

## **WORKING PAPER - HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS REVIEW TASK FORCE**

**SEPTEMBER, 2012**

This paper and subsequent versions seek to provide a framework that will guide discussions of the Task Force. It and the other versions will be organized around the following categories.

- Decisions that have been ratified by formal action
- Decisions that have been made.
- Issues that are being considered.
- Issues that yet need to be considered.

### **DECISIONS THAT HAVE BEEN RATIFIED BY FORMAL ACTION**

To date, the following decisions have been ratified by formal action.

1. To recommend that the requirement that students take end of course exams in specific subject areas be eliminated. The reasons for this decision are:
  - The degree of standardization that would result from this requirement would stifle ongoing curriculum development and improvement due to the need to change the end of course exams every time a substantial change needs to be made in the content of the course. Changing end of course exams would be a time and money consuming project and as such, would be a motivator to not engage in curriculum development and improvement.
  - Lack of funding has itself stifled the development of end of course exams to date. Presently only one of the specified exams, Algebra I, is being developed. There are presently no funds available for the development of any other exams and there may not be sufficient funding available for even the completion of the Algebra I exam.
  - The implementation of the Common Core standards and the Smarter Balance Assessment System will result in the set of common expectations for student performance and the promotion of rigor that the end of course exams were intended to produce.
2. To recommend that a procedure be established whereby districts that want to pilot multiple pathways for graduation requirements can do so with permission from the Commissioner of education which permission would be granted if the proposed multiple pathways meet pre-established requirements.

### **DECISIONS THAT HAVE BEEN MADE**

1. To preserve the rigor that has been established by the requirements specified in the secondary school reform program.
2. To consider a position paper on the extent to which graduation requirements should be based on demonstration of mastery as opposed to seat time.

3. To recommend that the implementation of student success plans be monitored with a view towards determining whether there is sufficient staff capacity at the school level to implement the plans beyond mere compliance towards determining the level of staff capacity that would be required if there is to be annual reviews of the plans after students complete the ninth, tenth and eleventh grades of their high school experience.

### **ISSUES THAT ARE BEING CONSIDERED**

If Carnegie Units are to be completely or partially preserved, the following issues would be under consideration.

- Tighter definitions and specifications within the 25 credit requirement.
- Alignment of graduation requirements with the Common Core.
- Elimination of the eighteen hour separate requirement for drug and alcohol abuse education and integrating coverage of this topic with health and safety education.
- Greater specification of credits in Mathematics and Science
- Provision of exemptions from the foreign language credit requirement.
- Restatement of the science credit requirements in terms of the Next Generation Science Standards.
- Reduction of the minimum credit requirement to twenty.
- Restatement of credit requirements in terms of umbrella concepts.

Apart from these issues, the following ones have been identified for consideration regarding student success plans.

- Required annual review of student success plans or at least after ninth grade.
- Staff capacity for implementation of student success plans.
- Use of student success plans as basis for individual learning plans for every student that would afford students multiple pathways for learning.
- Calculation of graduation rate calculations.