



Robbinsdale Area Schools School Board Meeting Agenda

Monday, July 9, 2012 at 8:30 PM

Work Session

Education Service Center Boardroom, 4148 Winnetka Avenue North,
New Hope, Minnesota

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1. Update on Hennepin County/Superintendents Efforts to Increase Graduation Rates 2
Presenter: Superintendent Sicoli
Time: 8:30 p.m. or Immediately Following Board Meeting
 2. Adjourn
Presenter: Chair Van Heel



TO: Members of the School Board

FROM: Aldo Sicoli, Superintendent

DATE: July 3, 2012

RE: Graduation Requirements for Students in Alternative Learning Centers

DISCUSSION:

In 2009 Hennepin County Commissioners, Hennepin County Staff, and Superintendents of Hennepin County school districts began discussion of partnership efforts in a number of areas. In 2010 the discussions included ideas for dropout prevention efforts in the county. In 2011 school districts passed a resolution, expressing an interest in working together to prevent students from dropping out of school.

As discussions and research into existing models progressed, an identified barrier to graduation was differing graduation requirements among school districts. This barrier is particularly challenging for many students who attend Area Learning Centers. Area Learning Center (ALC) students are often highly mobile, changing schools more often than most students.

Consequently, they make progress towards graduation requirements in a given school district and then attend school in another district that has different graduation requirements; credits earned in a former district do not always apply towards graduation in the new school district. This slows student efforts towards graduation and can be discouraging to students.

An expert group was formed and made two recommendations. The first recommendation deals with accepting common graduation requirements and the second relates to identifying a common currency to convey student learning information at less than a course-equivalent level.

Superintendents were asked to respond to their level of comfort with the recommendations. It was understood that some district superintendents, such as those in the Robbinsdale Area Schools, Richfield Schools, and Intermediate District 287, would be ready to have conversations with their school boards about the possibility of issuing a diploma to ALC students based on the state requirements for graduation. The state requires completion of at least 21.5 year-long credits, with credit requirements in specified curricular areas. Robbinsdale Area Schools requires completion of 46 semester credits (equivalent to 23 year-long credits), with credit requirements in specified curricular areas.

Materials included for discussion of this topic are a description of the Minnesota state graduation requirements, a chart that compares graduation requirements in various school districts, and a draft resolution. Future approval of the resolution would grant a Robbinsdale Area Schools diploma to students who attend an Area Learning Center in Robbinsdale Area Schools or in Intermediate District 287 and complete the State of Minnesota's requirements for graduation. If interested, next steps would be for the School Board to approve the resolution at an August School Board meeting and revise the graduation policy through first and second readings during the August School Board meetings.

Minnesota's High School Graduation Requirements

Students must meet state and local high school graduation requirements

To graduate from a Minnesota public high school, a student must meet the state's course credit and testing requirements and any additional local requirements established by the school district. State graduation requirements are outlined in [Minnesota Statutes, chapter 120B](#), and [Minnesota Rules, chapter 3501](#). Students also must pass three standards-based tests in reading, math, and writing.

Minnesota requires students to complete 21.5 required and elective course credits

State course credit requirements for graduating from high school require students to complete 21.5 course credits:

- four language arts credits
- three math credits in algebra, geometry and statistics, and probability; students in the class of 2015 and later also must complete an algebra II credit (or its equivalent) as part of this three-credit requirement
- three science credits that include one biology credit; students can use an agriculture science course to meet a general science credit, and students in the class of 2015 and later also must complete one physics or chemistry credit as part of this three-credit requirement
- three-and-a-half social studies credits in U.S. history, geography, world history, economics, and government and citizenship, or three social studies credits in U.S. history, geography, world history, government and citizenship, and half a credit in economics taught in the social studies, business, or agriculture education department of a high school
- one art credit
- seven elective credits

Beginning in the 2012-2013 school year, students must also have physical education, based on standards developed by the National Association for Sport and Physical Education.

A course credit signifies that a student successfully completed an academic year of study in a particular subject area or the district otherwise determined that the student mastered the subject area. Students may use a career and technical education course to meet a general science, math, or art credit.

State graduation requirements apply to ELL students and children with disabilities

Students with limited English proficiency, or English language learners (ELL), must meet the same graduation requirements as all other students. Children with disabilities must be given accommodations that are appropriate to their strengths and needs, and that permit equal access to and work toward grade-level content standards.

Students also must complete local graduation requirements

The state requires each district to establish standards in local graduation requirements for health, and also for physical education until the 2012-2013 school year when state physical education standards apply. Districts also must establish standards in career and technical education and world languages, and must offer

elective courses in these two subject areas. Districts may impose additional local graduation requirements.

Students must pass the GRAD writing, reading, and math tests; limited exceptions apply to some students

To graduate from high school, a Minnesota public school student who entered grade 8 in the 2005-2006 school year or later must pass three standards-based Graduation Required Assessment for Diploma (GRAD) tests: writing in grade 9; reading in grade 10; and math in grade 11. The few remaining who entered grade 8 in the 2004-2005 school year or earlier who have not yet graduated must pass three minimum-competency Basic Skills Tests (BSTs): reading and math in grade 8; and writing in grade 10. A student who does not pass may retake a test according to an established retest schedule. Students in the classes of 2010 through 2014 who do not pass the math GRAD test may still graduate if they meet all other specified requirements.

Students with limited English proficiency who first enroll in a Minnesota public school in grade 9 or above need not pass the GRAD tests to graduate. Other public school students in unique situations must pass the GRAD reading, math, and writing tests; those students include dual enrollment students, foreign exchange students, open enrollment students, postsecondary enrollment options students, district-placed students, students attending school under a tuition agreement, students without an individualized education program (IEP) placed for care and treatment, and students without an IEP program in a correctional facility.

GRAD test items that students must pass to graduate are embedded in the reading and math MCA-IIs

The GRAD reading and math test items that students must pass to graduate in Minnesota are embedded in the reading and math Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments-Series II (MCA-IIs). Students' GRAD test scores and MCA-II test scores are reported separately. The state and districts use students' GRAD test scores to determine whether students graduate. The state and districts use students' MCA-II test scores to comply with a federal requirement that districts demonstrate adequate yearly progress sufficient to have all students proficient in reading and math by the 2013-2014 school year. Also to comply with federal law, many 11th grade ELL students take the Mathematics Test for English Language Learners (MTELL), which assesses the same grade-level math standards as the math MCA-II.

MTAS is an alternative assessment for students with significant cognitive disabilities

Students with IEPs and significant cognitive disabilities can take the Minnesota Test of Academic Skills (MTAS) instead of the GRAD reading and math tests. The MTAS is an alternative assessment in reading, math, and science that is based on alternative achievement standards and measures the extent to which students are making progress in the general curriculum. Students with IEPs and significant cognitive disabilities also can take the Alternative Assessment for Writing, which is an alternative assessment for the GRAD writing test.

The MCA II high school science test is not a graduation requirement

Although the federal No Child Left Behind Act requires states to administer a science test to high school students, students do not need to pass the high school science MCA II to graduate. State law prohibits the education commissioner from requiring students to receive a passing score on high school science assessments as a condition of receiving a diploma.

For more information: Contact legislative analyst Lisa Larson at 651-296-8036.

The Research Department of the Minnesota House of Representatives is a nonpartisan office providing legislative, legal, and information services to the entire House.

	Social Studies	English	Math credits	Science credits	PE	Health	Fine Arts	Electives	Total credits needed to graduate	
2012-13										
Minnesota High School Graduation Requirements; 1 year = 1 credit	3.5	4	3	3	3			1	7	21.5
Robbinsdale; 1 semester = 1 credit	8	8	6	6	2	1	1	1	14	46
2009-10										
* Wayzata; 1 semester = 1 credit	8	8	8*	8*	2	1	2		27	60*
* Hopkins; 1 semester = 1 credit	8	8	6	6	2	1.5	2		20.5	54
St. Louis Park; 1 semester = 1 credit	8	8	6	6	2	2	2		12	46
Richfield; 1 semester = 1 credit	8	8	6	6	2	1	0?		11	42
Bloomington 1 semester = .5 credit	4	4	3.5	3	1	0.5	1		12	29
Minnetonka 1 semester = .5 credit	3.5	4	3	3	1	0.5	1	(includes FA credit) 7.5		22.5
Brooklyn Center 1 semester = .5 credit	4	4	3	3	1	0.5	0?		15.5	25 (26 after 2009)
Rochester 1 semester = .5 credit	3 (+ .5 econ)	4	3	3	1	0.5	1		7.5	24
Duluth 1 semester = .5 credit	3.5	4	3	3	0.5	0.5	1		6	21.5
* Osseo 1 trimester = 1 credit	10	12	9	9	1	1	3		19	45
Minneapolis 1 trimester = 1 credit	10	11	9	7	3	1	2		22	66
N. St. Paul/Oakdale 1 trimester = 1 credit	10	10	9	7	3	1	2		23	66
S. St. Paul 1 trimester = 1 credit	(4 yrs)	(4 yrs)	(3 yrs)	(2 yrs)	(1 trimester)	(1 yr)	(1 yr)	varies		varies

St. Paul									
1 quarter = 1 credit	14 (3.5 yrs)	16 (4 yrs)	12 (3 yrs)	12 (3 yrs)	2 (.5 yr)	2 (.5 yr)	4 (1 yr)	21 (22 after 2011)	85 (86 after 2011)
* Gr. 10-12 high schools			* includes STEM courses	* includes STEM courses	* includes 1 health credit				

WHEREAS, Intermediate District 287 and Robbinsdale Area Schools, Independent School District No. 281 have been participants in the Hennepin County Dropout Initiative, an effort designed to decrease school dropout rates throughout Hennepin County; and

WHEREAS, the Initiative has identified several systemic barriers to graduation, one of which is the differing credit requirements established by districts and the effect of this on area learning center (ALC) students (who most likely have moved frequently and/or dropped out of school at least once); and

WHEREAS, District 287 has analyzed the graduation requirements of 16 metro area districts and found that they vary widely in the number of years students must take certain subjects, the number and type of electives required, and the total class time required to satisfy districts' requirements; and

WHEREAS, the State of Minnesota has established graduation requirements of 21.5 year-long credits over four years to earn a high school diploma.
and

WHEREAS, Minnesota Statutes § 123A.06, Subd. 4 provides: "Upon successful completion of the area learning center program, a pupil is entitled to receive a high school diploma. The pupil may elect to receive a diploma from either the district of residence or the district in which the area learning center is located;" and

WHEREAS, Minnesota law provides area learning centers with the statutory authority to define successful completion; and

WHEREAS, the Minnesota Department of Education has endorsed the idea of individual districts working together to agree upon a set of graduation requirements that would entitle an ALC student to a diploma from any one of those individual districts, rather than continuing a practice of ALCs trying to accommodate dozens of differing graduation requirements for students; and

WHEREAS, such an agreement would remove a significant barrier to the ability of ALC students to earn a high school diploma and have an impact on the dropout rate in Hennepin County.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the School Boards of Intermediate District 287 and Robbinsdale Area Schools, Independent School District No. 281, State of Minnesota, as follows:

All Robbinsdale students attending ALCs operated by Intermediate District 287 or Robbinsdale Public Schools shall be entitled to receive a high school diploma upon successful completion of, at a minimum, the State of Minnesota's requirements for graduation. Furthermore, the option of receiving a Robbinsdale diploma will be offered even for non-resident Robbinsdale students if the ALC program operated by District 287 is within the geographical boundaries of Robbinsdale.