, especially those not active outside of school, have access to a robust physical education program that encourages lifelong health and wellness.”

The remaining information on parent and student perspective is summarized directly from the synthesis of data points collected in each Thought Exchange survey.

Additional Parent Perspective From Thought Exchange Overview:

The feedback from the parent survey has been analyzed and categorized into three sentiment buckets: Positive, Neutral, and Negative. Each category highlights the most common theme that emerged, along with a summary of key aspects and a verbatim comment from participants.

Theme (Positive): Physical Education Program Effectiveness

Participants generally feel positive about the effectiveness of the current physical education program. They believe it successfully equips students with the necessary knowledge, skills, and attitudes for a balanced life. The flexibility in class choices and the quality of instructors are particularly appreciated.

"The current physical education programming has met its goal by providing flexible class choices and having quality instructors."

Theme (Neutral): Mixed Opinions on Graduation Requirements

There are mixed feelings about the potential reduction of required PE classes from two to one. Some participants believe that the program's goals can still be met with fewer required classes, while others are uncertain or concerned about the potential impact on student wellness and program effectiveness.

"I think it might still work with just one required class, but I'm not entirely sure if it will meet all the goals."

Theme (Negative): Concerns About PE Course Variety

A significant portion of participants express concerns about the potential reduction in course variety if the number of required PE classes is decreased. They worry that limiting course choices could negatively impact the program's ability to meet its goals and reduce student engagement.

"Reducing the number of required PE classes and limiting course choices will not meet the department goals and could harm student engagement."

Additional Student Perspective From Thought Exchange Overview:

The feedback from the student survey has been analyzed and categorized into three sentiment buckets: Positive, Neutral, and Negative. Each category highlights the most common theme that emerged, along with a summary of key aspects and a verbatim comment from participants.

Fun Activities (Positive)

Participants who view PE positively often mention the availability of fun elective choices such as basketball, soccer, and unified sports. These activities make PE enjoyable and engaging, encouraging students to participate more actively.

"There are Physical Education elective choices that are fun for me. (basketball, unified, soccer, etc)"

PE Requirements (Neutral)

The sentiment around PE requirements is mixed. While some participants see the potential reduction of PE requirements as an opportunity to explore other electives, others are uncertain about whether they would take additional PE classes. This indicates a need for more information and consideration of individual preferences.

"Maybe, I do not know at this time"

Personal Discomfort (Negative)

A significant number of participants feel uncomfortable in PE classes for personal reasons, which negatively impacts their willingness to take additional PE courses. This discomfort is a

barrier to participation and highlights the need for a more inclusive and supportive PE environment.

"I am uncomfortable in PE for personal reasons."

Root-Cause Analysis Student Feedback on Why They Take Summer Physical Education:

Convenience

Convenience was a significant factor for many who opted for the summer option. Participants mentioned that it was easier to complete the gym credit during the summer when they had fewer commitments. The ability to choose their physical activities and the flexibility of online courses were also highlighted. This category was perceived positively as it allowed students to manage their time more effectively and avoid the inconvenience of gym classes during the school year. The convenience of the summer option made it an attractive choice for many.

Personal Comfort (Avoiding Inconvenience)

A notable number of participants chose the summer option to avoid the inconvenience of taking gym during the school year. Reasons included not wanting to be sweaty during school, finding in-person classes unproductive, and disliking the social aspects of gym. This category was perceived as a practical solution to avoid discomfort. Participants appreciated the ability to complete the requirement without the associated inconveniences of traditional gym classes.

Schedule

Many participants chose the summer option to free up their schedules during the school year. This allowed them to take more electives, harder classes, or have a student prep period. The flexibility was highly valued as it provided more control over their academic workload. Participants appreciated the ability to manage their time better and reduce stress during the school year. Overall, the perception of this category was very positive, with many seeing it as a strategic move to enhance their educational experience in a variety of ways.

Credit Completion

Completing required credits was a primary motivation for many participants. They saw the summer option as an efficient way to get mandatory credits out of the way. This allowed them to focus on other academic interests during the school year. The perception of this category was that it provided a straightforward path to fulfilling graduation requirements. Participants valued the opportunity to manage their credit load more effectively.

Activity Preference

Some participants chose the summer option because it aligned better with their personal activity preferences. They were already active during the summer or preferred the flexibility to choose their physical activities. This category was perceived positively as it allowed students to integrate their personal fitness routines (including, but not limited to, school athletic participation) with their academic requirements. Participants appreciated the ability to fulfill their gym credit in a way that suited their lifestyle and preferences.

Financial Literacy Flexibility

Preliminary planning for the additional required semester credit for Financial Literacy is in the beginning stages of exploration. Edina High School currently offers a Personal Finance class in Business for a semester elective credit and Edina Virtual Pathway also offers a Personal Finance class in Business for a semester elective credit.

Preliminary exploration discussions are just beginning to define the current reality of these two offerings. Recognizing an opportunity for growth, the current class will be redefined and standards will be realigned using the [MDE 8 Elements of Successful Financial Education Programs](#).

The exploration phase will meet New Course approval time-lines by ensuring the class and instructional practices are defined by the end of October. Flexible options will continue to be considered and proposed to the board for the first discussion at the Teaching and Learning Committee on 10.29 followed by a full board discussion on 11.19.24.

Exploration	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Define current reality● Unpack standards● Research best practices● Select and define the practice/program
Installation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● The program/practice has been identified and defined● Professional Development and coaching are used to prepare for the implementation● Resources are purchased● Data systems are prepared