



**State Board of Education Resolution**  
**To Approve Final Rulemaking Regarding High School Credit Flexibility**  
**SR16-3**

**WHEREAS**, District of Columbia law requires State Board of Education approval of high school graduation requirements;

**WHEREAS**, the District is one of the few jurisdictions in the United States where the time-based Carnegie unit (120 hours of class or contact time with an instructor during the year) is the sole means for awarding course credit for a traditional high school diploma;

**WHEREAS**, the opportunity gap remains massive in the District of Columbia, illustrated most recently by the 2015 Partnership for Readiness for College and Career (PARCC) scores, which showed performance for the most and least privileged students differed by 44 to 58 percentage points;

**WHEREAS**, students who enter high school either unprepared to meet the District of Columbia's rigorous academic standards or already having acquired the knowledge and skills to demonstrate mastery must enroll in courses organized into standard Carnegie units without an option to pace their own learning;

**WHEREAS**, the District of Columbia is the only jurisdiction in the country that requires students to enroll in Algebra I by ninth grade, regardless of their readiness;

**WHEREAS**, high schools in the District of Columbia may not tailor their credit-bearing course offerings outside of the Carnegie unit to take advantage of logical synergies between academic material that would enhance student learning;

**WHEREAS**, research indicates that academic outcomes improve when high school students are able to pace their own learning, choose how they acquire skills and knowledge, and determine how they provide evidence of proficiencies;

**WHEREAS**, key features of competency-based education include student self-pacing and choice in skill and knowledge acquisition and demonstration of learning;

**WHEREAS**, successful implementation of competency-based courses requires significant thought, preparation, and teacher support;

**WHEREAS**, most high schools in the District of Columbia currently organize their class schedules around the Carnegie unit, and its elimination all at once could create unproductive disruption to student learning;

**WHEREAS**, the State Board of Education convened a cross-city task force of 25 members representing teachers, principals, traditional and charter public schools, community groups, the business community, the Washington Teacher's Union, the Office of the Deputy Mayor for

Education, the Office of the State Superintendent of Education, and the Council of the District of Columbia from August 2015 to December 2015 to set forth recommendations for high-school credit flexibility;

**WHEREAS**, the majority of task force members agreed that creating alternative pathways to earning credit beyond the Carnegie unit represented an important first step toward recognizing that not all students learn at the same pace nor best demonstrate understanding of content based on 120 hours in a traditional classroom setting;

**WHEREAS**, the task force's report makes the following recommendations for earning high school credit:

1. **Create a waiver process** for schools wishing to pursue competency-based learning;
2. Allow students to receive **credit for demonstrated knowledge** in world languages and mathematics;
3. **Maintain Carnegie units** as the default means for earning credit where neither of the two above conditions apply;
4. Consistent with the benefits of student self-paced learning associated with competency-based models, **remove the requirement that students enroll in Algebra I by 9<sup>th</sup> grade.**

**WHEREAS**, the State Board of Education passed a resolution on December 16, 2015 advising the State Superintendent to consider the High School Credit Flexibility Task Force's recommendations as outlined in its report, and to initiate rulemaking to implement the recommendations;;

**WHEREAS**, a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking was published in the *D.C. Register* on January 22, 2016, at 63 DCR 4 for a thirty (30) day public comment period;

**WHEREAS**, the proposed rules maintain the Carnegie Unit as the default means for earning credit towards graduation, and create a waiver process for schools desiring to pursue competency-based learning;

**WHEREAS**, the proposed rulemaking requires students to enroll in Algebra I by 10th grade unless the school is granted further flexibility to this requirement through a competency-based waiver, while acknowledging that a specific three-course sequence is required for graduation from high school;

**WHEREAS**, the State Board of Education held working sessions on January 6, 2016, February 3, 2016, March 2, 2016 and public hearings on December 16, 2015, January 20, 2016, February 17, 2016 where the Board discussed the proposed rulemaking and received public testimony ;

**WHEREAS**, the comment period officially closed on February 22, 2016, with the State Superintendent having received numerous comments from advocates and members of the regulated community;

**WHEREAS**, the proposed rules allow students to receive credit for demonstrated knowledge in any required course and the State Superintendent received several comments regarding

subsection 2203.7(b), which would allow students to receive a unit equivalent to a Carnegie Unit for attaining a minimum score on an OSSE approved assessment and accordingly the State Superintendent does not adopt subsection 2203.7(b) as included in the Notice of Proposed Rulemaking but rather reserves the subsection to allow for further examination of this issue;

**WHEREAS**, the State Superintendent received several comments requesting the proposed rules increase the Physical and Health Education graduation requirements to 2.0 Carnegie Units, however, the State Superintendent will be working with the State Board of Education to conduct a broader review of the courses required for graduation in the near future;

**WHEREAS**, the State Board of Education finds that the final rulemaking may assist students at all levels of academic performance by eliminating barriers to meeting individual educational needs and by promoting competency-based learning that ensures students advance with the requisite knowledge to be successful;

**NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT**, on March 16, 2016, the State Board approves the final rulemaking implementing the High School Credit Flexibility Task Force's recommendations.

Date Adopted: March 16, 2016 Signed: \_\_\_\_\_