

TO: School Board Members

FROM: Cari Jo Drewitz, Director of Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment

DATE: November 4, 2024

SUBJECT: Second Reading of Policy 613, Graduation Requirements

BACKGROUND:

A review of Policy 613, Graduation Requirements, has been performed, and the current policy adheres to the district's processes and procedures currently in place. This was presented as a first reading at the meeting on October 21. To recap, the district's current policy was reviewed against MSBA's model policy. The policy was last reviewed in October of 2023, and changes were made to the graduation requirements to align with the 2023 legislative session. The changes currently proposed align with language from the 2024 legislative session. No changes to the actual graduation requirements are being proposed. Based on that, the following changes are recommended:

- Update Section III, Definitions, Flip two items to create alphabetical order, and "required standard" was expanded on
- Under Section V, Graduation Assessment Requirements, language has been updated to reflect updates in the 2024 legislative session
- Under Section VI, Graduation Credit Requirements, there are no changes to the number of credits needed for graduation. Language has been updated to reflect the change in science standards for students who completed 8th grade in 2024-2025
- Legal references were updated

Changes were made to the graduation requirements in October 2023. As we made those changes to meet new statute requirements, including credits in personal finance and the implementation of the new social studies standards. In the 2025-2026 school year, we will begin full implementation of the science standards. The course sequence for science will change as Physical Science has moved from grade 9 to grade 8. Students in grade will now take a course meeting Earth and Space science standards. This change is reflected in the revisions.

We used the four-way equity test as a framework for our recommendations in October 2023. We applied the framework in two specific ways described below.

- State statutes require us to meet the standards in ethnic studies, and we cannot do so adequately without increasing the amount of time spent in our social studies courses. The change of the course to a full year will benefit all students. A year-long geography and ethnic studies course for all Two Rivers High School students will allow teachers to offer a unit that explores Bdote, the heart of Mni Sota, the homeland of the Eastern Dakota Ayote. This land also includes modern-day Mendota. In this unit, students will explore the importance of our district's local community in modern Minnesota's past, present, and future landscapes through the lens of a geographer. This learning is imperative for all of our students, and additional time is needed to make it possible.

- In our review of our graduation requirements, we also considered the number of credits required for graduation. A high school student can earn up to 7 credits a year and, in their four years at Two Rivers, can earn up to 28 credits. Students could also earn up to 3 additional credits while in the district’s middle schools for a possible total of 31 credits. Despite all of these opportunities, we determined that raising the total number of credits required beyond 23 credits would cause a disadvantage for some of our most at-risk groups of students, particularly our ESL students.

RESOLUTION:

This is a second reading. No resolution is needed at this time.