

SBOE High School Graduation Requirements Task Force Final Recommendations

Introduction

The D.C. State Board of Education (State Board) has statutory duties to advise the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) on education regulations and to vote on the approval of high school graduation requirements proposed by OSSE. OSSE initiated the process of revising graduation requirements in 2025. In anticipation of receiving OSSE's proposal, in April 2025, the State Board passed [SR25-7, *Initiating the Creation of a High School Graduation Requirements Task Force*](#), convening a diverse group of stakeholders to review and make recommendations on the proposed changes. OSSE presented their proposed requirements to the State Board on September 30, 2025.

In October 2025, the State Board passed [SR25-13, *Establishing Membership of the High School Graduation Requirements Task Force*](#).¹ The task force brings together individuals from across D.C.'s education and workforce landscape, including teachers, parents, students, policymakers, and economic development leaders. The task force was chaired by the co-chairs of the State Board's College, Career, and Life Readiness (CCLR) Committee and included the CCLR Committee members, in addition to 22 other stakeholders. Membership was filled by two methods: invitation extended to partner agencies and organizations in the Washington, D.C., education policy ecosystem; and a blind application process open to all members of the city-wide community to ensure diverse representation among selected members.

The task force met from October 2025 through April 2026. They studied OSSE's proposal, consulted public feedback and relevant research, and heard from experts and stakeholders from D.C.'s education landscape. The task force voted on the changes proposed by OSSE, as well as additional proposals from task force members. Note that task force members were not required to vote on every proposal and proposed modification, so the vote counts listed may not add up to the full number of task force members. The report below includes the task force's **final recommendations** to the Board for each proposed change.

Recordings of all task force meetings are available on [DC SBOE's YouTube page](#). Materials from engagement sessions and public feedback related to the graduation requirements are available in [DC SBOE's Dropbox](#).

Task Force Members

Robert Henderson, (co-chair)	Ward 5 Representative, D.C. State Board of Education
Eboni-Rose Thompson (co-chair)	Ward 7 Representative, D.C. State Board of Education
LaJoy Johnson-Law	Ward 8 Representative, D.C. State Board of Education
Sitara Mazumdar	Student Representative, D.C. State Board of Education
Issa Ouarid	Student Representative, D.C. State Board of Education
Elleni Abebe	Teacher, District of Columbia Public Schools
Beli Acharya	Executive Director, Construction Trades Workforce Initiative
Vanessa Anderson	Director, Early College and Advanced Academics, Friendship Collegiate Public Charter School
Tanya Borachi	Director, Education and Workforce Initiatives, Federal City Council
Clara Botstein	Chief of Staff, Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education
Aniya Coffey	George Mason University Student and D.C. Graduate, Class of 2024
Dan Davis	Chief Student Advocate, Office of the Student Advocate
Kristie Dennis	Manager, Sector Planning and Compliance, D.C. Public Charter School Board
Laura Fuchs	President, Washington Teachers' Union
LaTasha Gross	Special Education Teacher, District of Columbia Public Schools
Chandra Goodman	Training, Skills & Development Manager, Workforce Investment Council
Christina Hanson	DCPS Parent, Educator, and Executive Director, CARE Anacostia
Arlen Herrell	Senior Deputy Director, Department of Employment Services
Bridget Jackson	Chief of Staff, Two Rivers Public Charter School

Chimere Jones	Director of Policy and Planning, Postsecondary & Career Education, OSSE
Sita Ramamurti	Dean, College of Arts and Sciences, Trinity Washington University
Cathy Reilly	Executive Director, Senior High Alliance of Parents, Principals and Educators
Sally Schwartz	Executive Director, Globalize DC
Yvette Selby-Mohamadu	Board Member, Parents Amplifying Voices in Education
Glenn Starnes	Senior Deputy Chief, SEAD Strategy, District of Columbia Public Schools
Alexander Ting	Student and Student Advisory Committee Member
Emily West	Senior Vice President, Policy & Initiatives, Greater Washington Partnership

Letter from the Co-Chairs

The District of Columbia's graduation requirements set the foundation for what we want all of our students to achieve. As one task force member puts it, the requirements establish what DC students have a right to learn. DC's graduation requirements have been among the most rigorous in the nation; we want to keep them that way.

Setting the minimum requirements is the easy part. The more difficult, essential work is making sure that all of our students, including special education students, can achieve them. That is the work of parents, teachers, administrators, really the whole of DC, and, of course, most importantly, the students themselves. It is up to all of us to ensure that students have the supports and resources that equip them to succeed, not just checking the box for completing requirements, but being substantively prepared for their futures, whatever path that might take. We want each credit earned to represent the substantial learning that comes from consistent attendance, sustained engagement, and rigorous intellectual challenge. Ultimately, the value of a DC graduate's diploma in the world depends on the degree of preparedness that institutions of higher education and employers can reliably expect from the DC graduates they admit, hire, and train.

The following report reflects the recommendations of the SBOE High School Graduation Requirements Task Force. The task force met eight times from October 2025 through April 2025 to consider graduation requirements revisions proposed by the Office of the State Superintendent of Education as well as additional proposals made by task force members. The task force held three public engagement sessions and conducted a survey with 157 respondents to gather additional public feedback on the proposals. In addition to considering this public feedback, the task force discussed each proposal among its members as well as with OSSE staff and invited experts. Task Force members drew on this discussion as well as their experiences and those of their networks (in some cases informal contacts and in other cases the constituencies of groups they represent such as the Washington Teachers Union, public charter schools, PAVE, etc.).

The recommendations that follow reflect the majority vote of the task force. In some cases, we achieved consensus; in others, the group was more divided. In either case, the report conveys dissenting views so that readers can see the main tensions and arguments that surfaced over each recommendation. Our discussions invariably turned to questions over implementation, and the report conveys concerns and suggestions from the task force related to each of the proposals.

We request that the members of the State Board accord due weight to the deliberations and recommendations of the task force, even as we recognize that these

recommendations are not binding. The task force has wrestled over questions of equity and access, implementation, and more, and we expect that you will as well; let our work be a guide and help to you.

Sincerely,

Robert Henderson, State Board Representative, Ward 5, Task Force Co-chair

Eboni-Rose Thompson, State Board Representative, Ward 7, Task Force Co-chair

Recommendation One: Postsecondary Plan

OSSE proposes that students have at least three postsecondary planning touchpoints with an advisor, stating that counselors, career technical education staff, teachers, or administrators can lead postsecondary planning work. Touchpoints should occur at minimum in 9th, 11th, and 12th grades.

Recommendation and Rationale

The task force recommends that OSSE **increase the number of touchpoints in the proposal to four, with a minimum of one in each year of high school**. The task force also recommends that OSSE specify touchpoints must include a conversation between the advisor and student, and that the requirement cannot be satisfied solely through the use of software. With these modifications, the task force supports this proposed change, with 21 votes in favor and 0 votes against.

On the modification to include four postsecondary planning touchpoints, with a minimum of one touchpoint in each grade of high school, 19 task force members voted in favor and 0 voted against. Feedback received from students indicated that many students feel that 10th grade should be included in postsecondary planning, as students transition from the start of high school to selecting pathways for their final two years. Task force members also expressed that 10th grade was an important year to include.

On the modification to specifically require that the touchpoints include an in-person conversation between the advisor and student, 19 task force members voted in favor and 0 voted against. Task force members expressed concerns that schools may count the usage of advising software as a touchpoint and wanted to ensure that advising includes in-person planning conversations between the advisor and student.

Recommendations for Implementation

Task force members expressed a desire for more guidance and training for advisors. In particular, some task force members expressed that advisors should have training in helping to see children's full potential and communicating the implications of different course and pathway options they choose in high school. Members also expressed that advisors need training in all of the options and pathways that are available to students.

Some task force members also shared a desire for more oversight from OSSE to ensure that schools are completing the minimum number of postsecondary touchpoints with fidelity.

Minority Opinion and Additional Discussion

Some task force members expressed that the number of proposed touchpoints is insufficient, and that postsecondary planning should include three touchpoints for each year of high school.

Some task force members also expressed that the term “touchpoints” is not reflective of what should occur in an advising meeting and suggested finding an alternative term.

Some task force members proposed combining the postsecondary planning with the proposed career preparation course, allowing for touchpoints to occur during that class. They suggested making the course title more inclusive of students’ postsecondary options with a name such as “College and Career Preparation.”

Recommendation Two: Capstone Project

OSSE proposes that all students complete a capstone project demonstrating fluency in characteristics and competencies from the DC Graduate profile.

Recommendation and Rationale

With only three votes in favor, the task force **does not recommend the proposal to require all students to complete a capstone project**. While many task force members see the benefits of capstone projects, they do not think that it should be a requirement for all students, or a requirement for all local education agencies (LEAs) to provide. Additionally, many task force members expressed concerns about the resources and staff time it would take for schools to support all students in completing a capstone project. At the January 2026 task force meeting, the task force heard from educators at BASIS DC who support the school’s optional capstone program. Many task force members expressed after the presentation that most schools do not have the resources to support such a comprehensive program.

Recommendations for Implementation

If implemented, the task force recommends that OSSE should offer additional resources and guidance to LEAs.

Minority Opinion and Additional Discussion

While the vote was nearly unanimous, some task force members see the value of capstone projects and encourage OSSE to continue researching and developing this proposal, supporting school capacity-building for implementation, and incentivizing adoption before potentially reconsidering it as a requirement in the future.

Recommendation Three: Endorsement Options

OSSE proposes creating four diploma endorsement options. Students can choose to pursue endorsements in Career and Technical Education (CTE), Advanced coursework, an Individualized endorsement, and/or a Seal of Biliteracy option. Selection of and participation in an endorsement is optional.

Recommendation and Rationale

The task force recommends the proposed endorsement options with several modifications. The task force recommends modifications including separating the Advanced coursework endorsement into three separate endorsements, requiring LEAs to offer at least one endorsement option, ensuring all students have access to the Seal of Biliteracy, clarifying the GPA requirement for the Advanced Placement (AP) endorsement option, and creating a process to review new endorsement proposals over time. With these modifications, the task force voted to recommend the proposal for diploma endorsements with 19 votes in favor and 0 votes against.

On the modification to separate the Advanced coursework endorsement into an AP endorsement, an International Baccalaureate (IB) endorsement, and a Dual enrollment endorsement, there were 17 votes in favor, one vote against, and one abstention. Task force members expressed that the coursework for these options is different and that the endorsements should reflect the specific work completed by the student.

On the modification for OSSE to require LEAs to offer at least one endorsement option, there were 17 votes in favor and 0 votes against. One of the main concerns discussed by the task force has been the need to balance equitable offerings across schools with consideration of the resources required by LEAs to offer endorsement options. The task force considered whether LEAs should be required to offer all endorsement options, or whether the recommendation should explicitly state that it is optional for LEAs to offer endorsements. Ultimately, the task force voted to recommend that all LEAs offer at least one endorsement for students.

On the modification for OSSE to ensure equitable access to the Seal of Biliteracy for all students, 18 votes in favor and 0 votes against. While this endorsement can be earned through competency-based demonstration of language proficiency that students may have reached outside of school courses, task force members raised concerns about equitable access to higher-level language courses at some schools. Task force members expressed that all students, including non-native speakers, should be able to access four years of courses in one language to be able to pursue the Seal of Biliteracy.

With 19 votes in favor and one vote against, the task force recommends that OSSE create an endorsement review process to refine and add endorsements over time. With 16 votes in favor, three votes against, and one abstention, the task force recommends that OSSE consider endorsements for a capstone project, work-based learning, and additional community service under this review process. Task force members suggested that the capstone and additional community service endorsements would offer a way for students to be recognized for these activities without making them requirements for all students. Task force members suggested the Work-based learning endorsement to recognize student work in internship, apprenticeship, and similar programs.

Finally, with 19 votes in favor and one vote against, the task force voted to recommend that the minimum GPA requirement for the AP Advanced coursework endorsement option be changed to an unweighted GPA of 3.0 to make it the same standard as for the IB option.

Recommendations for Implementation

Task force members have suggested that OSSE provide additional resources to schools to help them implement endorsement options. Some members also recommend expanding access to endorsements through hubs such as the Advanced Technical Center, which can help provide more equitable access for students who attend smaller schools or schools that do not offer these options

Minority Opinion and Additional Discussion

As discussed above, some task force members proposed making the endorsements explicitly optional for LEAs to offer, arguing that LEAs may not have the resources or capacity to offer endorsements that may require offering additional course options. Others proposed a delayed timeline for requiring LEAs to offer endorsement options to give them more time to implement the proposal. Some task force members expressed that having LEAs offering different options would contribute to inequity across schools, with some students having access to more options than others. While the task force ultimately decided to recommend that LEAs should be required to offer at least one endorsement, this remains a concern for some members.

Recommendation Four: Core Content Updates

OSSE proposes to amend the mathematics course requirements, maintaining 4.0 required credits but changing the requirement to complete Algebra II with “Algebra II or an equivalent integrated math course.” OSSE proposes reducing the required science credits from 4.0 to 3.0, including Biology and one other lab science. OSSE proposes amending the

1.5 required credits of Health/Physical Education to 1.0 credit of Physical Education and 0.5 credit of Health Education.

OSSE also proposes adding a financial literacy course and a career preparation course to the required subjects. OSSE proposes to maintain the English, social studies, world language, art, music, and electives requirements.

Recommendation and Rationale

Mathematics: With 20 votes in favor and 0 votes against, the task force recommends specifying that the “equivalent integrated math course” should be “Integrated Math III,” and with 19 votes in favor and 0 votes against, supports the proposal with this modification. The task force recommends this change to ensure that the alternative course meets the same level of rigor as Algebra II. With concerns about ensuring students continue to have access to Algebra II, the task force also voted to recommend that OSSE require LEAs to offer both Algebra II and Integrated Math III (13 votes in favor), require LEAs to offer Algebra II at all high school campuses (15 votes in favor), and to require schools offering Integrated Math III to continue offering Algebra II (14 votes in favor). Task force members expressed concerns that if Algebra II is not a requirement for all students, some schools may choose to only offer the alternative course and limit students’ equitable access to Algebra II. In supporting an alternative advanced math option, some task force members noted that Algebra II should not be a requirement for students not planning to pursue a science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) career and that it can be a barrier to graduation for those students.

Science: With eight votes in favor, 10 votes against, and two abstentions, the task force narrowly recommends keeping science graduation requirements at 4.0 credits. Task force members expressed concerns about reducing required science courses, as science and environmental literacy are crucial to understanding climate change and other current issues. Task force members also expressed concerns that this proposal would lead schools to only offer three science options, limiting students’ options to take additional science courses if desired. Another concern raised was how this would impact science teachers and that it may lead LEAs to reduce their science teacher workforces.

Health/Physical Education: With 19 votes in favor and one vote against, the task force recommends this proposal. The task force members did not raise any concerns about this proposal.

Financial Literacy: With 20 votes in favor and 0 votes against, the task force recommends the proposed requirement of 0.5 credits in financial literacy, with the modification of allowing LEAs to incorporate it into Math or Economics courses. The

public feedback received from current and recent students emphasized the need for financial literacy to be taught in school. The task force voted to recommend that LEAs be allowed to offer the required 0.5 credit incorporated into a math or economics course rather than a stand-alone course, with 15 votes in favor of this modification and six votes against.

Career Preparation: With five votes in favor, 12 votes against, and three abstentions, the task force voted not to recommend a required 0.5 credit in career preparation. Task force members have shared concerns about the lack of standards for this course, as well as the need for training for educators who would teach this course. Many task force members expressed skepticism that this course would be valuable for students. Before the final vote on the proposal, the task force voted in favor of modifying it to state that some CTE courses should count as credit for this course, with 16 votes in favor, one against, and four abstentions.

Recommendations for Implementation

Mathematics: As discussed above, many task force members have expressed that OSSE should ensure that Algebra II remains an option for students at all schools. Task force members also recommended that students and families are informed about how course options such as choosing Integrated Math III over Algebra II will affect postsecondary options such as 4-year college admissions.

Science: Some members have suggested that OSSE should ensure all students still have access to four science course options at every school.

Health/Physical Education: The task force did not have any implementation recommendations for Physical Education and Health Education.

Financial Literacy: The task force recommends that OSSE offer support and guidance to LEAs on implementation and training for teachers who will be teaching the course.

Career Preparation: While the task force voted not to recommend this course, members suggested developing state standards for the course and offering guidance and training for LEAs on implementation if the change goes ahead.

Note that the task force did not discuss in detail how their recommendations on the core content requirements would impact the total number of required credit hours. Keeping 4.0 required credits of science and adding 0.5 required credits in financial literacy would raise the total credit requirements by 0.5 credits.

Minority Opinion and Additional Discussion

Mathematics: While a majority of the task force ultimately supported this proposal with the specification of Integrated Math III, some task force members shared concerns that Algebra II is an admissions requirement for most 4-year universities and that students will have their postsecondary opportunities limited if they take an alternative course. One task force member also cited a letter from the DC Department of Energy and Environment noting that Algebra II is a prerequisite for apprenticeships such as those provided by the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers.

Science: Some task force members expressed that 3.0 credits of science is sufficient for students not choosing to pursue a STEM degree or career, and that reducing the requirement allows students more time to pursue subjects that interest them.

Financial Literacy: Some members have shared concerns about schools' ability to find qualified educators to teach the course and make it valuable for students. While a majority of the task force voted to allow LEAs to incorporate financial literacy into a math or economics course, others noted that the comprehensive state standards for financial literacy would be challenging to fit into another course.

Career Preparation: Some task force members expressed that this course could allow for more equity in students' exposure to career skills and opportunities. Others noted that the course could be used as a time for LEAs to implement the postsecondary planning touchpoints in Recommendation One.

Recommendation Five: Community Engagement

OSSE proposes to expand the current volunteer community service regulation to "community engagement," as well as reduce the number of hours from 100 to 60. OSSE defines community engagement as paid or unpaid activities outside of school consisting of civic duty addressing the needs or challenges faced by others, using knowledge gained in the classroom to solve real-world problems, or shaping the environment or community in positive and/or productive ways.

Recommendation and Rationale

With 17 votes in favor, three votes against, and one abstention, the task force recommends the change from 100 required hours to at least 60 hours, with some clarification on which hours count. With 13 votes in favor and five votes against, the task force also recommends the expansion to "community engagement" with tighter guardrails around which paid opportunities count. The task force discussions around this topic centered around the desire to reduce barriers for students who may have

difficulty meeting requirements due to family or other obligations, while still maintaining high standards and the benefits of community service. Most task force members agreed that the reduction in hours and expanded definition to community engagement will reduce barriers while still maintaining benefits.

As shared above in Recommendation Three, some task force members proposed a diploma endorsement option to honor students who complete service hours beyond the requirement. A majority of task force members voted to recommend that hours completed during the school day count if not for a grade (19 votes in favor, 0 votes against, one abstention), and in a close vote, that hours completed in the summer before high school count (11 votes in favor, five votes against, three abstentions). With 17 votes in favor, one vote against, and two abstentions, the task force voted that a tighter definition of community service is needed to ensure that only opportunities that have a real community benefit are counted.

Recommendations for Implementation

The task force recommends that if this proposal is implemented, OSSE should issue clear guidance on which opportunities meet the requirement and training for practitioners who are approving student hours.

Minority Opinion and Additional Discussion

Some task force members were in favor of maintaining the requirement of 100 hours and expressed that reducing the requirement would lower standards for graduation. On the proposed expansion from “community service” to “community engagement,” some task force members shared doubts that paid opportunities such as employment, internships, and apprenticeships really serve a societal benefit that should be included for this requirement and that allowing any paid opportunities undermines the requirement. They said that practitioners in schools who are responsible for approving hours will be put in difficult positions to determine whether paid opportunities should count.

Recommendation Six: Diploma Option for Students with Disabilities

OSSE proposes a Practical Studies Diploma for qualifying students with disabilities under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) who can complete coursework that is more advanced than what is required for the certificate of completion, but whose disability makes them unable to attain the standard diploma. The diploma is intended to prepare students for employment, career training, independent living, or workforce development programming that could provide an on-ramp to college.

Recommendation and Rationale

With two votes in favor, 13 votes against, and seven abstentions, the task force does not recommend the proposed Practical Studies Diploma. Task force members expressed concerns that this diploma option does not provide students with a meaningful credential that can be used to access postsecondary education or employment options. Another concern expressed was that students who could achieve the standard diploma may be tracked into this option and that students and families will not understand how this pathway will limit postsecondary options. Task force members expressed that they wanted to see more data on the target population and whether this diploma option's specific modifications to math and world language requirements would fully address barriers to graduation for this population. It should be noted that several task force members abstained from the votes on the Practical Studies Diploma, suggesting that it was outside their area of expertise.

Recommendations for Implementation

Although the task force does not support this proposal, if implemented, the task force recommends that OSSE provide clear guidance and training to LEAs and educators to ensure that students are not placed on the wrong track when they can complete more advanced coursework. This includes communication with students and families about how different tracks, including this proposed option and the certificate of completion, will impact postsecondary options.

Task force members suggested that explicit agreements with employers and higher education institutions should be in place before this diploma option is implemented to ensure it will be a meaningful credential that will lead to employment or career training.

Many task force members also suggested that OSSE conduct oversight of this diploma option to monitor whether students who could achieve the standard diploma are being incorrectly placed on this track.

Minority Opinion and Additional Discussion

A small number of task force members expressed that this proposed diploma option could provide an opportunity for some students at risk of dropping out of school without a credential, and that it would be better than the status quo for these students.

Some task force members shared an alternative proposal that would incorporate more flexibility for all students into the course requirements for the standard diploma, including allowing students to take Cultural Competency as a pathway toward the world language requirement. This proposal modifies the requirements for the standard diploma option and is not limited to students with disabilities, addressing federal regulations that to count as a

standard diploma, a diploma must align to the state standards for graduation. In response, some members expressed that increased flexibility could risk lowering standards and may lead LEAs to stop offering more rigorous options. With six votes in favor, nine votes against, and six abstentions, the task force ultimately did not support this proposal. Another component of the alternative proposal included allowing IEP teams to modify requirements for some students with disabilities to achieve the standard diploma. After reviewing guidance from the U.S. Department of Education that a similar proposal would risk denying students of post-graduation disability services, including the right to a free appropriate public education (FAPE) under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), no task force members voted in favor of this option.

Other Recommendations

Some task force members have made proposals for changes to the graduation requirements outside of the above six proposals from OSSE.

Advanced Studies Diploma Proposal

One task force member submitted a proposal for an **advanced diploma option**.¹ This proposed offering is modeled after similar options in other states and requires additional coursework beyond the standard diploma, including a third year of world language, an advanced math course after Algebra II, 100 hours of community service, and completion of two AP, IB, or dual enrollment courses. The proposal includes a requirement that all LEAs offer this diploma option. **With seven votes in favor, 11 votes against, and three abstentions, the task force does not recommend this proposal.** While some members felt this option would ensure that the updated graduation requirements raise the ceiling for students in addition to the floor and allow for students to be recognized for high achievement, others expressed concerns that it could lead to the tracking of students into different diploma pathways and inequity in access to different pathways. Some task force members expressed that the diploma endorsement options fulfilled the purpose of honoring higher achievement.

Competency-Based Credit for World Languages Proposal

Another proposal submitted was for **competency-based credit for world languages**.² This proposal includes allowing students to earn course credit for world languages learned outside of school based on competency-based assessment. **With 20 votes in favor and**

¹ See the full proposal on [DC SBOE's Dropbox](#)

² See the full proposal on [DC SBOE's Dropbox](#).

two votes against, the task force recommends this proposal. Task force members expressed that this proposal would help to address inequity in student access to world language courses across different schools. Some task force members shared concerns that it may disincentivize LEAs from expanding language course options in schools.

Competency-Based Credit for Electives Proposal

Another proposal submitted was for **competency-based credit for electives** through OSSE-approved out-of-school-time programs.³ This proposal includes allowing students to earn competency-based elective course credit for standards-aligned content learned in specific programs outside of school. **With eight votes in favor, six votes against, and one abstention the task force narrowly supports this proposal.** Task force members expressed that this proposal would help to address inequity in student access to courses across different schools. Some task force members shared concerns that it may disincentivize LEAs from expanding course options in schools.

³ See the full proposal on [DC SBOE's Dropbox](#).