

STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION – TOPIC SUMMARY

Topic: High School Diploma

Date: June 15, 2006

Staff/Office: Salam Noor, Pat Burk, Doug Kosty, ODE; Cam Preus-Braly, CCWD

Action Requested:

Information only First/Second Reading Policy Adoption Policy Adoption/Consent Calendar
 Policy Discussion Signal Field Stakeholder Input Bd. Leanings Identified Stakeholder Input Policy Decision

Priority:

Alignment 3 R's Assessment Resources/Accountability Communication
 Access Accountability Governance Success for All Students System Integration

ISSUE BEFORE THE BOARD: Adoption of preliminary high school diploma requirements.

BACKGROUND: The primary goal identified of the State Board of Education at its August 2005 Retreat was to examine current high school graduation requirements in light of research, particularly Achieve's American Diploma Project, as well as OUS requirements and other states' requirements regarding the knowledge and skills today's students need to succeed in their next steps.

History before the Board: The board has been regularly exploring this topic for the last year.

Concepts Supported by the Board

1. The current high school diploma requirements are too low: they need to be more rigorous.
2. Carnegie Units and course titles are widely understood and should not be abandoned.
3. The system will allow course credit if the student demonstrates proficiency.
4. The board will require specific courses, and specific course content.
5. Students will be required to develop a student plan & profile.
6. Incorporate the proficiencies from the CIM and the CAM (if the standards review supports this) into the diploma requirements and eliminate the CIM and the CAM as separately named certificates. Some conditioned this support with the requirement that the content standards be reduced to those linked to student success.
7. Create a single, rigorous, statewide standards diploma targeted at college and workforce readiness, as the default diploma. With school and parent approval, students may choose to earn alternative diploma based on student plan and profile. The plan for the alternative diploma must include specific learning goals connected with specific career or life outcomes outlined in student plan and profile. There was interest in not calling the alternate diploma by that name.¹
8. Ensure that students get the assistance they need if they are not meeting standards as they progress through school (as opposed to an 8th grade certificate).
9. Students should have to demonstrate "core capabilities." reflecting broad skills that cut across classes; these would likely include some of the CIM and CAM proficiencies.
10. Students must complete an "extended application."
11. Proficiency can be demonstrated through a number of pathways: statewide exams, use of a college entrance exam series, or assessments selected by the local district with documented alignment to content standards (e.g. end-of-course exams, senior projects, industry certification, AP or IB exams); these methods are accepted by post-secondary schools.
12. A national exam (i.e. ACT, SAT) should be available to high school students.
13. ODE does have a role in supporting formative assessments.
14. The P-16 system should be aligned, with course content agreed upon and recognized across sectors.
15. A credit of science should be added.

¹ Chair Squire commented that the single diploma should be rigorous enough to qualify for new federal grant program, however add'l research indicates that such a diploma may require more than has so far been discussed. Pat Burk will present those requirements in June.

16. Benchmark scores should be aligned and calibrated to ensure that students are ready for next steps (may mean moving high school assessment from 10th to 11th grade and changing cut scores)?²

Concepts Yet To Be Decided:

1. Should a student be able to graduate from high school and leave the building to continue their education once they have earned the requisite credits, or should they be required to stay for a minimum amount of time and use that time to explore electives, career choices, or earn college credit?
2. Should high school graduation requirements be the same as OUS entry requirements?
3. Should second languages be required? If so, should proficiency be assessed only in high school?
4. Should the arts be required or continue to be an option with second languages?
5. What is the purpose of assessments?
6. Should the math problem-solving assessment be re-activated and maintained?
7. Should the writing assessment be maintained?
8. Should the board define grade-level content area requirements?
9. Should the board define grade-level proficiencies/benchmarks?
10. Should a college entrance exam or community college placement test be the high school test?
11. Should community college placement tests/scores be standardized?

Longer Term Activities

- Performance standards and proficiency levels in the content standards will need to be established.

Goals for June:

- Complete making decisions on preliminary board leanings on major questions regarding the diploma.
- Modify/approve new board position paper.

² Members may wish to see the results of the standards review and assessment review prior to making this decision.

Proposed Oregon Diploma Recommendations

Draft for Board Discussion

May 18, 2006

Introduction

A review of Board discussion and publications from August to April has determined the following:

- The current high school diploma requirements are too low: they need to be more rigorous.
- Carnegie Units and course titles are widely understood and should not be abandoned.
- Diploma requirements must align with college and workforce readiness.
- The personal education plan and profile should guide a student's high school experience and post-high school preparation.
- Students need to demonstrate proficiency to earn a diploma, but not through a single exit exam.
- The new diploma should incorporate the features of the CIM and CAM that are valuable.
- Students should be required to gain credit in specific courses/content for the diploma.
- Credit should be awarded for learning outside of seat time when proficiency is demonstrated.
- Credit through proficiency use and guidelines must be more apparent in the diploma.
- Greater clarity of definitions is needed.

Recommendations

The new Oregon high school diploma should have the following characteristics:

General Features

- It identifies a common core of knowledge and skills that every student must demonstrate.
- It is rigorous and prepares all students for next steps—college, work, and citizenship.
- It contains language that clearly communicates expectations to students, teachers, parents and the community at large.
- Credentials, including awards and recognitions of a student's demonstrated level of proficiency, should be part of the system.

Requirements

- Specific credit requirements are given for the core academic subjects.
- Credit requirements are tied to specific courses and content areas.
- It lists a set of common course titles that must contain an agreed upon body of content standards and a set of measures that ascertain whether that content has been learned. The evidence would go into the student's profile. Assumes that proficiency can come from any source, but recognize that many schools will follow a common pathway in curriculum design.
- Students must have a personal education plan and profile that includes participation in career-related learning experiences, demonstration of career-related learning standards and extended application.

Proficiency and Credit Options

- Proficiency may be used as an appropriate measure of academic and technical achievement.
- Students demonstrating proficiency in the standards tied to each course will gain the appropriate credit toward graduation.
- Performance standards and proficiency levels in the content standards will need to be established.
- Proficiency can be demonstrated through a number of pathways: statewide exams, use of a college entrance exam series, or assessments selected by the local district with documented alignment to content standards (e.g. end-of-course exams, senior projects, industry certification, AP or IB exams).
- Students who meet Oregon diploma requirements in less than four years have the option to graduate early—or enroll in post secondary courses while in high school.

- Students have incentives to engage in accelerated learning options and earn college credit while in high school.
- Middle school courses may count for high school credit, so long as students are required to meet the same performance criteria as the equivalent high school course.

Assessments

- Assessments must be aligned to state standards and should inform not only accountability but also teaching, learning and student planning.
- 11th/12th grade standards in English, mathematics, social sciences, and science may need to be developed and adopted. This will allow for greater alignment of the K-12 system with post secondary options.

Systems Alignment

- There are clearly defined and articulated pathways for students to enter and exit the system and to make informed decisions regarding education and training opportunities.
- There are incentives for institutions to collaborate and be innovative to meet the needs of students.
- Multiple methods and pathways to demonstrate proficiency are accepted by post secondary partners.

Oregon Diploma -- Proposed Requirements				
<i>Required for all students receiving a high school diploma</i>				
Subject	Current Credit Requirement	Proposed Credit Requirement	Courses/Topics Aligned with Standards	Proficiency Measures/ Comments: <i>Rather than relying on Carnegie units alone, students may earn credit by demonstrating proficiency in specific content areas through a variety of assessments methods</i>
English/ Language Arts	3 (4*)	4	Reading, Writing, Speaking & Listening, Literature	Primarily through meeting or exceeding performance standards on statewide assessments. Alternate methods include: use of a college entrance exam series, or assessments selected by the local district with documented alignment to content standards (e.g. end-of-course exams, senior projects, industry certification, AP or IB exams).
Mathematics	2 (3*)	3	Algebra, Geometry, Statistics	
Science	2	3	Physical Science, Life Science, Earth and Space Science	
Social Sciences	3	3	Civics and Government, Economics, Geography, History	
P.E.	1	1		
Health	1	1		Meet or exceed state content standards through district administration of local assessments tied to the performance requirements in these content areas.
Second Language, Arts, Applied Arts	1	3	Proficiency in 2 nd language at the level of second-year high school language course	
Focused Electives	9	6		Course selection is based on the Education Plan and Profile.
Total Credits	24	24		
Each student must have a personal education plan and profile that includes participation in career-related learning experiences and demonstration of career-related learning standards and extended application.				

* - House Bill 3129 raises the English and mathematics requirements for the class of 2010.

Diploma Terminology

Content Standard: A statement of what students are expected to know and be able to demonstrate in a particular subject area. Content standards are listed by grade level or benchmark year. The collection of standards form part of the academic core of knowledge and skills that is expected from all high school graduates. Examples of CIM level standards:

- English/Language Arts – *Write technical documents, such as a manual on rules of behavior for conflict resolution, procedures for conducting a meeting, or minutes of a meeting.*
- Social Sciences – *Identify and understand the causes of World War I and the reasons why the United States entered this war.*

Performance Standard: The targeted level of performance that describes the score expected of students on a state or local assessment, classroom work or collection of evidence.

Proficiency: Students are deemed proficient when they meet a targeted level of performance, such as a performance standard.

Honors Diploma

Although this proposal specifies a single diploma, the Board may consider an Honors diploma. We would recommend that an Honors diploma be tied to the rigor of the coursework taken and not merely a student's GPA. The Honors diploma may be based on criteria such as the number of AP courses, completion of an IB program, scores on state assessment tests, SAT, ACT, number of college credits earned, and other types of certificates (e.g. industry certification).

Implications

Although new diploma requirements will have intended positive consequences on student achievement and readiness for post high school experiences, there may be unintended consequences that at least in the short term may adversely impact various subgroups and populations such as ELL students, migrant students, and special education students. The financial impact on districts and schools will also be significant.

- Increasing graduation requirements may have a negative effect on elective courses available for students.
- Remediation and additional assistance will be required for students who do not reach mastery of the required core content.
- Some of the cost and effort in remediation may be transferred from post secondary education to the high schools.
- Current instructional programs in some districts may not be adequate for delivering the core level of proficiency that is linked to post-secondary education success.
- Current teaching corps may not be adequately prepared to deliver an expanded and more rigorous instructional program as additional course requirements are added to Oregon high schools.
- Significant costs associated with such a change and especially in teacher preparation, availability, compensation, and retention.
- Increased course and proficiency requirements may exacerbate equity issues and the widening of the Achievement Gap (at least in the short term). Other issues include raising the drop out rate; increase the number of at-risk students, and a decrease in post secondary participation may also be experienced in the short term.
- Readiness and capacity of the current system to accommodate such requirements including OUS, CCs and TSPC's ability to produce and license qualified teachers and administrators. The Board must consider the

current level of preparation of the Oregon educational workforce to fully implement current requirements and what will be needed to meet the increased demand.

Example for State Board Discussion – Sample Geometry “Core” Standards

The following is an example of how the standards might be reduced to a more condensed list. In this case, we have taken the high school Geometry standards and removed standards that are prerequisites for other standards on the list, or might be considered non-essential. In some cases the standards were edited for clarity and brevity. The standards list was reduced from 24 down to 13.

Sample “Core” Standards	Current Standards
<p>Properties and Relationships</p> <p>1.1 Determine defining properties that characterize classes of three-dimensional figures and their component parts.</p> <p>1.2 Determine the measures of corresponding parts of congruent and similar figures.</p> <p>1.3 Use trigonometric functions and angle and side relationships of right triangles to solve for an unknown length and determine distances and solve problems.</p> <p>1.4 Investigate relationships among chords, secants, tangents, inscribed angles, and inscribed and circumscribed polygons of circles.</p> <p>1.5 Construct and judge the validity of a logical argument and give counterexamples to disprove a statement.</p> <p>1.6 Justify and use theorems involving the properties of triangles, quadrilaterals, circles, and their component parts to verify congruence and similarity.</p>	<p>Properties and Relationships</p> <p>1.1 Determine defining properties that characterize classes of three-dimensional figures and their component parts.</p> <p>1.2 Recognize and represent three-dimensional figures and their component parts.</p> <p>1.3 Justify and use theorems involving the angles formed by parallel lines cut by a transversal.</p> <p>1.4 Develop, understand, and apply properties of circles and of inscribed and circumscribed polygons.</p> <p>1.5 Use measures of sides and of interior and exterior angles of polygons to classify figures and solve problems.</p> <p>1.6 Prove congruence of two triangles or their corresponding component parts.</p> <p>1.7 Determine the measures of corresponding angles, sides, and corresponding parts of congruent and similar figures.</p> <p>1.8 Use angle, side length and triangle inequality relationships to solve problems.</p> <p>1.9 Use trigonometric functions, and angle and side relationships of special right triangles (30- 60-right triangles and isosceles right triangles) to solve for an unknown length and determine distances and solve problems.</p> <p>1.10 Investigate relationships among chords, secants, tangents, inscribed angles, and inscribed and circumscribed polygons of circles.</p> <p>1.11 Construct and judge the validity of a logical argument and give counterexamples to disprove a statement.</p> <p>1.12 Justify and use theorems involving the properties of triangles, quadrilaterals, circles, and their component parts to verify congruence and similarity.</p>

<p>Modeling</p> <p>2.1 Model, sketch, label and construct basic elements of geometric figures (e.g., altitudes, midpoints, medians, angle bisectors, and perpendicular bisectors).</p> <p>2.2 Make a model of a three-dimensional figure from a two-dimensional drawing and make a two-dimensional representation of a three-dimensional object.</p>	<p>Modeling</p> <p>2.1 Model, sketch, label and where appropriate construct cones and spheres, and basic elements of geometric figures (e.g., altitudes, midpoints, medians, angle bisectors, and perpendicular bisectors) using compass and straightedge or technology.</p> <p>2.2 Describe how two or more objects are related in space (e.g., skew lines, the possible ways three planes might intersect).</p> <p>2.3 Make a model of a three-dimensional figure from a two-dimensional drawing and make a two-dimensional representation of a three-dimensional object through scale drawings, perspective drawings, blueprints or computer simulations.</p> <p>2.4 Recognize representations of three-dimensional objects from different perspectives and identify cross-sections of three-dimensional objects.</p>
<p>Coordinate Geometry</p> <p>3.1 Determine the relative placement (e.g., intersecting, parallel, perpendicular) of two lines on a coordinate plane given the algebraic equations representing them.</p> <p>3.2 Calculate slope, distance and midpoint between points.</p>	<p>Coordinate Geometry</p> <p>3.1 Determine the relative placement (e.g., intersecting, parallel, perpendicular) of two lines on a coordinate plane given the algebraic equations representing them.</p> <p>3.2 Calculate slope, distance and midpoint between points with an emphasis on practical applications (use coordinate formulas).</p>
<p>Transformations and Symmetry</p> <p>4.1 Determine whether a given pair of figures on a coordinate plane represent a translation, reflection, rotation and/or dilation.</p> <p>4.2 Determine the image of a figure on a coordinate graph under translations, reflections, and rotations.</p> <p>4.3 Analyze the congruence, similarity, and line or rotational symmetry of figures using transformations.</p>	<p>Transformations and Symmetry</p> <p>4.1 Use coordinate geometry to determine whether a figure is symmetrical with respect to a line or a point.</p> <p>4.2 Determine whether a given pair of figures on a coordinate plane represent a translation, reflection, rotation and/or dilation.</p> <p>4.3 Determine the image of a figure on a coordinate graph under translations, reflections, and rotations.</p> <p>4.4 Given a figure and its image on a coordinate graph, determine the translation vector or locate the axis of reflection.</p> <p>4.5 Determine the coordinates of and draw the dilation of a figure on a coordinate graphs.</p> <p>4.6 Analyze the congruence, similarity, and line or rotational symmetry of figures using transformations.</p>

SPECIAL EDUCATION IMPLICATIONS

The information below represents a summary of the findings from the national study on graduation requirements and diploma options. The summary includes the findings relative to consequences, intended and unintended, and serves as a reminder when creating a universal system on this topic.

Consequences of Requiring Students with Disabilities to Pass Exit Exams to Receive a Standard High School Diploma

Unintended Consequences

Some students get no diploma

Higher dropout rates because students frustrated with not passing exit exams

Lower student self-esteem

Conflicts with parents

Students stay in school longer

State and districts may need to have alternative pathways for students to exit

Intended Consequences

More participation in general education curriculum by more students

Higher expectations = more access to post secondary education and employment

Differences between general education & special education students reduced (same standards)

Exit exams give more meaning to diploma

Educators use differentiated instruction including accommodations

Consequences of Using a Single Diploma Option

Unintended Consequences

Fewer students with disabilities receive diploma

Students dropout because frustrated

Standard diploma perceived as sub par

States lower standards for general education students

More special education students stay in school until 21

Increased perceptions that accommodations unfair to general education students

Intended Consequences

High expectations for all students

More students with disabilities with a diploma

Consistent requirements for diploma

Employers and higher education institutions have clearer picture of student's performance

Sense of equity in how all students are viewed

Students have coursework that has direct connection to postsecondary education, jobs training and jobs

Consequences of Using Multiple Diploma Options

Unintended Consequences

IEP teams don't hold students accountable to pass exit exams (lower expectations)

Non-standard diplomas viewed as sub par

Intended Consequences

State maintains high academic standards for standard diploma

More students receive high school diploma

Use of multiple diplomas viewed as special tracks, difficult for students with disabilities to do

State and districts have more flexibility

Communication requirements to parents difficult

More options for students means more motivation

Access to post secondary education limited if alternate diplomas seen as watered down

Able to recognize students for higher levels of performance

Understanding diploma options and meanings of each may be confusing for employers

Consequences of Receiving an Alternative Diploma

Unintended Consequences

Alternative diplomas not valued by employers

Lower expectations for some students

Confusing for employers & post secondary education

Courses insufficient to meet post secondary education needs

Legal implications, especially if parents don't understand diploma "tracks"

Intended Consequences

Employers & post secondary education know what students' skills are based on diploma

Student receives something that signifies completion of high school

Opportunity to focus more on transition needs/functional skills

ASSESSMENT ISSUES

Recap:

1. No single exit exam. (10-0)
2. ODE does have a role to play in creating summative assessments. (9-1)
3. National assessment should be a high school assessment (OSAT maintained). (7-3)

Other Possible Issues Not Determined:

1. Whether to make national assessment available to 8/9th graders, to inform them of their strengths/weaknesses.
2. Whether to conduct a feasibility study to see if assessments could be made formative.
3. Whether community college placement test could/should be used as a high school exam.
4. Whether community college placement exams should be standardized (alignment issue).

For June:

Peer Review/Technical Advisory Committee report to be delivered in June

- o Whether to keep writing assessments
- o Whether to keep math problem-solving assessments
- o Whether to move the state high school assessment to 11th grade
- o Whether to change benchmark cut scores
- o Whether to develop benchmarks for each grade

For reference – arguments from March diploma discussion

Should a college admissions test be used as a high school assessment?

YES

Determine whether this should be:

The community college placement test: Would have to have OUS agreement to use this and all schools agree on cut scores.

ACT or SAT: Would need community colleges to agree to accept this in lieu of placement exams and OUS and community colleges to agree on cut scores.

Other? Describe what's desired, send out to bid.

BENEFITS:

- Students may be more motivated to do well, take more difficult courses.
- Using outside vendor such as ACT, may add credibility.
- Students/parents will save money, not having to pay for test, depending on the number of times the state allows re-tests.
- Community colleges may save time/money, not giving redundant placement tests.
- First step toward a "seamless" system.

CHALLENGES:

- Cost: Aligning non-state test to state standards or changing (all) state standards (for alignment) will cost money (amount undetermined).
- New high school test will need to align with tests administered in lower grades to comply with NCLB.
- May not be able to be incorporated into a growth model.
- Using outside vendor will likely be more expensive; no control over future costs (could be policy option package).
- Tests most likely won't be on-line.
- The state probably won't be able to offer more than one opportunity to test.
- The current 9-month long test window would probably be reduced to 1 day.
- All of ODE's and districts' communication, training, and documentation would need to be adjusted.
- Modification and accommodation panels would need to review options.
- Tests may not be available in Russian.
- Problematic for federal AYP purposes due to lack of consistent data; may have to run both tests for two years.
- More than likely, the score required for "meeting the standard" would be different than the score required for college admissions. In addition, the "norms" for the existing tests are based on college-bound seniors.
- Tests may not meet Oregon's standards for universal design.
- Oregon teachers would likely not be involved in writing items and scoring writing papers.
- May not be good use of student's time/state money for those not planning on college.

NO

If "no", then other questions need to be asked.

- Are current standards high enough?
- Is high school test taken at the best time?
- Should ODE continue acting as the prime contractor with state assessments or should it contract with an outside vendor to act as the prime contractor?
- What performance expectations do we hold for students exiting elementary, middle, and high school? Is it world class performance or basic proficiency? If the former, are we prepared to fund such a system and hold schools accountable for such a standard?
- Should we expand computer-based scoring for performance assessments (such as writing, math problem solving)?
- Should ODE focus more resources on reporting and analysis of assessment data to make the current system more meaningful to teachers, parents, and students?

BENEFITS:

- Saves money to keep existing tests.
- Oregon teachers write items and score writing papers.

- TESA delivery of state tests already established; less expensive and will become mandatory for all schools.

CHALLENGES:

See "Benefits" above

What is ODE's role in supporting formative and local assessments?

Inform instruction & Accountability

ARGUMENTS IN FAVOR:

- "Assessment for learning" rather than "assessment of learning" can be powerful means to improve student success.
- Assessment for learning can help make the student the primary consumer of the assessment system.
- Many districts don't have the resources to provide professional development for teachers regarding assessment literacy.
- Many districts are duplicating efforts in their attempts to do this work on their own.
- Teachers may view formative assessments as useful rather than a burden.
- Many different paradigms are available including providing documentation, guidance, training, offering item banks, and providing an option for tests to be either formative or summative.
- Local and formative assessments could be aligned to state content standards improving their technical adequacy.
- Data based decision making would be based on best practices and appropriate use of education data.

ARGUMENTS AGAINST:

- Cost: Any of the above options will require more funding and resources.
- Districts vary in their readiness for improvements in local and formative assessments.
- Teachers may put more stock in their own assessments to measure students.
- Districts see this as an encroachment on local control.

Accountability Only

ARGUMENTS IN FAVOR:

- Cost: assessments that measure school success can be shorter, less costly to design. Can keep existing assessments.
- Consistent with the designs of many other state assessment systems.

ARGUMENTS AGAINST:

Students and educators may not view assessment as credible or a good use of their time.

Last meeting, the Board agreed on the basic structure of the diploma requirements:

- Essential skills
- Course requirements
- Extended Learning Application
- Student Plan and Profile

This structure is illustrated in the diploma template.

Next Steps:

- 1) The Board must determine the specific content of each category of requirements:
 - a. Essential Skills
 - i. What Essential Skills will be required?
 - ii. Will all Essential Skills be required, or will some be optional (i.e. choose a certain number)?
 - b. Course Requirements
 - i. What courses will be required?
- 2) The Board must determine how all requirements will be assessed.

Issues to be resolved:

- 1) What Essential Skills should be included in the diploma requirements? Should all be required or should some be included in a group from which a certain number are required?
 - Option 1: (same as diploma template)

Demonstrate All

- Read and interpret a variety of texts.
- Write for a variety of purposes.
- Apply advanced math skills.
- Utilize technology.

Demonstrate At Least Six

- Understand the scientific method.
 - Research.
 - Public speaking and presentation.
 - Problem solving.
 - Teamwork.
 - Second language proficiency.
 - Civic and community responsibility.
 - Project management.
 - Financial literacy.
- Option 2: In *Demonstrate At Least Six* category, include “**Reason and problem solve,**” in place of separate “Problem solving,” “Apply advanced math skills,” and “Understand the scientific method,” skills.

- Option 3: In *Demonstrate All* category, include “**Employment and Career Foundations**,” in place of separate “Teamwork,” and “Project management,” skills.
- Option 4+: Other options from the Board.

2) How many credits of science should be required?

- Option 1: 2 credits (current requirements)
- Option 2: 3 credits

3) Should specific science courses be required?

- Option 1: Do not require any specific courses.
- Option 2: Require any 3 lab science courses.
- Option 3: Require 2 courses from Physics, Chemistry, and Biology plus any additional course.
- Option 4: Require 2 courses from Physics, Chemistry, and Biology plus an additional lab science course.
- Option 5: Require Physics, Chemistry, and Biology.

4) Should specific math courses be required?

- Option 1: No specific requirements.
- Option 2: All courses must be at Algebra I level or above.
- Option 3: Require:
 - Algebra I
 - Geometry
 - Unspecified additional course
- Option 4: Require:
 - Algebra I
 - Geometry
 - Algebra II.

5) Should second language courses be required?

- Option 1: 1 credit of second language or arts or applied arts (current requirements).

- Option 2: 3 credits of second language or arts or applied arts.
- Option 3: 2 credits of second language and 1 credit of arts or applied arts.

6) How should each essential skill be assessed? Assessment options may include any combination of the following options:

- Option 1: Statewide multiple choice exam (may be current Oregon state assessment or other standardized test to be determined later).
- Option 2: Statewide open answer exam, such as writing or math problem-solving (may be current Oregon state assessment or other standardized test to be determined later).
- Option 3: Local assessment using state-provided rubric.
- Option 4: Local assessment based on state content standards.
- Option 5: Local assessment with no state standards or scoring guidance.

7) How should course requirements be assessed?

- Option 1: Statewide exam.
- Option 2: Local assessment using state-provided rubric.
- Option 3: Teacher judgment (i.e. grades) based on state content standards.
- Option 4: Teacher judgment (i.e. grades) with no state standards or scoring guidance.

8) If course requirements are assessed based on some form of teacher judgment, what is the minimum grade or grade average that should be allowed for students to earn a high school diploma?

- Option 1: Students must have an overall 1.0 GPA (D average) and not fail any required course.
- Option 2: Students must have an overall 2.0 GPA (C average) and not fail any required course.
- Option 3: Students must have an overall x GPA and not fail any required course.
- Option 4: Students must not earn a grade lower than C- in any individual course.

9) Should the state mandate specific mechanisms for earning credit by proficiency?

- Option 1: Mandate specific mechanisms (i.e. specific exams) that schools must use as the only means for earning credit by proficiency in some or all subjects.
- Option 2: Mandate specific mechanisms that schools must allow students to use to earn credit by proficiency; permit schools and districts to adopt additional methods for earning credit by proficiency.
- Option 3: Recommend specific mechanisms that schools could use for credit by proficiency, but do not require schools their use.
- Option 4: State sets no requirements and makes no recommendations.

10) Given that standardized tests must be used for No Child Left Behind purposes and may be used for other purposes (such as measuring essential skills or benchmarking in the Oregon system), what test should be used?

- Option 1: Oregon State Assessment
- Option 2: A national, college-linked assessment such as the SAT or ACT.
- Option 3: A version of an Oregon higher education-specific test such as the community college placement test.

11) When should standardized test be given?

STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION – TOPIC SUMMARY

Topic: Background Information: Workforce Readiness Certificate
6/152006

Date:

Staff/Office: Cam Preus-Braly, Joanne Truesdell, CCWD

Action Requested:

Information only First/Second Reading Policy Adoption Policy Adoption/Consent Calendar
 Policy Discussion Signal Field Stakeholder Input Bd. Leanings Identified Stakeholder Input Policy Decision

Priority:

Alignment 3 R's Assessment Resources/Accountability Communication

ISSUE BEFORE THE BOARD: The State Board of Education and the Oregon Workforce Investment Board have similar interests in the use or the requirement of some type of workforce/career/employability certificate.

BACKGROUND:

Because of both boards having a similar interest in this topic, Willis Green & Associates, Inc. were asked to interview leaders of employer led organizations in Oregon to ascertain their views, use of and leadership of some type of workforce/career/employability certificate. At the May board meeting, the SBE saw a proposed policy option package that suggested that such a certificate would “provide a *career readiness* credential for core employability skills required across multiple industries and occupations certifies, *workforce readiness* of high school students, GED students and individuals who do not have a secondary degree or equivalent”. A status report follows for both boards to review.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Are the suggested next steps from the report reasonable and in line with the SBE work on a proficiency diploma?
2. What additional information is needed at this point to move forward?

**WORKFORCE READINESS CERTIFICATE
STATUS REPORT**
Prepared by Connie Green and Vicki Willis
Willis, Green & Associates, Inc.
June 2006

BACKGROUND

Beginning with the SCANS Commission in 1990, there have been ongoing discussions throughout the nation and in Oregon about how to ensure a workforce that is well prepared. The SCANS report and several Oregon surveys of employers (“Oregon Works”) made it clear that worker readiness was a key issue for business. Oregon’s Education Act for the 21st Century and the Workforce Quality Act of 1991 were early efforts to address the needs in Oregon. Although progress has been made on many issues, actual certification of workforce readiness has not been implemented as a statewide effort in Oregon. The statewide effort that comes closest is the adoption of the Career Plan and Profile as a secondary school requirement with business involvement in establishing the standards.

Nationally there are several efforts underway for a career or workforce readiness certificate. Virginia’s Governor Mark Warner began an effort in conjunction with seven other states – Virginia, Tennessee, Maryland, Delaware, Washington, D.C., North Carolina and Kentucky. This project has since spread to seventeen additional states with thirteen more poised for participation. The Career Readiness Certificate (CRC) uses three Work Keys assessments to determine how well workers can apply basic mathematical, reading and information gathering skills in the workplace.

A second national effort is being led by The Center for Workforce Preparation, funded and supported by the national Chamber of Commerce. This center is developing the Work Readiness Credential, part of the larger Equipped for the Future (EFF) product line. This credential has been pilot-tested in five states (FL, NJ, NY, RI, and WA) and the District of Columbia. Beginning later this summer, the U. S. Chamber of Commerce will be promoting this workforce readiness assessment process and credential nationwide.

A third certificate is being piloted here in Oregon in four of the Workforce regions: Region 2: Portland area; Region 3: Marion, Polk and Yamhill counties; Region 4: Linn, Benton and Lincoln Counties and Region 5: Lane County. All four regions are using an assessment process that was developed by Learning Resources, Inc. Their assessment is a video-based tool that is aimed at “soft skills:” interpersonal relations, work ethic, etc. LRI is partnering with CASAS (the company Oregon uses for Adult Basic Learning skill gain assessment) to provide an accompanying reading and math assessment that will provide a comprehensive “employability certificate.” This partnership has been finalized in the last month.

The effort to ensure an entry-level quality workforce is also a focus of many business groups. There are statewide efforts in specific clusters, such as the manufacturing cluster strategy to develop a statewide proof of workforce readiness. The Oregon Business Council Plan also asks for such a certificate as does the Oregon Workforce Investment Board (OWIB). Associated Oregon Industries (AOI) has identified college, career and work readiness for students among their top three educational initiatives

Thus the issue of workforce readiness has been and continues to be a significant concern for many Oregon businesses. The State Board of Education is pursuing standards for a high school diploma that ensures that graduates will be work, career and college ready. The Oregon Business Council (OBC) plan has recommended that employers and industry associations work with education boards and workforce systems to develop curricula and credentials that better connect education with economic opportunities.

The State Board of Education, the Oregon Workforce Investment Board, the Community Colleges and Workforce Development Department and the Department of Education have been working in concert to assess the level of interest in and the feasibility of deploying a statewide standardized skills assessment tool and work readiness certificate.

A key step in this process has been to clarify business perceptions to assist Oregon in determining the next steps. The Community Colleges and Workforce Development Department contracted with our firm to conduct individual and group interviews with selected business representatives. Business leaders were asked:

- What are the attributes and skills that should be “certified”?
- Should this assessment tool and certificate be used by all employers or only employers from specific industry clusters?
- Are employers likely to use, give preference to, or require a workforce readiness certificate with prospective employees?
- Should Oregon consider joining one of the national efforts underway?

To date we have interviewed representatives from National Federation Independent Businesses (NFIB), Associated Oregon Industries (AOI), Chamber of Commerce leadership throughout Oregon and Oregon Business Council (OBC). We have also talked with representatives from specific industry clusters (e.g., manufacturing, high tech, food processing) and other business leaders that were recommended to us. Over thirty leaders have shared their views. Also interviewed and included in the process were staff members from the four workforce regional pilots, the lead staff working on the Career Plan and Profile and Adult Basic Education leadership.

FINDINGS:

Skills to Be Certified

Employers were asked to affirm or modify the findings of employers in 2002 in an Employment Department survey of what employers are most needing from their entry level applicants. The top three items in 2002 and affirmed by the employers interviewed are

1. work ethic
2. problem solving and critical thinking skills
3. interpersonal skills.

Closely following those items in ranking were English language skills (reading and writing) and math. Other skills varied by industry; for example, computer skills, operation of hand tools, observation skills, etc.

Workforce Readiness and the High School Diploma

Employers believe that workforce readiness assessment should be part of the high school diploma. They stressed that any student, whether bound for college or for the workforce, should understand how business works. They would welcome a high school diploma that “meant something.” They felt that workforce readiness should be a component, but not the sole focus, of the high school diploma. Based on previous experience with the CIM and CAM certificates which were implemented unevenly throughout the state, some employers expressed skepticism about whether work-readiness certification would be consistent statewide.

Use of the Certificate

Employers would use a workforce readiness certificate for prescreening or extra points in their hiring process. Depending on the assessment tool, some might also use it for placement. Most employers were struggling to find qualified entry level workers and therefore would not be in a position to require the certificate. However, they believed it would definitely assist in the employment process. They saw its potential for conserving internal HR resources and for increasing employee retention.

Which Model?

We provided summaries of the three models (described in the background section above) to the leaders we interviewed. In the interviews, we distinguished between a “threshold” model, which would simply certify that a person is ready to work, and a “tiered” model that would provide differentiation of skill levels. Employers of all sizes in all industries articulated the need for a certificate that certifies the person is ready to work (threshold model). Larger employers with Human Resource Departments could also see potential use for a tiered model that would rate the skill level of the applicant. There was no single assessment tool preferred by employers although each tool had features that appealed to them. Many expressed a desire for a “hybrid” model that could provide a combination of features.

Assessment Locations

There was strong agreement among employers that the assessment should be available at all the locations where students and job seekers might be found, at high schools and community colleges, Worksource Oregon centers, local Employment Offices, and similar locations.

Willingness to Lead

There was very strong interest in this process expressed by the leaders we interviewed. Many employers and association representatives expressed willingness to serve on a statewide steering group to move the project forward. Additionally, representatives from the regional workforce committees expressed a desire to be included in the process to determine the type of assessments that might be chosen for implementation in Oregon.

TENTATIVE NEXT STEPS:

As we began this process, the Oregon Workforce Investment Board identified some issues that needed to be addressed:

1. Getting business to embrace the workforce credential. This will require assuring business that the credential
 - Serves their needs
 - Demonstrates a costs savings benefit over in-house/industry methods.

2. Choosing among and reconciling the different existing credentialing efforts and systems (e.g., Work Keys, National Institute for Literacy, National Skills Standards) for a state workforce assessment system.
3. Determining how the credential will be issued (e.g., who will assess and certify, what is the assessment procedure, etc.)?

As we have said, the purpose of the employer interview process was to determine whether a workforce readiness certificate was likely to be embraced by the business community and whether there were strong preferences for a particular type of assessment. The interviews certainly underscored employer support for workforce readiness certification. Preferences were not as clear regarding the specific type of assessment.

Further work on this assessment project should focus on selecting the appropriate assessment tool(s) from among the options and determining how the assessment and certification process should work. Once the certificate model and process are identified, pilot regions/areas could be chosen to test the system and determine how to best implement statewide.

Phase 1: Review and Alignment

Staff and a representative group of key users evaluate the following standards/assessments: (June—July)

1. Review the Career Related Learning Standards for their applicability as a high school certificate of workforce readiness.
2. Review the CASAS/LRI model and the threshold model (EFF) for consideration as an adult/out-of-school youth certificate for basic skills and work readiness.
3. Review the use of the tiered model (Career Readiness Certificate) as an optional assessment to meet additional needs of employers for a highly skilled workforce.

NOTE: Each of the model providers would be asked to answer a set of questions for providers and staff to review, which would include a “crosswalk” among these assessments and other educational assessments (e.g., GED, ACT placement tests, etc.).

Phase 2: Pilot Testing and Implementation

Based on the work done in Phase 1 above, the Community College and Workforce Development Department and the Department of Education identify next steps to implement a statewide workforce credential. Recommended steps:

1. Create a statewide steering committee to oversee, champion and assist in the implementation of certification of workforce readiness. (July---September)
2. Evaluate the extent to which the credential standards and assessments are already in place and identify those that need to be pilot-tested. (July—October)
3. Identify policy, implementation and cost issues. (July—November)
4. Provide policy and implementation plans to the SBE and OWIB by December 2006.