

Updating Delaware's High School Graduation Requirements



The High School Graduation
Requirements Committee

Committee Report

2006

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Executive Summary

Over the past three years, Achieve, Inc., a national education non-profit organization created by the nation's governors and business leaders, has conducted research indicating that high school students across the country are not being adequately prepared for success in college and the workforce, as well as for citizenship in a democratic society and global economy. Based on these findings, Delaware employed Achieve to analyze the state's graduation requirements and make recommendations for improvement. The resulting report called for Delaware to increase the specificity and rigor of the course requirements for graduation and align the requirements more closely with the entrance requirements of the University of Delaware and Delaware State University. The report led to the formation of the High School Graduation Requirements Committee, which began its work in September 2005.

Over the course of the next nine months, the Committee formed a series of recommendations for each core subject area. The recommended graduation requirements are as follows:

- 4 credits in English Language Arts (with an emphasis on reading, literature, writing, presentation & communication skills, reasoning, logic, and technical writing)
- 4 credits of Mathematics (including skills equivalent to at least Algebra II). One math credit must be taken in the student's senior year.
- 3 credits of laboratory Science (including skills equivalent to Physical/Earth Science, Chemistry, and Biology)
- 3 credits of Social Studies (including skills encompassing the core areas of history, geography, civics, and economics)
- 2 credits of World Language (Effective: August 1, 2009 for graduates in 2013)
- 1 credit of Physical Education; ½ credit of Health Education
- 3 credits in a Career Pathway
- 3 ½ Elective credits

One major issue the Committee discussed was the senior year. Under the current requirements, it is not uncommon for a student to complete only one or two required credits in their senior year and still earn a diploma. However, a substantial amount of research indicates that students must be engaged and challenged during all four years of high school to be adequately prepared for entering college or the workforce. Therefore,

the Committee is recommending that seniors be required to enroll in more than half of the class time available under the school's scheduling system. While the Committee has deferred to the individual high schools in determining the exact method for enrolling seniors, the regulation mandates that all students must be completing credits in additional core courses, Advanced Placement or college classes, a senior project, a formal work/study program, community service, or another academic pursuit.

All students entering high school in fall 2007 will begin this required curriculum. Student progress will be monitored each marking period to ensure that they are successfully completing the English language arts, mathematics, science and social studies programs. If a student is not progressing satisfactorily, supports will be put in place immediately to allow the student to successfully complete the course. If the situation does not improve, additional measures will be taken, including revisions to the student's Individual Learning Plan (ILP), parental conferences, summer school, and the option of a 5th year of high school.

Background

In 2004, the American Diploma Project, created by Achieve, the Education Trust, and the Thomas B. Fordham Foundation, released a study titled “The Expectations Gap: A 50-State Review of Graduation Requirements”, indicating that students across the country are not being adequately prepared for success in college or the workplace as well as for citizenship in a democratic society and global economy. In the report, Achieve writes that states are not requiring their graduates to take courses that reflect the real-world demands of work and postsecondary education.

Based on these findings, the State Board of Education and the Department of Education asked Achieve to conduct an analysis of the state’s graduation requirements and form recommendations for improvement. The resulting report, “Taking Stock: An Analysis of Delaware’s High School Standards and Course Requirements”, measured Delaware’s English Language Arts and Mathematics requirements against those of benchmark states throughout the nation. As a final analysis, the report compared Delaware’s high school graduation requirements to the admission requirements of both the University of Delaware and Delaware State University.

Delaware’s current high school requirement of 22 credits is similar to many other states’ minimum diploma requirements. In fact, 22 credits is the median number of credits required across the country. In addition, the credits Delaware specifies for the core content areas of English language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies are consistent with most requirements set by other states. However, research from the American Diploma Project and other sources indicate that *taking the right courses* is more important than *taking the right number of courses*. To prepare all Delaware students for postsecondary education or the workforce and to be competent citizens in a global society, Delaware must add specificity and rigor to its credit requirements.

When compared to the admission requirements for the University of Delaware and Delaware State University, Delaware’s standards again fall short. Both institutions’ requirements outpace the level of work that high school graduates are expected to complete. For instance, in Mathematics, both UD and DSU require a three-course sequence of Algebra I, Geometry, and Algebra II. Delaware’s graduation requirements include the three necessary credits but fail to specify course or skill levels beyond

Algebra I. These distinctions and shortcomings in the Delaware requirements limit graduates' options and contribute to a lack of preparedness for work at the next level.

In June 2005 the Department of Education submitted a proposal and received funding for a National Governors Association Honors Grant to redesign Delaware's high schools. In that grant, the Department proposed a two year work plan that includes restoring the value of the high school diploma in Delaware and redesigning high schools into learning communities that support student needs and goals to enable success in either postsecondary education or the workplace. In addition to revising the requirements for high school graduation, a plan for Individual Learning Plans (ILP's) is being developed by the Department of Education, which will be piloted by two districts in the state during the 2006-2007 school year. The ILP's will provide a five-year plan for each student entering high school that will reflect his or her goals towards graduation, as well as one year beyond high school.

The Department of Education has also been working to establish a recommended curriculum for all grades in subject areas for which there are content standards. All of the core curricula areas are included, as well as many of the high school elective areas. The recommended curriculum for English language arts and mathematics will be completed in June 2006, and work on the science and social studies curricula is underway and will be complete in the next year. Along with the recommended curricula, grade level expectations are also being developed.

Recommendations

In response to Achieve's findings and in conjunction with the Honors Grant, the Graduation Requirements Committee was formed, under the auspices of the P-20 Council, to update Delaware's high school graduation requirements and ensure that all students can successfully meet the demands of college and work. The committee was formed in September 2005 and includes representatives from the Department of Education, the State Board, district superintendents, high school principals, teacher representatives, school board members, community and business groups, and higher education. A list of the committee members is appended to this report.

This report summarizes the committee's discussions regarding Achieve's recommendations, as well as other issues raised in the process.

At its initial meeting in September, the Committee established Guiding Principles. They included a vision for the future, a desire for the preparedness of all students, the need for a rigorous curriculum and a course-taking program with relevance to the students' goals for post-graduation pursuits. The Committee also believed that a high school diploma should signify that students are prepared for a successful postsecondary education or to enter the job market in a well paying position with opportunity for advancement. At subsequent meetings the Committee discussed the minimum requirements for English language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, computer literacy, and world language competency. Copies of the Summary Notes for each meeting of the committee are appended to this report.

Credits:

Ultimately, the Committee decided to make the following recommendations for students in the graduating class of 2011:

- 4 credits in English Language Arts (with an emphasis on reading, literature, writing, presentation & communication skills, reasoning, logic, and technical writing)
- 4 credits of Mathematics (including skills equivalent to Algebra I, Geometry and Algebra II). One math credit must be taken in the student's senior year.
- 3 credits of laboratory Science (including skills equivalent to Physical/Earth Science, Chemistry, and Biology)
- 3 credits of Social Studies (including skills encompassing the core areas of history, geography, civics, and economics)
- 1 credit of Physical Education; ½ credit of Health Education
- 3 credits in a Career Pathway
- 3 ½ Elective credits

The result of the recommendation is that each high school student must take an additional credit in math in the senior year. Furthermore, the level of math attainment must be at least through Algebra II. In English language arts, science and social studies, the content standards, along with the recommended curricula will give structure to the courses and provide increased rigor for all students. The

Committee also recommended that the computer literacy credit be dropped at the high school level and become a component of the middle school curriculum.

In comparing the recommendations to those offered by Achieve, Inc., the Committee has increased the mathematics credits beyond what Achieve, Inc. recommended by moving to four (4) credits with one of the credits earned in the senior year. The Committee has also defined the rigor of the courses that all students are expected to complete.

For the class graduating in 2013, an additional 2 credits in world languages will be required, increasing the number of credits for graduation to twenty-four (24). The Committee is aware that adding this requirement raises a number of issues. The Committee also favors providing instruction in world languages well before ninth grade in order to assure language competency. In light of the awareness and concerns, the Committee recommends that another group be specifically charged with exploring how best to infuse world language into the curriculum, what resources are needed and how to determine language competency. This recommendation goes beyond Achieve's American Diploma Project recommendations, but, in light of additional research, comments from focus groups, and discussion within the Committee, there were compelling reasons to add world languages as a requirement.

Senior Year:

A major issue the Committee discussed was the senior year. High schools across the State have a variety of academic structures. Some have a traditional six (6) period day allowing a student to earn up to 24 credits in their four years, some have a seven (7) period day allowing up to 28 credits to be earned, and some have block scheduling that allows for up to eight (8) credits to be earned in any given year for a total of 32 by graduation. The State requirements are minimums. Local districts can exceed what the State requires, and some do. However, in some high schools, students need only to complete their English language arts credits their senior year. This can and does result in seniors not being in an educational setting taking rigorous courses to adequately prepare them for post graduation. Information the committee received from colleges and employers in this State further convinced members of the committee that seniors who are

not fully engaged in rigorous course taking are not good candidates for successfully entering college or the work place.

The Committee deferred to the districts to determine what the senior year should be for each student but the regulations will mandate that all students be intellectually engaged in taking additional core courses; earning college credit in Advanced Placement or in college classes; completing a senior project; engaging in a formal work/study program; performing community service; or some other academic pursuit that will result in more than half of the class time available to a senior being used to further their knowledge and skill levels.

Student Supports:

Another issue that consumed much of the Committee's deliberations regarded the students who were not prepared for the course rigor in high school. These students could struggle with the increased rigor, and run the risk of not meeting the new requirements. The Committee explored and debated alternative curriculum options for under performing students as have been established in several other states. However, the members kept returning to the issue that we were risking tracking students and that some students might decide to "game" the system, take less than they should, and still earn a high school diploma. In the end, the Committee recommended that all students have the same credit and course requirements as a minimum and that all students would be monitored by marking period to assure that they are successfully completing the English language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies courses. The monitoring will be conducted by support teams determined at the building level, and will include counselors, specialists and other educators. If students show signs of not progressing satisfactorily, supports should be put in place immediately to allow the student to successfully complete the course. If that is not sufficient, additional measures should be taken, including summer school and offering the student a 5th year of high school, in order to complete the requirements for graduation. This approach ties into the ILP's that are under development by the Department. It is also a key component of smaller learning communities at the high school.

Focus Groups

As the Committee was finalizing its recommendations, 13 focus groups were assembled across the State in late February through mid-April to review the Committee's work. The focus groups were facilitated by the Conflict Resolution Program in the Institute for Public Administration at the College of Human Services, Education and Public Policy located at the University of Delaware in Newark, Delaware. The focus groups consisted of educators, teachers, parents, students and community representatives. Each group was asked their thoughts on more rigor at the high school level, including an additional credit of mathematics through the completion of Algebra II and beyond; requiring a rigorous senior year; and an optional curriculum for students who are struggling.

In general, the focus groups expressed support for increasing the rigor and credit requirements for high school graduation. However, concerns were raised about students' preparation for increased rigor as a result of their elementary and middle school experiences. Implementation concerns were also expressed with regard to qualified teachers, funding for additional staff, availability of support services and the impact on vocational and co-op programs. Concerns about increasing dropouts were also raised. The increased requirements for the senior year received positive feedback with some of the same concerns as noted above. Reactions were very mixed in response to the third question about whether or not an alternative curriculum should be offered for some students. There were a number of concerns raised about "tracking" students, whether those students would feel "second class", and if it would just provide a way for students to "game" the system and avoid the more challenging work.

Other comments that surfaced in a number of groups included the concepts of having the same courses across all of the high schools, having more consistency in what is taught in all schools, and having a school culture that encourages excellence.

Reaction to Focus Group Comments

It should be noted that at the time the focus groups were being held, the committee was proposing the science level to include physics and the mathematics to

exceed Algebra II. Also, world language requirements had not yet been determined by the Committee.

Subsequent deliberations of the Committee adjusted the science to more accurately reflect the science standards and include the earth and physical science material that is taught to most 9th graders. Likewise, once the science was adjusted to remove the requirement of completing the equivalent of physics, the only difference being proposed in the curriculum between the alternative and the required was a credit of math beyond the mastery of Algebra II. Additional research into what is currently taking place in high school math determined that in 12 high schools from 11 districts, a low of 45% to a high of 92% of students were taking Algebra II and above. The Committee concurred that by requiring students to complete the equivalent of Algebra II as a minimum, many students would continue to take even higher level math courses.

The specific results of each focus group meeting are appended.

Path Forward

As a result of the Committee's recommendations, the Department of Education regulation 505 will be amended for the graduating class of 2011 to include an additional credit in mathematics, removal of the required credit in computer literacy, definitions for the content of the credits in the core content areas, student engagement in a meaningful senior year, and the details of a formal process to identify and support student needs. In addition, for the graduating class of 2013, 2 additional credits of world language will be added.

These proposed amendments will be published for comment in the summer of 2006 and go before the State Board of Education for consideration by the fall of 2006.

Implementation Issues

Concerns were raised by the Committee and in the focus groups about the need for more qualified teachers, counselors, and other staff that would be required to successfully implement the Committee recommendations and best serve students.

From the information we currently have available, additional resources are needed at the high school level in order to provide for additional math requirements, student supports, and senior year requirements. One way to infuse more resources would be to lower the unit count for grades 9 through 12 from 20 to 19 for an increase in units statewide of approximately 84 based on enrollments for 2005-2006. Initial estimates indicate the cost of this unit reduction in today's dollars to be in the range of \$5.7 to \$6 million. This change can be phased in over the next 4 years as students move through high school and are impacted by the increased requirements. Schools should have flexibility with these resources so that they can provide additional teachers and counselors as well as provide other instructional opportunities, such as distance learning, dual credit and independent study.

Elementary and middle school instruction must provide assurances that students reach the ninth grade prepared to engage in rigorous courses.

More highly qualified mathematics teachers need to be attracted to Delaware schools as well. It should be noted that this year the University of Delaware is graduating 23 certified math teachers and Wilmington College has a new masters program for math certification. These efforts need to continue and expand in order to have the numbers of qualified teachers that will be required.

Course rigor is another issue that cannot be achieved through regulation, but must be monitored to assure that all students are receiving a high quality education, no matter what school they are in or what teacher they have. The work coming out of the Department of Education in terms of a recommended curriculum and grade level expectations will support this.

Beyond the Minimums

At the same time the Committee on High School Graduation Requirements was meeting, representatives from Delaware State University, Delaware Technical and Community College, the University of Delaware, Wesley College, and Wilmington College were forming their own recommendations. They made a presentation to the P-20 Council and its Subcommittee on Postsecondary Success on April 24, 2006. In their presentation they acknowledged that they all had different entrance requirements, but

agreed that a high school student wishing to enter any of their programs with a high level of confidence of success should have 4 credits in English language arts with an emphasis on critical reading, documenting and writing research papers, 4 credits in mathematics, 4 credits in science, 2 to 3 credits in world language, 2 credits in history, 2 credits in social studies and 2 credits in electives. Those credits should all be at the highest level the student can achieve. Furthermore, they recommend that at least 5 of the credits be earned in the students' senior year.

The Vision 2015 group composed of education, business, and community leaders has also been meeting since November 2005. Their goal is to formulate recommendations that will enable Delaware's public education system to be a beacon of excellence. The group is committed to developing a truly innovative, world-class education system in the State that can serve as an example to the rest of the world. An essential component of their recommendations should be increased high school requirements and rigor, allowing Delaware students to take their place in the world and become productive and responsible citizens.

Conclusion

Delaware high school graduates must be better prepared to enter post-secondary education or the workplace and meet the increasing demands of citizenship in a democratic society and global economy. In the 21st century economy, the skills necessary to meet these challenges are greater than ever before. Efforts need to be improved at the high school level, and expectations need to be aligned with those of colleges, universities, and employers. While adjusting the graduation requirements is not by itself a solution, it is an essential aspect of a broader reform effort to heighten student success.

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Ms. Ann Case, Policy Analyst for the State Board of Education

Mrs. Fran Fletcher, Assistant Policy Scientist, Conflict Resolution Program, Institute for
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Mr. John Kraman, Policy Analyst at Achieve, Inc.

Mrs. Dani Moore, Administrative Secretary for the State Board of Education

Ms. Cheryl Orr, Staff Liaison for Indiana's Education Roundtable and Senior
Communications Associate for the Indiana Commission for Higher Education

Mr. Albert Shields, Graduate Assistant in the Institute for Public Administration at the
University of Delaware

Mrs. Kathy Wian, Coordinator, Conflict Resolution Program, Institute for Public
Administration, University of Delaware

Appendix A

Taking Stock: An Analysis of Delaware's High School Standards and Course Requirement

Achieve, Inc.

[http://www.achieve.org/dstore.nsf/Lookup/DE%20final05/\\$file/DEfinal05.pdf](http://www.achieve.org/dstore.nsf/Lookup/DE%20final05/$file/DEfinal05.pdf)

Appendix B

National Governor's Association Grant

Redesigning Delaware's High Schools

NGA Honor States Grant Proposal

June 1, 2005

*Submitted by the Governor of Delaware,
The Honorable Ruth Ann Minner*

Redesigning Delaware’s High Schools Grant Proposal

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Background

Governor Ruth Ann Minner, through the Delaware Department of Education (DDOE), and on behalf of its schools, students and families, submits this application for the NGA Honor States Grant Program. Award funds will assist us in consolidating, focusing, and leveraging an array of current and planned activities to transform our public high schools into institutions of excellence that prepare our youth for postsecondary success.

Located in the Mid-Atlantic region, Delaware is unique in many ways providing a wonderful environment for innovative ideas. The state is 1,954 square miles in size with a population of 820,000. We serve approximately 119,000 public education students from pre-kindergarten through grade 12 and have collaborative relationships with our nineteen local school districts and thirteen charter schools. Local school districts, which include three countywide vocational-technical school districts, and the thirteen charter schools have a total of thirty-three public high schools. Delaware's public schools reflect the diversity of the state's population with our student population comprised of 56% white, 32% African-American, 9% Hispanic and 3% other students. Such diversity brings richness of cultures to our classrooms, but also the many challenges inherent in meeting the needs of students with varying backgrounds and experiences.

Delaware has two public, four year institutions of higher education. The University of Delaware is a competitive university that has been highly rated nationally and is popular with both out of state and in state students. Delaware State University is a school that has traditionally served primarily African American students and draws its population from across the state. Both institutions are working to serve a more diverse population. Delaware Technical and Community College is a statewide two year institution with four campuses, two in New Castle County including the City of Wilmington and one each in Kent and Sussex counties. There are three private colleges, two of which are largely attended by Delawareans. Wilmington College offers bachelor degree programs along with masters and doctoral degree programs, primarily focused on educators. Wesley College offers bachelor degree programs. Goldey Beacom is a business college that draws students primarily from Delaware and nearby states.

In 2003, Governor Ruth Ann Minner issued an Executive Order that formed the Delaware P-20 Council to promote joint action between the Department of Education, State Board of Education, our institutions of Higher Education, the Legislature and the business community. Department of Education conversations with the Delaware Business Roundtable, State Chamber of Commerce, civic leaders, and legislators have helped spur concerted action at the secondary level. Both public and private institutions of higher education are included on the council, specifically the private schools that train teachers and provide graduate training for teachers and administrators.

The first initiative of the P-20 Council was to form a Subcommittee on Postsecondary Success. Significant work and investments over the past decade have brought success at the elementary level; however, our middle and high schools have yet to realize similar outcomes. We know that true transformation of our state's secondary schools, especially high schools, will come only through a concerted long-term effort. The traditions and culture around local high schools are strong and often resistant to local change efforts. Discussions of possible reorganization, course redesign, or alternative scheduling often are met with resistance since the current structures appear to work for staff and at least some students. Without compelling data about the extent of student under-development during their secondary years, few education leaders are able to overcome the local commitment to the status quo.

Delaware has a long-standing commitment to education reform. We were among the first states to establish content standards with accompanying assessments and an accountability system. We are

able to take advantage of an outstanding technology infrastructure to collect and utilize data system wide. The decision many years ago to have a unique student identifier allows us to follow not only cohorts of students but also individual students throughout their public school careers. Because of our data infrastructure Delaware was among the first six states to “go live” with the National Education Data Partnership in the winter of 2004. We have since been heavily involved in working with the SchoolMatters project supported by the Broad and Gates Foundations and managed by Standard and Poors. Our discussions regarding this project have not only made it a better system for reporting Delaware data but also for use by other states.

The value of SchoolMatters to states across the country will become evident as states begin to utilize it to spur conversations with policy makers and others within each state. We intend to use SchoolMatters to help document the outcomes and to hold discussions among our stakeholders about the investments that have been made during this grant period and that will need to continue in order for us to achieve our overall goals. Also, we believe that our data infrastructure and our unique ID system can be instrumental in the design and implementation of a longitudinal, 4-year cohort high school graduation measure. The struggle will be to reach agreement among states for common definitions and tracking systems.

We see the Honors States Grant Program as an outstanding opportunity to galvanize our entire effort. Our vision for our high schools is one of exemplary institutions committed to (1) the effective preparation of all its students for future success in both postsecondary education and in the workplace, and (2) continuous improvement. We must reform our high schools so that Delaware graduates are equipped with the desirable competencies and level of confidence necessary for postsecondary training and career placement.

The Delaware Honors States Grant Initiative

It is our intent to incorporate the NGA Honors States Grant Award with other current resource allocations for the implementation of the short and long-term activities detailed in this proposal. The Interdisciplinary Policy Team will oversee this long-term consolidated program of reform activities. While we are committed to systemic high school reform that reaches all public high schools within our state, we recognize that there are immediate and urgent priorities confronting a sub-set of twenty of our thirty-three high schools. This sub-set of twenty “focus” high schools includes thirteen high schools presently under school improvement because of the Delaware Accountability System and the group of seven schools actively involved with the State Action for Education Leadership Program (SAELP) initiative. We want to focus intense strategies on these twenty schools while also maintaining and strengthening a network with all Delaware high schools. The Interdisciplinary Policy Team will assure that all Delaware public high schools will receive planning assistance, access to high quality professional development, and technical assistance regarding effective governance and capacity building strategies. Meanwhile those schools that fall under school improvement or have laid the foundation for community involved reform efforts will get more focused assistance during the two years of the grant.

Two-Year Work Plan

The Delaware Blueprint for Action Agenda outlines a plan to redesign high schools in a way that will prepare our graduates to be successful in postsecondary education or a career that will enable them to be financially independent. In preparing this proposal, we carefully examined the Blueprint, the current status of high school reform efforts, student achievement data, and district identified needs. We then conducted a gap analysis to target areas of focus for the two-year grant period.

While the Blueprint addresses goals, targets and activities in all five key strategies for improving high schools, an analysis of our data indicates a great deal of work already underway in two areas: Strategy (3) *Give Students the Excellent Teachers and Principals They Need* and Strategy (5) *Streamline and Improve Education Governance*. In the area of Excellent Teachers and Principals, Delaware is one of the states to have received two grants from the Wallace Foundation for the State Action for Education Leadership (SAELP) initiative. Likewise, Delaware's P-20 Council is an established group of stakeholders who have successfully put in place strategies for addressing educational governance. This council has bipartisan support, cross-agency representation and a mission in place to effectively address governance issues.

Based upon our analysis of the blueprint, the data clearly point to the three key strategies on which we should focus our efforts: *Restore the Value of a High School Diploma*; *Redesign High Schools*; and *Set Goals, Measure Progress, and Hold High Schools and Colleges Accountable*.

It is clear that a major thrust of our Redesigning High Schools Initiative is a comprehensive communication campaign. This campaign will be woven through all five of the key strategies. Its activities have been embedded below in the three strategies which are the focal point of this grant application. In Attachment E, a proposed communication plan is included which we have worked on with an expert consultant. We will be able to use this document for further planning as well as participation in the NGA communication workshops.

NGA Action Agenda Key Strategy: Restore the Value of the High School Diploma

Goal: The high school diploma will represent the skills and knowledge students need to be successful in either postsecondary education or the workplace. (*Blueprint for State Action Agenda pg. 4*)

Long-Term Target 1

By September 2015, all public high schools will facilitate all students' successful transitions to postsecondary education or the workforce. All public high school students will have the skills and knowledge needed for acceptance and success in the workplace or postsecondary education without the need for remedial courses.

Short-Term Targets

- By May 2006, the State Board of Education will revise the graduation requirements to define the number of courses required in each content area, as well as the course content descriptions that align with a College/Workplace Readiness curriculum of study. State graduation requirements will be aligned with the entrance requirements at the University of Delaware and Delaware State University. (*Legislative Action – House Joint Resolution No. 9*)
- By June 2007, the percentage of all students who graduate from high school each year with a diploma will increase to 86.0% or greater. (DDOE Strategic Plan, Performance Measure 1.5.1)
- By June 2007, the percentage of all students who drop out of school will decrease to 5.0% or less. (DDOE Strategic Plan, Performance Measure 1.5.2)
- By September 2007, all Delaware public high school incoming freshman will be encouraged to follow a default College/Workplace Readiness curriculum of study for a State of Delaware High School diploma.

The critical activity towards these targets will be the work of the State Board of Education and the P-20 Council, in collaboration with key stakeholder groups, to review and strengthen the graduation requirements. The report by Achieve, Inc. will be used as a guide to ensure that the requirements and course content descriptions align with a college/work readiness curriculum. We will establish standards commissions for all content areas that will be led by Delaware educators, higher education, business, and community leaders who will be charged with the development of the 11th and 12th grade standards in the same way that K-10 standards were developed. These commissions will also examine and make recommendations for innovative, content focused programs for the last two years of high school.

Long Term Target 2 (Blueprint for State Action Agenda pg.6)

By 2015, all Delaware public school districts and charter schools will have curriculum aligned to the Delaware developed standards, will have model units that will incorporate a variety of instructional and assessment strategies to meet the needs of a diverse student population, and will have a system of ongoing professional development for all teachers to ensure systemic implementation.

Short-Term Targets

- By June 2006 the Statewide Recommended Curriculum for English language arts and mathematics will be completed. The curriculum will be designed around the Grade Level Expectations established for each grade to align state assessments with state standards as required by NCLB.
- By June 2007, all districts will provide evidence of alignment of their curricula in grades K-10 in ELA and mathematics.
- By August 2007, the Statewide Recommended Curriculum including model units and formative assessments will be completed in all content areas and will provide the framework for district curriculum alignment in these content areas.
- By August 2008, all public school districts and charter schools will have provided evidence to the Delaware Department of Education that their curriculum is aligned to the standards in all content areas.
- By August 2008, all public school teachers will have received training on the Statewide Recommended Curriculum relevant to their current teaching assignment.

Work groups comprised of Department of Education staff and district and school personnel are already engaged in the development of Statewide Recommended Curriculum in the four major content areas. We will design professional development to familiarize all teachers and administrators with the Statewide Recommended Curriculum and to enable them to assist their districts in providing the evidentiary documentation regarding curriculum alignment. Districts and charter schools will receive technical assistance as needed on the development of curriculum and alignment review. Similar efforts are beginning for other content areas.

Long-Term Target 3 (Blueprint for State Action Agenda pg.7)

By September 2015, the State of Delaware will regularly assess a student's college or workplace readiness.

Short Term Target

- March 2006, the Task Force on Best Practices of Educational Assessments will provide information on various models of assessments and potential changes to the

current Delaware Student Testing Program (DSTP) with the possibility of including a college and workplace readiness component. (*Legislative Action – House Joint Resolution No. 4*)

- By July 2007, the Delaware Department of Education will pilot a college or workplace readiness exam.

The Postsecondary Success Subcommittee of the P-20 Council review best practices of college and workplace readiness exams that already exist (e.g., California’s Early Assessment Program, ACT WorkKeys assessments, Educational Testing Service- College Board). We are exploring the possibility of joining the network of states that are currently working with Achieve on this issue. We will enter into a contract either to adopt an existing exam or to develop Delaware specific college or workplace readiness assessments.

Long-Term Target 4 (Blueprint for State Action Agenda pg.8)

By September 2015, all industry related and career and technical programs will be fully aligned to industry and business standards and result in a job that will allow the individual to be financially independent through entry into postsecondary education, an apprenticeship, industry certification or additional technical training.

Short-Term Target

- By September 2006, a review of the current standards and existing career and technical programs will be conducted.
- By December 2007, adjustments will be made to align career and technical pathways to industry recognized certifications where applicable and appropriate.

Delaware will convene a cross agency committee including representatives from middle and high schools, Department of Education, Department of Labor, and the Delaware Economic Development Office to review the standards and to align the career competencies to ensure that where appropriate they result in an industry certification, entry into postsecondary education or entry into an apprenticeship. An intensive program review model that will strengthen the career and technical education system in Delaware by aligning career and technical standards to industry standards will be undertaken. The committee will also review current internship and cooperative work experience practices and explore Adopt-a-School initiatives, mentoring and job shadowing programs in order to strengthen programs.

NGA Action Agenda Key Strategy: Redesign High Schools

In order for the high school diploma to be a meaningful achievement for all students, high schools must undergo significant redesign so that students are supported appropriately. The current industrial model that moves students through an assembly line of course taking with little attention to individual needs and goals will not suffice in the twenty first century.

Goal: All public high schools will establish a learning community that respects and supports learning for all students, staff members, families and communities. (*Blueprint for State Action Agenda pg.15*)

Long-Term Target 1

By September 2010, each Delaware public high school student will have an Individual Learning Plan that sets the path and logical steps for attainment of the student’s goals and provides the core values of a civil and democratic society.

Short-Term Targets

- By May 2007, students in the focus high schools will meet with a mentor/advisor regarding their Individual Learning Plans to ensure it is aligned with their aspirations and career pathways.
- By September 2007, secondary school staff in selected schools under improvement will receive professional development on student advisory programs and other similar initiatives that take into account individual development that aid in postsecondary transitions.
- By September 2007, Delaware public high schools will have a transition program for students as they move between middle schools and high schools to assure access of all students to college and workplace ready curricula.
- By September 2007, all incoming freshman will have five year Individual Learning Plans that connect students to career pathways.

Activities related to these targets include assisting the focus high schools in identifying models for implementing advisee programs in high schools, help to identify the pool of mentors/advisors for their particular school and needs and providing professional development on the Individual Learning Plans to the mentors/advisors. We also plan to develop a paperless system for the Individual Learning Plans to ease editing, managing and monitoring of the plans and to determine baseline data on the number of Delaware public high school students accepted into postsecondary education with reliability tied to the unique student identifier and information from the local education agencies and charter high schools.

The P-20 Council Subcommittee on Postsecondary Success will assist in the creation of effective transition programs with the intent of defining alternatives to tracking and ability grouping. They will review best practices and develop models for reorganizing the school building, schedule and staff roles that provide quality interactions between students and school personnel. (e.g. small learning communities, schools within schools, Personal Adult Advocate model). This will include the exploration of looping models that allow school staff to follow cohorts of students that will enable them to know the personal skills, challenges and goals of individual students.

Long-Term Target 2

By September 2010, each Delaware public high school will have demonstrated results from the literacy and math recovery programs that ensure students have the skills they need to succeed in high school and allow them to take courses that will prepare them for postsecondary education and the workplace.

Short-Term Targets

- By June 2007, current programs designed to provide additional instructional time, including before/after school, Saturday and summer programs will have participated in a statewide evaluation.
- By September 2007, selected public high schools under improvement will ensure 9th grade transition programs reflect best practice and provide differentiated instruction targeted to students with literacy and math deficiencies.
- By December 2007, the percentage of students with disabilities ages 6 – 21 in general education classes greater than 80% of the day will increase to 53% based on the student's Individual Education Program (DDOE Strategic Plan, Performance Measure 1.7.1)

The Department of Education will develop a statewide evaluation for programs designed to provide additional instructional time, including before/after school, Saturday and summer school.

We will continue to explore best practice for providing recovery programs in literacy and mathematics and recommend curriculum models, including those that provide additional supports for students who may struggle with challenging courses of study, that tie to our Statewide Recommended Curriculum and standards. The design of the plan will also include strategies targeted to increase the number of students with disabilities effectively included in the general education classroom participating with their non-disabled peers. On-going professional development will be in place for teachers/ transition specialists specifically designed to provide instructional strategies proven to meet the needs of students with multiple abilities.

Long-Term Target 3

By 2015, each Delaware public high school will align the school-wide, ongoing professional development program with staff member personalized goals related to content knowledge and instructional strategies. As a result the focus will be attention to student diversity and addressing individual student needs. They will expose students to varying viewpoints, perspectives and experiences that will prepare them for graduation.

Short-Term Targets

- By June 2007, a select number of the high schools under improvement will encourage staff members to pilot the use of personalized goal plans as part of their school's professional development plans or as part of professional development clusters targeting such plans.
- By September 2007, the state will provide for the expansion of the school leader induction program by continually improving the mentoring program and increasing the assessment center opportunities.

School improvement planning and individual educator professional development is increasingly data driven. Examination of data assists teachers, specialists and administrators in focusing on actions they must take in order to meet the instructional needs of their students. In Delaware, all educators must complete 90 hours of professional development every five years in order to maintain certification. Specific professional development activities at the building level, as well as professional development clusters that provide 2%, 4% or 6% increases good for a five-year period on the state salary schedule for educators who complete the clusters successfully, can be developed to address specific needs. This compensation system will be helpful in providing incentives for educators to use Personal Learning Plans.

Long-Term Target 4

By September 2015, families, educators, boards of education and communities will be continually informed and able to engage in discussions regarding the importance of maintaining high quality high schools that prepare all students for adult success.

Short-Term Targets

- By Fall 2005, the Delaware Department of Education will participate in the Southern Regional Education Board's (SREB) Go Alliance.
- By June 2006, training will be developed for local school boards of education and local school superintendents regarding public engagement with families and communities necessary to create the support for educational programs and policies consistent with the best practices.

- By 2007, training will be provided to several local school boards of education and local school superintendents on public engagement with families and communities to create the support for educational programs and policies consistent with the best practices.

One of the most critical components of this project is an aggressive communication campaign focused on creating a clearly, defined purpose that engages the community, parents, students, school personnel, elected officials and business community in defining issues to be tackled and to provide hard facts and other relevant information regarding the importance of building an extended and inclusive educational community that reflects 21st century skills and knowledge. Delaware plans to use grant funds to enable participation in SREB's **Go Alliance** program, which is a program designed to improve high school completion as well as student attendance and success in college. We will focus the overall communication campaign around providing the public with information regarding the skills and knowledge necessary for our young adults to be successful in postsecondary education or the workplace and emphasize that the skills required for college and the workplace do not differ. (Achieve) Some strategies may include establishing focus groups of parents, students, teachers, business community, and elected officials; conducting surveys, placing print ads, a billboard campaign, TV/Radio Spots and strategic use of the Internet.

NGA Action Agenda Key Strategy: Set Goals, Measure Progress, and Hold High Schools and Colleges Accountable

In our effort to set goals, measure progress, and hold high schools and colleges accountable, the state has committed to tracking students and putting in place policies that ensure a variety of postsecondary options that lead to success for all.

Goal 1: All public high school and college students will be provided the supports necessary to succeed in either postsecondary education or the workplace ultimately resulting in the individual's ability to be financially independent. (*Blueprint for State Action Agenda pg.28*)

Long-Term Target 1

By September 2015, a data system will be in place that will allow the State to measure and track the progress of all students as they transition to higher education or the workplace. The data will also be used to evaluate and examine policies and programs pre-kindergarten through grade 12 so that appropriate adjustments can be made to improve the system so that it supports high achievement for all students.

Short-Term Targets

- By September 2006, the state institutions of higher education, the Department of Education, and local education agencies through the work of the P-20 Council will have consensus regarding the implementation of a statewide unique student identifier from pre-k through postsecondary education.
- By November 2007, we will have begun a pilot to test the core student growth parameters of the P-20 Council's data system to ensure the data being collected informs us in the way in which it is intended.
- By December 2007, a similar system will be agreed upon by the business community with specific timelines for piloting and full implementation.

The Postsecondary Success Subcommittee of the P-20 Council will work collaboratively with the Delaware institutions of higher education, DDOE's Technology Management and Design workgroup and local education agencies on the design and implementation of the data system that supports the unique student identifier. It is important that this data system not only provides the means for high schools to track the success of their graduates but also for higher education institutions to track their students so that policies and practices are in place to support students as they move through the higher education system. This is particularly critical for students who are the first in their families to attend college.

Long-Term Target 2

By September 2015, all public high school students will have the opportunity to attend a two-year degree program from Delaware Technical and Community College at no tuition cost to the student as long as they meet the state grant criteria.

Short-Term Targets

- By July 2006, the state will provide funding to attend Delaware Technical and Community College for all Delaware public high school students who maintain a 2.5 grade point average and have no criminal record. (*Legislative Action- Senate Bill No. 30*)
- By August 2007, Delaware public school average SAT scores for verbal, quantitative, and combined portions of the assessment will be maintained or increase to at least 98% of the national average public SAT scores for verbal, quantitative, and combined portions of the assessment. (DDOE Strategic Plan, Performance Measure 1.6.4)

As we take steps in support of this legislation to implement the program, we must immediately begin efforts to publicize the existence of the program at both middle and high schools throughout the state and in the community at large.

Long-Term Target 3

By September 2015, all Delaware public high school students will have the ability to gain college credit while in a Delaware public high school.

Short-Term Targets

- By May 2006, all Delaware public high schools will offer Advanced Placement courses in most core content areas of English language arts, science, mathematics, and social studies.
- By May 2007, the number of students taking Advanced Placement exams will increase from 9.5% in 2004 to 15 %.
- By May 2007, at least one of the focus high schools will establish an International Baccalaureate program.

The Postsecondary Success Subcommittee of the P-20 Council will be charged with developing the policies governing dual enrollment. The committee will also develop the appropriate processes to continually certify that college level courses taken in high schools are equivalent to other college courses, and to validate honors and college-credit bearing courses statewide. Funding will be secured to ensure that Delaware continues to provide financial assistance to students for Advanced Placement test fees.

Membership

The Interdisciplinary Policy Team membership reflects key leaders in the state of Delaware and provides a forum for the coordination of efforts of multiple agencies across the state. The

members hold positions that will enable them to chart the path for high school redesign in the state and communicate to the public the need for high standards.

The Secretary of Education will serve as the team leader. Secretary Woodruff has an extensive background in secondary education having been a high school teacher, counselor, assistant principal and principal. She was selected Delaware High School Principal of the Year in 1990 due to her outstanding leadership in turning a troubled high school around. She led the efforts to establish the first wellness center in a Delaware high school. She brought the RE: Learning Project to her high school. Affiliated with the Coalition of Essential Schools led by Dr. Ted Sizer at Brown University, the Nine Common Principles of an Effective School are more important today than ever before. Mrs. Woodruff served as a Thomson Fellow for the Coalition and provided professional development and led discussions about high school reform throughout the country. She also represents Delaware as a member of the Board for SREB, was a member of the commission that developed the SREB Challenge to Lead goals, and is President-elect of the Council of Chief State School Officers which has been involved in continuous work on the importance of revamping high schools.

The legislators bring a wealth of experience to the project. Senator Sokola has been chair of the Senate Education Committee for several years and has sponsored most of the innovative education legislation over the past ten years. Representative Wagner is new to the House Education leadership position but has been on the committee for many years. In addition she is a high school teacher in a school that has been extensively involved with the Southern Region Education Board's High Schools That Work model. Dr. Dan Rich is the Academic Provost at the University of Delaware and has been instrumental in forging strong partnerships between the University and public education. As the former Dean of the College of Human Services, Education and Public Policy, he made service of University faculty to the education community a priority. Dr. Joe Pika is a University of Delaware professor who led a number of policy study committees on educator professional development prior to his tenure as State Board President. He has been involved in setting policy for public education through a time of considerable change. He co-chairs the P-20 Council with the Secretary of Education and fully supports the need for significant change in the high schools in our state. He led the State Board's recent Secondary Schools Summit which featured such noted speakers as Joe DiMartino, Director for Secondary School Redesign at the Education Alliance at Brown University and Michael Cohen, President of Achieve, Inc. along with Delaware practitioners who are engaged in the beginning of high school and middle school reform.

Jim Wolfe, President and CEO of the State Chamber of Commerce, is the former plant manager of the Daimler Chrysler plant in Newark and has long been a proponent for public education. In his first two years as president of the Chamber he has rejuvenated both the Principal for a Day program that places CEOs and other business leaders in public schools across our state for a day in October and the Superstars in Education program. Superstars evaluates applications from schools across the state based on specific criteria related to standards based programs and innovative practices that support student achievement. An annual dinner is held at the Riverfront Conference Center in Wilmington where schools are presented with cash awards and banners to celebrate their achievements. Beginning this year the Chamber and the DDOE designed methods by which these Superstar schools are able to share their best practices so they can be adapted or replicated by others. Bob Sutton works directly for Bruce Hammonds, the CEO of MBNA and chair of the Delaware Business Roundtable's Education Subcommittee. Governor Minner appointed Mr. Sutton to represent the State as a member of the SREB Board. He often attends State Board of Education and represents Mr. Hammonds on the P-20 Council.

Delaware has a long-standing tradition of collaborative work with education stakeholders, and we are fortunate to have the leadership of Delaware's professional organizations as IPT members. Dr. Tony Marchio who will be president of the Delaware Chief School Officers Association beginning in July is a former high school teacher and principal and is superintendent of one of Delaware's most successful school districts. Susan Francis, Executive Director of the Delaware School Boards Association, is a former member of one of our local boards of education and is supportive of high school reform. She recently arranged for the members of the State Board to engage local boards in discussions regarding this issue. Pete Basile, Executive Director of the Delaware Association of School Administrators, is working with the DDOE to develop a series of seminars for middle and high school principals as a result of their request for additional knowledge and support in their work to redesign and improve their schools. Howard Weinberg, Executive Director of the Delaware State Education Association, will help forge stronger relationships with the state's teachers as partners in this initiative.

George Krupanski is President of the Boys and Girls Clubs of Delaware, one of our premier and one of the largest youth-serving agencies. Boys and Girls Clubs serve several thousand Delaware students at many sites across our state. The clubs offer not only a safe haven for many students but also a venue that focuses on academic success and character building. Annually each club chooses its own Youth of the Year who then competes for the state Youth of the Year title. These young people represent the hopes and dreams of their families and communities, and George realizes that significant support is needed for them while they are in middle and high school so they can realize their dreams. His involvement in our initiative will bring the knowledge and perspective of youth-serving organizations to the table.

Although all of the individuals we have asked to participate are extremely busy in their specific roles and regular work and professions, they have committed to this initiative knowing full well that unless we make significant changes in our high schools, many of our students will continue to be ill prepared and will not become the citizens our state needs in order to prosper not only economically but also as strong members of a civil and democratic society.

Judi Coffield will be the grant coordinator for this project. Judi has 17 years of experience in education including roles as a classroom teacher, a supervisor in a large district's central office responsible for instructional technology K-12 and middle school mathematics, and as a building assistant principal.

Readiness for Change

Public education has been a high priority with Governor Ruth Ann Minner throughout her political career. She has served in both chambers of the State Legislature and two terms as Lt. Governor. In each of these roles she has been a part of major decisions and actions regarding public education. Although our reform began during the term of Governor, now Representative Mike Castle, and gained momentum during the term of Governor, now Senator Tom Carper, Governor Minner made it very clear both during her first campaign for Governor and when she assumed office that education was her number one priority and that she would not be deterred in continuing the reform. During her first gubernatorial term in a challenging economic downturn, she provided an extra \$165 million for classrooms. She placed reading specialists in every elementary school, created special after school programs and worked with the Legislature to provide \$10 million of extra funding for textbooks and technology. She initiated the Teacher Corps loans that provide tuition payment for teachers in critical content areas of mathematics and science for our middle and high schools. For every year of service in a Delaware public middle or high school, one year of the recipient's loan will be forgiven. The Governor's proposals for the

coming fiscal year include placing math specialists in our middle schools that show the poorest mathematics performance on our state assessment so that students have intense support and intervention in preparation for challenging high school mathematics curriculum, additional Teacher Corps loan funding, and the SEED (Student Excellence Equals Degree) scholarship program for Delaware high school graduates. Under this program, students who graduate with a 2.5 or better grade point average and who meet other criteria will receive full funding for tuition at Delaware Technical and Community College. These initiatives clearly show that well qualified teachers, extra instructional support for students, and incentives for high school students will be important elements of our continuing efforts toward full reform.

Delaware's Congressional Delegation, Representative Castle and Senators Carper and Biden, have worked tirelessly, often across party lines, to ensure strong consideration for Delaware public education in both local and national forums. Their support for our Accountability Workbook submissions, including important amendments that have helped maintain much of our original state accountability plans, has been outstanding. A recent example was a meeting in April with the DDOE Secretary, her senior staff, and our local district superintendents with Assistant Secretary Ray Simon arranged and attended by Rep. Castle and Sen. Carper.

At the same time, Delaware's state legislators have been important partners in moving forward a strong education agenda. In both the Senate and House of Representatives, resolutions and legislation have helped strategically advance the policies and supports needed. Examples of resolutions passed by the current legislature and pending legislation which focus on areas of particular import to Redesigning High Schools in Delaware are included in the attachments. For instance, House Joint Resolution 9 supports the State Board of Education's Efforts to Revise Graduation Requirements and House Joint Resolution 4 provides for a task force to review best practices for state assessments in preparation for future decisions regarding this important issue. The Department of Education and the Governor's Office enjoy a good working relationship with our legislators who look to us for leadership on education policy.

These most recent investments signal the commitment of the Governor and the Legislature as they add to previous commitments to education which include millions of dollars for professional and staff development activities, parenting education, early childhood education for all low income children, extra instructional time for struggling students, discipline programs in every school, computer technology for every classroom, and class size reduction in the early grades. Delaware's business community has also worked diligently with DDOE and reinforced our focus on redesigning high schools. The CEO of MBNA and chair of the Delaware Business Roundtable Education Committee, Bruce Hammonds, recently testified before the House Education Committee on the importance of Delaware's diploma representing that students have mastered a solid curriculum which gives them the skills they need to succeed in college and work.

Examining the Blueprint for Action (see Attachments), it becomes clear that Delaware is a state that has begun and is committed to the hard work of improving our high schools. This gap analysis shows that in two of the key strategies, *Give Students the Excellent Teachers and Principals They Need* and *Streamline and Improve Education Governance*, our community is successfully working together and progressing on the right path. With this grant providing the resources not only from a fiscal perspective but also through technical assistance and learning from other states' successful models, we can bring forward the other three strategies so that we have a comprehensive, effective approach.

Delaware has leveraged its resources through membership in groups such as the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB), and actively participating in multiple projects (e.g., High

Schools That Work) intended to shape a statewide commitment to best practices in instruction, student progress monitoring, and local capacity building in our secondary schools. Similarly, Delaware educators both within the Delaware Department of Education and teachers and administrators in our schools continue to participate in ongoing projects in curriculum, assessment, and professional development through the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO).

Through active participation in the National Governors Association, Delaware has been able to work with colleagues to establish a national dialogue and develop a framework for meaningful high school reform. These forums provide an opportunity for governors to identify valuable resources to share with state legislators and stakeholders. Participation in conferences like “Teachers: Every School’s Most Important Subject” has enabled Delaware along with other states to not only identify and share best practices but also to learn about strategies and methods that have been implemented and evaluated elsewhere.

Prior to the National Education Summit on High Schools in February, a team of representatives from Delaware participated in the NGA policy workshops. These workshops set the stage for us to work closely with key members of the business and education communities to identify national trends, workforce dynamics, and target areas in need of immediate improvement. Perhaps more importantly, these workshops provided key policy individuals with time to identify additional resources and thoughtfully consider next steps. The policy workshops and NGA National Education Summit coincided with the Delaware State Board of Education’s High School Summit and created a renewed sense of urgency and momentum. Feedback from the State Board Summit has been overwhelming in support of this focus on high schools. Principals, superintendents, local board members and parents have expressed significant interest in working with us in pursuing the necessary changes to improve high school outcomes.

Appendix C

Graduation Requirements Committee Membership List

Jean Allen-Chair

Anthony Soligo
Bob Smith
Ann Case
Charles Brown
Daniel Curry
Tammy Davis
Edie Corbin
Emily Falcon
Kevin Fitzgerald
Gary Wray
Genevieve Tighe
Louis Hirsh
Frank Ingram
Jack Polidori

Jim Wolfe
Joe Pika
Mae Gaskins
Michael Morton
Marion Proffitt
Rich Farmer
Richard Heffron
Robert Sutton
Ron Russo
Albert Shields
Simone White
Fran Tracy-Mumford
Shuhan Wang

Appendix D

Graduation Requirements Committee Guiding Principles

Guiding Principles

- New World
 - Vision for the Future
- Preparedness
 - Equal opportunities for **all**
 - Rigor
 - Consistency
 - Importance of middle school experience
 - Global need
 - Student advocate role
 - Economic need-both students and the state
- Rigorous Curriculum
 - Strong Senior year
 - Focused course offerings
 - Concentration on academic skills especially in English Language Arts and Mathematics
- Relevance
 - Career Pathway experience

An overriding goal to accomplish all of these tasks is to communicate with parents more effectively. They need to be more educated about the high school system and know exactly what a Delaware high school diploma means for their children.

What should the Delaware high school diploma represent to students and parents, colleges and universities, and employers?

- Students and Parents
 - An indication that the student can survive and excel in a college or work environment.
 - Includes proficiency in Mathematics and English as well as non-academic skills, like citizenship, decision making and information management.
 - Sense of Accomplishment
 - Both the parents and students need to be proud of the high school diploma.
 - Access to Information.
 - Students need to be aware of the resources and opportunities in life and a diploma should signify that they have been exposed to many different paths and career choices.
- Colleges and Universities
 - The mastery of a specific body of knowledge that will make students successful at their institutions

- Skills that must be demonstrated include academic (Math and English) and non-academic (study skills, time management, the joy and desire to learn, and self-discipline).
- Employers
 - A sign that the student is prepared to advance in his/her career and demonstrate reliability and a commitment to the organization
 - Students must be prepared enough to be able to make career choices with reasonable confidence in their success.

What skills and knowledge will universities, colleges, and employers require in 2010?

- Basic academic foundation (Math, English, etc.)
- Analytical and critical thinking
- Communication skills (including interpersonal, written, and technological)
- Research skills
- Problem-Solving
- Decision-making
- Information management

How would a high school senior demonstrate that they have these skills and knowledge?

- College assessment tools (SAT, ACT)
- Senior project or portfolio
- School sanctioned resume
- Lack of remedial classes
- Community service activities
- AP courses
- End-of-course exams

Appendix E

Graduation Requirements Committee Meeting Minutes

Graduation Requirements Committee September 27, 2005 Minutes and Summary

Welcome

Introductions

Background Information

- Summary presentation by Ann Case. Presentation provided insight into the current state of Delaware public high schools and included assessments by students, colleges, and employers, recommendations from Achieve, Inc. with a discussion of the current graduation requirements, and a look at future economic impact from a global, state, and personal level.

Guiding Principles

- New World
 - Vision for the Future
- Preparedness
 - Equal opportunities for **all**
 - Rigor
 - Consistency
 - Importance of middle school experience
 - Global need
 - Student advocate role
 - Economic need-both students and the state
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 - Includes proficiency in Mathematics and English as well as non-academic skills, like citizenship, decision making and information management.
- Sense of Accomplishment
 - Both the parents and students need to be proud of the high school diploma.
 - Access to Information.
 - Students need to be aware of the resources and opportunities in life and a diploma should signify that they have been exposed to many different paths and career choices.
- Colleges and Universities
 - The mastery of a specific body of knowledge that will make students successful at their institutions
 - Skills that must be demonstrated include academic (Math and English) and non-academic (study skills, time management, the joy and desire to learn, and self-discipline).
- Employers
 - A sign that the student is prepared to advance in his/her career and demonstrate reliability and a commitment to the organization
 - Students must be prepared enough to be able to make career choices with reasonable confidence in their success.

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- Research skills
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- Decision-making
- Information management

How would a high school senior demonstrate that they have these skills and knowledge?

- College assessment tools (SAT, ACT)
- Senior project or portfolio
- School sanctioned resume
- Lack of remedial classes
- Community service activities
- AP courses
- End-of-course exams

Next meeting: Noon (Lunch will be provided)
October 21, 2005
Cabinet Room, Townsend Building

Time Lines:

- Recommendations on high school graduation requirements to the State Board of Education by March 1, 2006 for final action in May 2006
- Recommendations on dual enrollment to the State Board of Education by June 1, 2006

Graduation Requirements Committee
October 21, 2005
Summary Notes

The Committee reviewed the consensus reached at the September meeting regarding the Guiding Principles, what a Delaware high school diploma should mean, what skills and knowledge should be required, and how students could demonstrate skills and knowledge needed for graduation.

The vast majority of this meeting time was devoted to small group discussions on the English language arts requirements for graduation.

Based on the reporting of the groups the following are important components of the English language arts requirements for graduation:

- Writing skills
 - o Research/ going beyond “self”
 - o Research paper as a cap stone
- Presentation/Communication skills both orally and in writing
 - o as an individual and
 - o as a member of a group
 - o using technology
 - o examine the standards for oral communications used in the vocational areas for competitions
- Reasoning/Logic/Problem Solving/Interpretation
- Build on the requirements in the English Language Arts Standards from the 9th and 10th grades.
 - o Extend the standards to grade 12
 - o Begin working towards mastery in the middle school/use of vertical complexity as the student moves through the grades in literature, writing and oral communications
- Writing across the curriculum is important as is writing for different audiences and purposes
- High school graduation should enable a student to enter college in a freshman credit bearing English course – What does a grade of “D” mean?? Does that indicate any level of mastery or competence??

The next meeting of the committee is November 18th in the Cabinet Room beginning at noon.

Lunch will be available.

The committee will move into the math and science requirements as well as social studies if time permits.

Graduation Requirements Committee
November 18, 2005
Minutes

The Committee reviewed information gathered since the last meeting, including a commentary on raising graduation requirements published by Achieve, Inc., an article about a similar redesign effort by the Idaho State Board of Education, and a chart detailing various English curricula at high schools across the state.

Much of the meeting was spent in small group discussions on the mathematics and science requirements for graduation. Based on the reporting of the groups, there was agreement reached on many issues about the important components of the graduation requirements.

- Mathematics

- o Consensus:

- Most committee members were in agreement over the adoption of the American Diploma Project recommendations, although there was some discussion about the fourth credit and whether there should be an emphasis on the practical or abstract applications of the courses.
 - A math course should be taken in the student's senior year, especially if her or she is progressing to college.
 - There was discussion about revising the high school mathematics standards and the effects that would have on the middle schools. Almost all members agreed that the focus and rigor of middle school mathematics should also be addressed.

- o Issues for Discussion:

- The effects of the new mathematics requirements on special education students.
 - The additional revenue to be spent on both low and high achievers
 - There was discussion about students who complete Algebra 1 in middle school and whether they should be required to take four math courses in high school.

- Science

- o Consensus:

- Most committee members agreed on adoption of the ADP recommended three science credits, including Biology, Chemistry, and Physics, 2 with a lab. There was some discussion about whether these three should be the standard courses offered, or if they should be covered as topics.
 - As with mathematics, there was a feeling that more rigor should be explored in middle school science programs. Increased rigor would give the students more knowledge about the science classes relevant to their career pathways.

- o Issues for Discussion:

- There was discussion about offering and encouraging a fourth science credit. Logistical issues, such as resources and staff, need to be explored further for this option.

The following are important components of the English Language Arts requirements for graduation, which the committee reached consensus on at the October 21st meeting. While they were not discussed further at last week's meeting, they are important to keep in mind as the committee continues its work.

- o Writing
 - o Research/Going beyond "self"
 - o Possible research paper as a capstone project
- o Presentation/Communication skills both orally and in writing
 - o As an individual and as a member of a group
 - o The use of technology
 - o Examine the standards for oral communication used in the vocational areas for competitions
- o Reasoning/Logic/Problem Solving/Interpretation
- o Build on the requirements in the English Language Arts Standards from the 9th and 10th grades
 - o Extend the standards to grade 12
 - o Begin working towards mastery in the middle school/use of vertical complexity as the students move through the grades in literature, writing, and oral communication
- o Writing across the curriculum is important, as is writing for different audiences and purposes

Issues to be Discussed Further:

- o Meeting the need for increased resources as a result of the new graduation requirements. Specifically, the addition of more staff, building space, cost, etc.
- o Public Awareness: Part of the responsibility involves communicating the need for increased graduation requirements to the public. The committee is currently planning to address this issue by arranging focus groups with various education and community organizations throughout the state. More details will be presented as they are finalized.

The next meeting of the Committee is December 12th in the Cabinet Room beginning at noon.

Lunch will be available.

The committee will move into the requirements for social studies.

**Graduation Requirements Committee
December 12, 2005**

Notes

The first part of the meeting was spent in small group discussions on the social studies requirements for graduation. Based on the reporting of the groups, there was agreement reached on many issues about the important components of the social studies graduation requirements.

- Social Studies

- o Consensus:

- Most committee members were in agreement with the American Diploma Project recommendations for three credits with course contents, including World History; U. S. History; economics and civics. There was some discussion about encouraging a fourth year of social studies that could be part of the career pathway.
- Most committee members were comfortable with either specific course title or using the integrated approach. Of more concern than course arrangement was course content.
- There was concern expressed that sufficient social studies standards be covered by the end of 10th grade to prepare students for the DSTP in social studies given in the fall of the 11th grade.
- There was discussion on the need for students to understand the world around them and the factors that were influencing their lives and their futures.

- o Issues for Further Discussion:

- Is there a difference in scores for students placed in integrated math as opposed to traditional math?
- Consequences of increasing graduation requirements
- Expansion of career pathway offerings needed to cover all of the interest areas.

The second part of the meeting was devoted to small and large group discussions around the number of credits and course requirements that would be needed to graduate students prepared for college and/or the work place. There were similarities and differences as shown by the following chart of the recommendations of the three groups.

Material was distributed that shows how Arkansas, Indiana and Texas handle “opt-out” students and the alternative requirements that are placed on those students.

Handouts included:

- o Learning for the 21st Century: A report and mile guide for 21st Century Skills
- o Gaining Traction, Gaining Ground: How some high schools accelerate learning for struggling students
- o The Power to Change: High schools that help all students achieve

The next meeting is scheduled for January 27, 2006 from noon to 3:00 p.m. in the Cabinet Room, second floor Townsend Building in Dover.

The agenda will include a continuation of the discussion around course content and graduation credits as well as discussion around any “opt-out” process.

Results of Small Group Discussion of Graduation Credits/Courses

Group 2	Group 3	Group 4
22 or 23 credits as follows:	26 Credits as follows:	24 Credits as follows:
4 ELA	4 ELA	4 ELA
3/4 Math	4 Math	4 Math
3 Science	3 Science	4/3 Science and Social Studies (total of 7 credits)
3 Career Pathways	3 Social Studies	3 Career Pathways
1 ½ Health & Phys Ed	2 PE	Additional ½ credit PE with the provision that team and intramural sports can be substituted for the credit requirements in PE
1 Computer Science	½ Health (might combine with PE for a total of 2)	A minimum of 5 credits would be required in the senior year.
More subject rigor and better defined pathways were also recommended.	2 World Language	
	1 Fine Arts	
	3 Career Pathway	
	3 1/2 Electives	
	Move the Computer Credit to the Middle School	

Graduation Requirements Committee
January 27, 2006
Minutes

The meeting began with a presentation by Dan Rich, Provost at the University of Delaware, about their *Commitment to Delawareans* program. The Commitment to Delawareans is a set of goals and a level of performance that students must achieve to be confident of gaining admission to the University of Delaware. Any Delaware student that reaches these goals will be considered a very strong candidate for admission and have their financial needs met, up to the cost of in-state tuition.

In order to be eligible for the Commitment to Delawareans program, students must complete at least 20 academic credits between grades 9 through 12. These credits must include 4 years of English, 4 years of Mathematics, 4 years of Science, 3 years of the same Foreign Language, 2 years of History, and 2 years of Social Studies, all at the college preparatory level or above.

The remainder of the meeting was spent discussing the core course requirements. Based on the discussion, there was agreement reached on many issues about the important components of the graduation requirements.

English Language Arts

The committee began with the components of the English Language Arts requirements that were originally discussed at the October 21st meeting, which include 4 required credits emphasizing:

- Writing
 - o Research/Going beyond “self”
 - o Possible research paper as capstone project
- Presentation/Communication skills both orally and in writing
 - o As an individual and as a member of a group
 - o The use of technology
 - o Examine the standards for oral communication used in the vocational areas for competitions
- Reasoning/Logic/Problem Solving/Interpretation
- Build on the requirements in the ELA Standards from the 9th & 10th grades
 - o Extend the standards to Grade 12
 - o Begin working towards mastery in the middle school/use of vertical complexity as the students move through grades in literature, writing, and oral communication
 - o Writing across the curriculum is important, as is writing for different audiences and purposes

The option of a senior project that encompasses many or all of these skills was discussed as a possible addition to the requirements.

Mathematics

Most committee members reached consensus on the following issues:

- A requirement of 4 credits, with one to be taken in the student's senior year.
- Specifying Algebra I, II, and Geometry, or their equivalents, as graduation requirements.

Although a majority of the committee was in agreement over specifying the above three courses, there was much discussion over the Algebra II requirement and its affect on students not progressing to college. Some members advocated more flexibility in the requirements, to provide a choice between college preparatory classes and those emphasizing practical applications.

Science

The committee reached a consensus in requiring 3 science credits, including Biology, Chemistry, and Physics, all with a lab.

Social Science

The committee also agreed that 3 credits of Social Science should be required, which encompass the core subject areas of history, geography, government, and economics. It was noted that the subjects can be successfully delivered in an integrated approach.

The committee then discussed the Computer Literacy credit and a proposed Art requirement. It was decided that, due to the large majority of high school students already skilled with computers, the requirement should be moved to the middle school level. Also, the committee did not recommend a required credit in Art for reasons including the need for additional resources and the threat to already strong programs.

Issues to be Discussed Further:

- Foreign Language requirement
 - o Required or Recommended?
- Career Pathways
- Opt-Out Requirements
 - o What other states are doing
 - o Delaware?

The next meeting of the Committee is February 24th in the Cabinet Room from 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. The Committee will hear a presentation from Cheryl Orr of the Indiana Commission for Higher Education.

Graduation Requirements Committee
February 24, 2006
Minutes

Cheryl Orr, Staff Liaison for Indiana's Education Roundtable and Senior Communications Associate for Indiana Commission for Higher Education, was present at the meeting to provide information and insights on Indiana's Core 40. Indiana is one of a handful of states who has preceded Delaware in increasing the rigor of the requirements for high school graduation. Indiana embarked on this journey ten years ago when it became apparent that Indiana high school graduates were not competitive with graduates from other states and few graduates were pursuing higher education opportunities.

Ms Orr noted that in Indiana, the Core 40 is tied to the minimum admission requirements for institutions of higher education as well as student financial aid. Indiana also has end of course assessments to insure the quality of the high school curriculum. Math is required in both the junior and senior years of high school. Students can earn high school graduation credits in middle school if the courses conform to the standards of the high school course and the exit exams are passed. She noted that with the increased requirements in high school, middle schools are changing as well.

Indiana has an "opt-out" option for students who along with their parents or guardians, and school officials determine that they need an alternative program for graduation. The "op-out" program requires explicit curriculum planning to assure that the student graduates with skills that can be used in the work place. In order to be considered for the "op-out" provision, the student must have completed the 9th grade year under the Core 40 program and have failed at least three Core 40 courses; not achieved higher than the 25 percentile in the graduation qualifying exam given in the fall of 10th grade; or at the parent or guardian's request. The "op-out" provision is seen as a transition opportunity for those students who do not have the essential underpinnings to take the more rigorous courses offered for students expected to enter postsecondary education or training. It was also noted that of all of the states currently exploring increasing graduation requirements, only Kentucky has decided not to offer an alternative program.

The committee members questioned Ms Orr about the system in Indiana and asked for her advice in moving toward increased requirements in Delaware. Ms Orr noted the importance of data collection as students progress through the system and into higher education. She also urged that the message about why requirements are increasing be consistent. She urged the committee to continue to push forward even if we don't have all of the answers today.

Following the discussion with Ms Orr, the committee turned to discussion of whether or not Delaware should pursue an "opt-out" curriculum for the small number of students who may not be able to graduate under the proposed increased requirements.

Issues raised by the committee included:

- The "op-out" curriculum cannot become a "tracking" system

- Student potential must be considered
- There should be public reporting on the numbers of students taking the optional program
- Additional academic supports need to be in place for students who might be potential “op-out” candidates
- A “cooling off” period should be provided so that students and their parents or guardians can re-visit the “op-out” choice.

Consensus of the committee came down on the side of exploring the “opt-out” provisions in more detail.

It was also noted that focus groups are being scheduled and held during the month of March and into early April. The results of the focus groups will come back to the committee.

The next meeting of the Committee will be Wednesday, March 29th beginning at noon in the Cabinet Room of the Townsend Building.

An April meeting has also been scheduled for Tuesday, April 25th beginning at 1:30 p.m. in the Cabinet Room of the Townsend Building.

Graduation Requirements Committee
March 29, 2006
Minutes

World Language

The meeting began with a discussion of world languages and whether or not there should be a course/credit requirement for all students. A number of issues were raised as follows:

- Should 2 credits in world language be required for all students for graduation?
- Do high schools have the scheduling capacity to add more credits?
- Will adding more credit requirements impact vocational programs?
- Where will the additional units for teachers of world language come from?
- Unless there are additional resources, there will be an inequity across the state with those who can afford to add more world language and those who must cut other programs to world language for all students.
- How hard is it to find certified world language educators?
- In order to develop world language competency, exposure must take place in the middle school if not the elementary school level. Competency will not be achieved with a 2 credit requirement in high school.
- Are there contract implications to consider in implementation?
- What alternative certification processes are there for world language educators?

As the discussion progressed, comments were offered regarding the increased interest at both the federal and state levels in expanding the availability of world languages for all students. Trade industries are also interested in second language capabilities as more Spanish speaking workers are hired. World language certification has been updated to allow native speakers to show fluency through testing and CD Rom supports are becoming more widely available. Teacher exchange programs are also possible to address the need for world language instruction. It was also underscored that early exposure and instruction is important if a student is really going to achieve competency in the language and understand different cultural backgrounds.

The Committee determined that it would recommend that freshman entering high school in 2009 be required to graduate with 2 credits in a comprehensive program in world language. The committee further recommended that a task force on world language implementation be established to resolve issues regarding resources, providing world language exposure in the elementary and/or middle school.

Senior Year

The Committee discussed the need for a rigorous senior year. Requirements such as Senior Projects, research papers, dual enrollment opportunities, work/study programs and community service were all discussed.

The Committee determined that it would require students to be engaged in educational pursuits for both semesters senior year that would earn them more than 50% of the available credits that could be earned in that year. Furthermore, the district would determine what options it would allow in order to accomplish that engagement so that the students would be involved in activities that increase their knowledge, their skills and their experience, thereby better preparing them for post high school endeavors.

Optional Requirements

The Committee discussed allowing optional graduation requirements in certain cases. The dilemma recognized from the outset was expecting high standards for all students and then making exceptions for some.

There were concerns expressed about allowing students and adults to “game” the system.

As the discussion unfolded, there was consideration for allowing some students to have a “five year” plan for graduation, offering credit recovery programs, extending the school year and providing other alternatives within the system.

Establishing a safety net for students and having indicators that would require a team approach to look at the student’s progress, needs and pulling together resources to help the student be successful in meeting the graduation requirements was considered to be more important than having optional requirements. A suggestion was made that a review of a student’s academic progress could be part of the ILP process contained in the NGA grant.

It was agreed that a new proposal reflecting the discussion of the committee will be prepared and distributed to committee members prior to the April meeting when the issue will again be on the agenda.

The next meeting of the Committee will be Tuesday, April 25 from 1:30 to 4:00 p.m. in the Cabinet Room in the Townsend Building, Dover.

Appendix F

Current Graduation Requirements

Appoquinimink School District	Middletown High School-22 credit requirement. Grade 12 students must complete a senior project
Brandywine School District	Brandywine, Concord, and Mount Pleasant High Schools- 22 credit requirement
Caesar Rodney School District	Caesar Rodney High School-22 credit requirement
Cape Henlopen School District	Cape Henlopen High School-22 credit requirement
Capital School District	Dover High School-22 credit requirement
Christina School District	Christiana, Glasgow, and Newark High Schools- 26 credit requirement. 5.5 Elective credits, 1 credit Senior Project, 1 credit Community Service.
Colonial School District	William Penn High School-22 credit requirement
Delmar School District	Delmar High School-22 credit requirement
Indian River School District	Indian River High School- 22.5 credit requirement. Sussex Central Senior High School- 22.5 credit requirement.
Lake Forest School District	Lake Forest High School- 26 credit requirement. 1 credit of Social Studies and 3 elective credits beyond minimum.
Laurel School District	Laurel Senior High School- 24 credit requirement. 2 more elective credits.
Milford School District	Milford High School- 27 credit requirement. 1 credit of Social Studies and 4 elective credits beyond minimum.
NCC Votech District	Delcastle, Howard, and Hodgson Technical High Schools- 24.5 credit requirement. Additional credits for Career Program.
POLYTECH High School District	POLYTECH High School- 26 credit requirement. 1 Mathematics requirement and 3 Career Program credits beyond minimum.
Red Clay School District	24 credit requirement. 2 Foreign language credits.
Seaford School District	Seaford High School- 22 credit requirement.
Smyrna School District	Smyrna High School- 22 credit requirement.
Sussex Technical School District	Sussex Technical High School- 25 credit requirement. 9 Technical Education credits and 2.5 elective credits.
Woodbridge School District	Woodbridge High School- 25 credit requirement.

Appendix G

Recommended Graduation Requirements Chart

	Current Delaware Requirements	ADP Benchmarks	Recommended Delaware Requirements
English/Language Arts	4 credits	4 credits: Curricula must include: literature, writing, reasoning, logic, and communication skills	4 credits: Curricula should emphasize literature, writing, presentation & communication skills, reasoning, logic, and technical writing
Mathematics	3 credits	3 credits: Requirements must include Algebra I, Geometry, and Algebra II. Optional classes in Data Analysis and Statistics	4 credits: Curricula should include skills equivalent to at least Algebra II. One credit should be taken in the student's senior year.
Science	3 credits	3 credits: Requirements must include: Biology, Chemistry, and Physics.	3 credits: Requirements should include Earth/Physical Science, Chemistry, and Biology, or their equivalents (all with a lab).
Social Science	3 credits	3 credits: Curricula must include: World History, U.S. History, and U.S. Government	3 credits: Courses should encompass the core areas of history, geography, civics, and economics.
Other Requirements	3 credits: Career Pathway 1.5 credits: Physical Education/Health 1 credit: Computer Literacy 3.5 credits: Electives <i>**1/4 credit: Driver Education</i>		3 credits: Career Pathway 1.5 credits: Physical Education/Health 3.5 credits: Electives <i>**1/4 credit: Driver Education</i>
Total	22 credits		22 credits

Appendix H

Senior Project Descriptions

Synopsis of Requirements and Process

Middletown High School

- Research paper, product and presentation with portfolio
 - Paper 7 to 10 pages
 - Product – stand as a focus of the research and centerpiece of presentation
 - Must not exceed 20 minutes including questions and answer segments.
- Pass/fail/incomplete grade system
- Schedule for completion of segments determined annually.

Woodbridge High School

- Research paper, product and presentation
 - Research paper must be a minimum of 5 pages
 - Products are a tangible creation based on the research
 - Presentations are to be no less than 10 minutes or exceed 20 minutes in length
- Projects are graded on a scale from 0 to 25 with a scoring rubric
- Schedule
 - Final Reports due November
 - Products due in March
 - Presentations in March/April
 - Reflections on project due in May

POLYTECH High School

- Technical Exhibition consisting of a research paper, product or community service activity to show skill mastery and a presentation
 - Research paper must be at least 10 pages
 - Product must require at least 20 hours of preparation and construction or choose 20 hours of community service
 - Presentations are to be no less than 10 minutes or exceed 20 minutes in length
- Projects are graded on a scale of 0 to 100 and the student must receive a grade of 70 on each part to pass. There is a scoring rubric. Segments can be redone
- Students may also opt for a Master of Technology Diploma requiring more stringent requirements both in course taking and the senior project
- Schedule
 - Senior project can be completed in the first or second semester

Sussex Tech High School

- Research paper, product utilizing advanced technical skill, and an oral presentation
 - Paper must be at least 3 pages not counting title page, references, outline and appendices.
- Projects are graded using a scoring rubric

New Castle County Vocational-Technical High School *** (Only Hodgson has a senior project)*

- Research paper focusing on a technical subject area, an oral presentation, and a completed product.
 - Research paper must be 10-25 pages in length
 - Presentation must be between 15 and 30 minutes long
 - Product must be completed
- Grading
 - The research paper is graded by both an English teacher, for format and grammar, and a vocational teacher for content. Each teacher assigns a grade worth 1/6 of the overall grade.
 - The presentation is graded by the student's committee panel, consisting of 3-5 professionals and/or staff members. The grades are averaged and count as 1/3 of the overall grade.
 - The product is graded by the same committee panel, as well as the student's shop teacher. The two grades are averaged and the result counts as 1/3 of the overall grade.
 - Once all of the components are graded, the scores are averaged, and if the overall score is above 69.5, the student is eligible for graduation.
- Schedule
 - Components of the senior project are completed throughout the year, with some topics being addressed in senior year classes.

Appendix I

4th Year Mathematics Statistics

District/School	2004	2005	2006	Math Classes
<u>Appoquinimink School District</u>				
Middletown High School			232 (50.2%)	Probability and Statistics, CB Calculus, AP Calculus, AP Prob. & Stat., Pre-Calculus
<u>Brandywine School District</u>				
Mount Pleasant High School			150 (76.1%)	Algebra II, Advanced Algebra, AP Calculus, Honors Calculus, IB Mathematical Studies, Pre-Calculus
<u>Caesar Rodney School District</u>				
Caesar Rodney High School	309(80%)	293 (84%)	324 (79.2%)	Algebra II, Intro to Calculus, Discrete Math, Pre-Calculus, Calculus, Adv. Geometry, AP Calculus, AP Statistics
<u>Colonial School District</u>				
William Penn High School			239 (55%)	Geometry, Algebra II, Calculus, Advanced Mathematics, AP Statistics, Pre-Calculus
<u>Delmar School District</u>				
Delmar Senior High School			84 (73.6%)	AP Calc, Stat. & Prob, Trig./Algebra III, Honors Algebra II, Algebra II, Algebra I, Geometry, Core Plus 2 & 3, Inclusion Core Plus 3, ILC Math, UD Academic Challenge
<u>Indian River School District</u>				
Sussex Central High School			208 (92%) 4th credit: 60 (26.5%)	Prob. & Stat., Calculus, Calculus AB (AP)
<u>Lake Forest School District</u>				

Lake Forest High School	103 (45.5%)	Honors Geometry, Honors Pre-Calculus, AP Calculus, Int. Alg. & Geometry I-IV, Calculus
<u>Milford School District</u>		
Milford Senior High School	133 (59.1%)	Geometry, Academic Alg. II, Acad. Geometry, Honors Geometry, Stat. & App., Academic Pre-Calculus, Honors Pre-Calculus, Academic Calculus, AP Calculus,
<u>POLYTECH School District</u>		
POLYTECH High School	196 (72.3%)	Core Plus III, Algebra II, Algebra III, Pre-Calculus, Calculus, AP Calculus, Discrete Mathematics, Statistics
<u>Red Clay School District</u>		
Dickinson High School	150 (89.8%)	Geometry Honors, Algebra II (Honors, CP, and General), Math 3, Pre-Calculus (Honors and CP), Math 4, AP Statistics, Calculus (Honors, AB, and BC),
McKean High School	133 (57.8%)	Geometry (Honors, CP, General), Math II, Algebra II (Honors, CP, General), Math III, Pre-Calc (CP, Honors), Senior Math, Calculus (AP, Honors), Stat and Prob,
<u>Smyrna School District</u>		
Smyrna High School	99 (50%)	Integrated Math II, Geometry, Algebra II, Pre-Calculus, Calculus, SAT Math Prep., Computer Science

Appendix J

Secondary Math Teacher Graduates: Statistics

	2004	2005	2006	Percent 2004-2005	Change 2005-2006
Delaware State University	9	6	8	-33%	33%
Wilmington College	N/A	N/A	5	N/A	N/A
University of Delaware	5	8	23	60%	287.50%
Total	14	14	36		
Total Percent Change		0%	257%		

Appendix K

Guidance Counselor Statistics

District/School	Enrollment	Guidance Counselors	Ratio
<u>Appoquinimink School District</u>			
Middletown High School	1805	5	361-1
<u>Brandywine School District</u>			
Brandywine High School	1272	4	318-1
Concord High School	1136	4	284-1
Mount Pleasant High School	949	3	316-1
<u>Caesar Rodney School District</u>			
Caesar Rodney High School	1785	5	357-1
<u>Cape Henlopen School District</u>			
Cape Henlopen High School	1172	4	293-1
<u>Capital School District</u>			
Dover High School	1470	4	368-1
<u>Charter Schools</u>			
Campus Community School	196	1	196-1
Charter School of Wilmington	936	4	234-1
Delaware Military Academy	414	1	414-1
Positive Outcomes	78	1	78-1
<u>Christina School District</u>			
Christiana High School	1452	5	290-1
Glasgow High School	1510	4	378-1
Newark High School	1815	5	363-1
<u>Colonial School District</u>			
William Penn High School	2369	8	296-1
<u>Delmar School District</u>			
Delmar Senior High School	534	2	267-1
<u>Indian River School District</u>			
Indian River High School	758	3	253-1
Sussex Central Senior High School	1108	4	277-1
<u>Lake Forest School District</u>			
Lake Forest High School	841	3	280-1
<u>Laurel School District</u>			
Laurel Senior High School	489	2	245-1

<u>Milford School District</u>			
Milford Senior High School	998	3	333-1
<u>NCCVT District</u>			
Delcastle High School	1477	5	295-1
Hodgson High School	1105	3	368-1
Howard High School	772	3	257-1
<u>POLYTECH School District</u>			
POLYTECH High School	1149	5	230-1
<u>Red Clay School District</u>			
A.I. DuPont High School	1270	5	254-1
Dickinson High School	1007	3	336-1
McKean High School	1053	4	263-1
<u>Seaford School District</u>			
Seaford Senior High School	884	3	295-1
<u>Smyrna School District</u>			
Smyrna High School	990	3	330-1
<u>Sussex Tech. School District</u>			
Sussex Tech. High School	1212	4	303-1
<u>Woodbridge School District</u>			
Woodbridge High School	509	2	255-1
Average Ratio	293.3-1		
Lowest Ratio			
Positive Outcomes School	78-1		
Highest Ratio			
Delaware Military Academy	414-1		
Lowest Ratio (Non-charter)			
POLYTECH High School	230-1		
Highest Ratio (Non-charter)			
Dover High School	368-1		
Hodgson Tech. High School	368-1		

Appendix L

World Language References

Graduation Requirement Considerations for World Languages

February 6, 2006

**To: Jean W. Allen, President
Delaware State Board of Education**

**Thru: Martha Brooks, Associate Secretary
Mike Stetter, Director of Curriculum Development Group**

**From: Shuhan C. Wang, Education Associate
World Languages & International Education**

Suggested Course of Study Required for Graduation, Including Number of Credits

All public school students in grades 9-12 shall successfully complete 2 credits of the same language, either a European or an Asian language. These credits shall consist of courses that are aligned to the standards and ensure that students will meet the Grade Level Expectations or the End of Cluster Expectations as evidenced by transfer of learning. This will be monitored through the DOE curriculum alignment process.

Other World Language Competency Evidence Accepted for ALL Students

In lieu of the course credits, students may earn two credits by passing the following equivalent competency tests:

Novice-Mid proficiency level on the Proficiency Scale established by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) for Speaking, Reading, and Writing Skills tested by the Standards-based Measurement of Proficiency (STAMP) Test offered by the Language Learning Solutions, Inc. Students must reach the Novice-Mid level in any two of the three skills specified.

For partial credit, districts/charter schools may use their own placement assessment to determine if students are able to take a Level II course without having taken Level I course.

Suggested Sequence Beginning in High School

Most of the universities and colleges require at least two years of study of the same language. Many prestigious universities or colleges, including the University of Delaware, require three credits of the same language for admission.

Suggested Sequence Beginning in Middle School, if Possible

In order to enable students to take the Advanced Placement (AP) Tests offered by the College Board (See College Board Position Letter), students will have to begin their study of a World Language in the middle school years, if not sooner in elementary schools. Internationally, most countries begin their study of a World Language in elementary schools (See attached Executive Summary of Foreign Language Teaching: What the United States Can Learn from Other Countries, 2000; and the accompanying table). Likewise, it has become a national trend in the United States (US) to begin the instruction of a World Language in elementary schools (See NCSSFL State Requirements Table, June 2004).

Rationale, National Trends and Latest Research

This trend to build **World Language K-16 Pipelines** is in accordance with the demands placed on the citizenry and workforce of the US:

- a. **Global Competencies for the 21st Century:** Such as the six traits suggested by Mr. Michael Eskew, the CEO of the UPS: trade literate, sensitive to foreign cultures, conversant in different languages, technology savvy, capable of managing complexity, and ethical (States Institute, December 8, 2005);
- b. **National Security:** It is no doubt that languages and cultures are effective tools to fight against global terrorism and any threat against the US;
- c. **Economic Competitiveness:** The US must stay ahead in a “flattened” world shaped by the force of globalization;
- d. **Political Engagement and People Diplomacy:** The understanding of another language and culture will expand the children’s world views;
- e. **Multilingual and Multicultural Diversity within the State:** The heritage/ethnic communities can be a rich resource for the state to expand our capacity for language needs in business and social interaction; and
- f. **Cognitive and Educational Benefits:** As research has shown, the study of a World Language has resulted in the following cognitive benefits for learners: tap into their multiple intelligences; enable them to develop and use better learning strategies; become self-managed and life-long learners; character-based languages are 2-dimensional, thus enhance learners’ ability to process patterning and geometry; and support learning in other disciplines.

Resource and Teacher Shortage Issues

We are cognizant of the fact that there are resource and teacher shortage issues related to WL education in Delaware, the solution of which requires all stakeholders to make a concerted effort. The US is notoriously known for being behind in World Language Education, while Delaware lags further behind many other states. If Delaware does not begin to face this crisis and make a strong stance on this issue, we will have **a generation of children left behind.**

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Graduation Requirement Committee consider this issue seriously. Given the current resource and teacher shortage issues, it may be necessary to take a phase-in approach. To be silent on World Language Requirements, however, is not serving the interests of the State and students in the long run.

Enclosures

c.c.: Sec. Valerie Woodruff
Ann Case
Martha Books

April 30, 2005

To: Chief State School Officers
From: Tom Matts and Marcia Wilbur, The College Board
Re: Achieving Equitable Access to World Language AP[®] Exams for All Students
Cc: National Council of State Supervisors For Languages

AP World Languages Initiative

You are very likely aware that The College Board is purposefully and actively seeking to impact world language studies by expanding its Advanced Placement (AP) offerings to include AP Chinese Language and Culture, AP Italian Language and Culture, AP Japanese Language and Culture, and AP Russian Language and Culture by May of 2007. By developing these new AP Exams for students and the corresponding professional development support for teachers, the College Board is taking the necessary steps towards recognizing and promoting second language study its rightful place of prominence and importance in U.S. schools, given the urgent demands of our global 21st century society. While we will continue to support the acquisition of traditional European languages with our AP French, AP German, AP Latin, and AP Spanish courses, we recognize the need to encourage students to broaden their understanding of and ability to communicate with the citizens of a greater variety of nations abroad.

A Matter of Equity

The College Board is equally committed to equitable access to our AP courses for all students, and to the principle that all students who are willing to accept the challenge of a rigorous academic curriculum should be given consideration for admission to AP courses.ⁱ The Board encourages the elimination of barriers that restrict access to AP courses for students from ethnic, racial, and socioeconomic groups that have been traditionally underrepresented in the AP Program. Schools should make every effort to ensure that their AP classes reflect the diversity of their student population. For the study of world languages, the Equity Policy Statement translates into long-sequences of study.

Because of the time investment necessary to achieve second language proficiency and due to the demonstrated benefits of world language studies, it is imperative that state policy makers consider the addition of formal, sequential instruction of world languages as essential, beginning in the middle school and even sooner, in order to allow equitable access to everyone. While we know that elementary programs are key to developing students' ability to acquire a second language and to fostering their positive, receptive attitudes about language and culture, without long-sequence language study of five or six years, second language fluency and success on an AP exam in a world language remain possible for only an elite, select group of our student population. Does the required K-12 curriculum in your state include long-sequences of world language study?

Five Years' Study Significantly Better Than Four on AP Exams

Research data bear out that in order to achieve equity for all students, long sequences of study (greater than four years) in secondary schools are essential to the acquisition of second language proficiency. As part of the 2002 AP French, AP German, and AP Spanish language exams, survey data support a strong connection between the length of study (in years) and students' scores on the corresponding AP Examination. Students who had studied the language for five years scored significantly higher than those who had studied it for only four (Baum, Bischof, & Luna, 2004).ⁱⁱ

Foreign Language Study Translates to Higher SAT Scores

In the College Board's report, *2004 College Bound Seniors: A Profile of SAT Test Takers*, students whose profiles include long-sequences of world language study consistently demonstrate higher scores on both

the math and verbal portions of the SAT than do their non-language studying counterparts.ⁱⁱⁱ The gains are incremental; the more years of world language study, the greater the gains on the SAT Test. These data continue to corroborate previous research confirming the correlation of world language study with higher SAT scores.^{iv}

We hope you believe, as we do, that it is time for state legislatures to recognize the need to support second language proficiency for every U.S. student. We welcome your questions and extend our appreciation to you for your time and careful consideration of this matter.

With best regards,

Thomas Matts
Director, World Languages Initiative
Advanced Placement Program
The College Board
45 Columbus Avenue
New York, NY 10023
212/373-8727
tmatts@collegeboard.org

Marcia Wilbur
Associate Director,
Head, World Languages & Cultures
K-12 Professional Development
The College Board
3700 Crestwood Parkway, Suite 700
Duluth, GA 30096
770/225-4079
mwilbur@collegeboard.org

FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING

What the United States Can Learn From Other Countries

Ingrid Pufahl, Nancy C. Rhodes, and Donna Christian
Center for Applied Linguistics

Prepared for the U.S. Department of
Education's
Comparative Information on Improving
Education Practice
Working Group 4
Policy Priority: Foreign Language Learning
December 2000

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In an effort to inform foreign language teaching efforts in elementary and secondary schools in the United States, a small-scale, 3-month exploratory study was designed to collect information that would highlight what was most interesting and illuminating about foreign language education in various countries.

Twenty-two educators from 19 countries responded to a series of questions about methodologies, strategies, and policies in their countries that could help improve language teaching in the United States. From their responses to questions such as, "What do you think are three of the most successful aspects of foreign language education in your country?", specific policies and practices were identified that could inform U.S. language education. These characteristics are described in this report, organized by topic: An Early Start; A Well-Articulated Framework; Rigorous Teacher Education; Comprehensive Use of Technology; Effective Strategies; Strong Policy; Assessment; and Maintenance of Heritage, Regional, and Indigenous Languages.

Participants in the study were language educators from Australia, Austria, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Italy, Israel, Kazakhstan, Luxembourg, Morocco, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Peru, Spain, and Thailand. Information on China, England, and Hong Kong was gathered from published comparative education reports.

The following implications for U.S. schools were drawn from the study results:

- **Start language education early.** Most of the countries surveyed begin language instruction for the majority of students in the elementary grades, while most schools in the United States do not offer foreign language classes until middle school or high school.
- **Learn from others.** We have much to learn from the failures and successes of other countries.

- **Conduct long-term research.** Longitudinal research is needed on the effectiveness of specific policies and practices, such as early language instruction.
- **Provide stronger leadership.** Strong leadership is needed at the federal level to create a forum for discussion and improvement of instruction.
- **Identify how technology can improve language instruction.** Research is needed on how best technology can improve language instruction.
- **Improve teacher education.** The United States needs to study how other countries offer high-quality in-service and pre-service education for foreign language teachers.
- **Develop appropriate language assessment instruments.** U.S. educators need to focus additional attention on the development and use of appropriate assessment instruments.
- **Designate foreign language as a core subject.** Designating foreign languages as a core subject area is essential for a successful program. In almost all the countries with successful language education programs, foreign language has the same status as other core subjects such as mathematics and reading.
- **Take advantage of the sociolinguistic context.** American educators need to take advantage of the context in which we live by promoting the learning of languages spoken by the many immigrants and refugees in our country.

It is apparent from this preliminary study that Americans have a lot to learn from the way other countries offer language education in their schools. The entire language education profession could benefit greatly from systematic international collaboration in our language teaching efforts.

This project was carried out by the Center for Applied Linguistics with funding from the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement, under contract no. ED-00-PO-4609. CAL worked collaboratively in these efforts with the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto, an internationally known center for graduate studies, research, and teacher education.



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 American Sign Language Report
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State Requirements for Foreign/World Languages in Elementary Schools June 2004

Arkansas	<i>Standards for Accreditation for Arkansas Public Schools</i> require that all K-4 students receive instruction in all content areas annually, which includes foreign language experiences. Foreign language experiences are also required in grades 5-6 as part of social studies (history and culture of the world).
Florida	Every LEA must have a K-12 foreign language curriculum plan.
Louisiana	Curriculum program requirement in grades 1-12, with a daily 30-minute program specifically required in grades 4-6 for academically able students and optional for all others.
Maine	LEAs must have a K-12 implementation and assessment plan for modern and classical languages in place. K-12 implementation and assessment must begin in the 2007-2008 school year, contingent upon continued funding from the state legislature.

Massachusetts	Unfunded requirement for K-12 instruction (refer to <i>Massachusetts Foreign Language Curriculum Framework</i>)
North Carolina	K-12 requirement, however to be implemented as funding allows.
New Jersey	According to administrative code (not legislative statute), LEAs must offer a program in grades K-8 and all students are required to participate. The definition of an elementary school includes grades 7-8.
Oklahoma	K-8 requirement for all students (language awareness in K-3, sequential instructional program in 4-8); inclusion of grades 7-8 in the definition of an elementary school is dependent on the building site.
Vermont	K-12 instruction for all learners (refer to <i>Vermont's Framework of Standards and Learning Opportunities</i>); K-12 assessment plan must be in place and implemented by 2005
Wyoming	K-2 requirement for all students.

Contact NCSFL · Contact the Webmaster

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WORLD LANGUAGES CAREER PATHWAYS CHART

District	School	Courses
Charter	Delaware Military Academy	Spanish I-V
Christina School District	Christiana High School	French I-V German I-IV and German Language (AP) Spanish I-V
	Glasgow High School	French I-IV and French Literature German I-III and German Language Latin I-III, Latin Literature, and Latin: Virgil Spanish I-V
	Newark High School	Fairy Tales and Fables French I-V German I-V Latin I-IV, Latin Literature, and Latin: Virgil Spanish I-V
Colonial School District	William Penn High School	Spanish I-IV French I-IV German I-IV
Indian River High School	Sussex Central Senior High School	French I-IV Spanish I-IV
	Laurel School District	Laurel Senior High School
Red Clay	John Dickinson High School	3 credits in any one foreign language

Half of Europe's Citizens Know 2 Languages
The Associated Press, Sep 24 , 2005

BRUSSELS, Belgium

Half of European citizens speak a second language, according to a European Union survey released Friday.

The poll, conducted in June across Europe, found that tiny Luxembourg had the highest percentage of bilingual citizens, with 99 percent of those questioned saying they could master a conversation in a second language.

Hungary had the lowest number with 29 percent of its citizens able to speak another language. Britain was second last with 30 percent.

The survey also found that almost eight out of 10 students--ages 15-24--can have a normal conversation in at least one foreign language.

In the United States, by contrast, 9 percent of Americans speak both their native language and another language fluently, according to a U.S. Senate resolution designating 2005 the "Year of Foreign Language Study."

In the European survey, English was identified by 34 percent of respondents as their second language, followed by German which was a second language for 12 percent, then French which was spoken as a second language by 11 percent, according to the survey.

Spanish and Russian are spoken as a second language by 5 percent of those surveyed. Russian has become more common due to its widespread use in the 10 mostly eastern European countries that joined the EU last year.

It is not, however, listed as one of the EU's 21 official languages, and so receives no funding from EU education programs.

The poll, which surveyed 29,328 people across the 25-nation EU, Turkey, Croatia, Bulgaria and Romania, was released to coincide with European Day of Languages on Monday, which aims to promote the study of languages. The survey had a margin of 3.1 percentage points.

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FOREIGN LANGUAGE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

No Child Left Behind
Act of 2001

Title V: Promoting Informed Parental Choice and Innovative Programs
Part D: Fund for the Improvement of Education
Subpart 9: Foreign Language Assistance Program, also known as the "Foreign Language Assistance Act of 2001"

Purpose: To improve the quality and extent of foreign language instruction, particularly in the Nation's elementary schools.

Discretionary provisions authorize the Department to make 3-year grants to State Education Agencies and Local Education Agencies.

The grants pay the Federal share of the cost of innovative model programs for the establishment, improvement, or expansion of foreign language study for elementary and secondary school students.

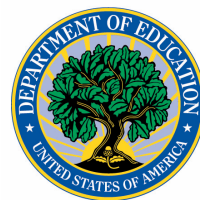
Grants to **State Education Agencies** support systemic approaches to improving foreign language learning in the State.

- The State Department of Education is eligible to apply.
- Range of awards \$50,000 to \$400,000.

Grants to **Local Education Agencies** support programs that:

1. Show the promise of being continued beyond the grant period
2. Demonstrate approaches that can be disseminated
3. May include a professional development component.

- Local school districts are eligible.
- Range of awards \$50,000 to \$300,000.



In order to build program capacity at the State and local level, cost sharing is required. The Federal share of the foreign language program for each fiscal year is restricted to 50%. If a local educational agency (LEA) designs a foreign language program for a total cost of \$200,000, it may request \$100,000 in Federal funding and the match is \$100,000. If a district does not have adequate resources, a waiver may be requested. Waivers are not available for State agencies.

- 75% of the total available funding for the FLAP program (continuations and new grants) is to be used for the expansion of foreign language learning in the elementary grades.
 - Special consideration is given to proposals describing foreign language programs that:
 1. Include summer professional development
 2. Link foreign language speakers in the community with schools
 3. Promote the sequential study of a foreign language, beginning in elementary school
 4. Effectively use technology
 5. Promote innovative activities, such as foreign language immersion, partial immersion or content-based instruction
 6. Are carried out through a consortium comprised of the agency receiving the grant and an elementary or secondary school
-

Find and Apply for Grants

www.grants.gov

The U. S. Department of Education (ED) is transitioning to Grants.gov, a website that allows organizations and individuals to find and apply for grants electronically from all Federal grant-making agencies.

All potential applicants for ED grants should register early at Grants.gov. Through early registration, you will avoid facing unexpected delays that could result in the rejection of your application.

Don't wait until the grant opportunity you are interested in is posted.

Resources

Periodically check the following website for funding updates: Click on Chart 1
<http://www.ed.gov/fund/grant/find/edlite-forecast.html>

The Office of English Language Acquisition, Language Enhancement, and Academic Achievement for Limited English Proficient Students (OELA)
www.ed.gov/offices/OELA

The National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition and Language instruction Educational Programs
www.ncela.gwu.edu/oela/OELAprograms/4_FLAP.htm

Grantmaking at ED

<http://www.ed.gov/fund/grant/about/grantmaking/pt204.html>

Contact Information

Rebecca Richey
Phone: (202) 245-7133
Fax: (202) 245-7166
Rebecca.Richey@ed.gov

Sharon Manassa
Phone: (202) 245-7124
Fax: (202) 245-7166
Sharon.Manassa@ed.gov

Application Reviewers Needed

1. Recent experience in teaching foreign languages in K-12 public elementary or secondary schools in the U.S., or in preparing teachers to teach foreign languages K-12 in the U.S.
2. Ability to use technology to complete reviews
Send a brief resume to Sharon.Manassa@ed.gov

ⁱ Visit the College Board's Equity Policy Statement and additional related information at:
<http://apcentral.collegeboard.com/article/0,,150-157-0-2200,00.html>

ⁱⁱ Baum, D. Bischof, D., & Luna, C. (2004) *Before and Beyond the AP Foreign Language Classroom*.
http://www.collegeboard.com/prod_downloads/apc/ap04_beforeandbeyond.pdf

ⁱⁱⁱ http://www.collegeboard.com/about/news_info/cbsenior/yr2004/reports.html

^{iv} Cooper, T. (1987). Foreign Language Study and SAT-Verbal Scores. *The Modern Language Journal*, 71(4), 381-387.

Appendix M

Career Pathway Options

District/High School	Career Pathway Options
Appoquinimink School District Middletown High School	Academic, Agriscience, Business & Information Technology, Family & Consumer Sciences, Jobs for DE Grads, ROTC, Technology Education, Visual & Performing Arts,
Brandywine School District Brandywine High School Concord High School Mount Pleasant High School	Art, Business/Computer Education, Family & Consumer Science, Marketing, Music, Technology Education, Agricultural Science, Bio & Chem. Technology, Business, Information Technology, Physical Technology Army JROTC, Business Education, Design & Technology Education, Family & Consumer Science, Jobs for DE Grads
Caesar Rodney School District Caesar Rodney High School	Academic, Agriscience, Air Force JROTC, Business, Family & Consumer Science, Foreign Language, Technology Education, Visual & Performing Arts
Cape Henlopen School District Cape Henlopen High School	Academic, Agriscience, Business, Marketing, & Finance, Family & Consumer Science, Foreign Language, Technology Education, Visual & Performing Arts
Capital School District Dover High School	Academic, Business, Computer Science, Foreign Language, Technical Education, Visual & Performing Arts
Charter Schools Campus Community School The Charter School of Wilmington Delaware Military Academy	Foreign Language, Technology Applications, Visual/Performing Arts Art, Computer Science, Science, Social Science Business, Military Science, World Language, Visual & Performing Arts

Christina School District Christiana High School Glasgow High School Newark High School	Agriscience & Horticulture, Business Technology Education, Design & Technology, Family & Consumer Science, Performing Arts, Visual Arts, World Languages
Colonial School District William Penn High School	Business Education, Family & Consumer Science, Horticulture, Jobs for DE Grads, Technology Education, Visual & Performing Arts, World Languages
Delmar School District Delmar Senior High School	Agriscience, Business, Jobs for DE Grads, Technology, Visual/Performing Arts
Indian River School District Indian River High School Sussex Central Senior High School	Agricultural Science, Accounting & Finance, Business Applications, Communication Arts, Criminal Justice, Integrated Math & Science, Marine JROTC, Performing Arts, Sports Medicine, Visual Arts Accounting & Finance, Agriscience, Art, Broadcasting, Business Application, Communication, Computer Science, Dance, Enterprise Mgmt., Health & Wellness, Jobs for DE Grads, Music, Network Design, Technology Systems, Theater
Lake Forest School District Lake Forest High School	Agriscience, Business, Family & Consumer Science, Jobs for DE Grads, Sports Medicine, Technology Education, Visual & Performing Arts
Laurel School District Laurel High School	Agriscience, Business, Foreign Language, Journalism, Math & Science, Jobs for DE Grads, Social Science, Technology Education, Visual & Performing Arts
Milford School District Milford High School	Arts & Sciences, Business Technology, Technology Education, Visual & Performing Arts
New Castle County Vo-Tech School District Delcastle Technical High School Hodgson Technical High School	Business, Communication & Computers, Construction, Health Services, Public &

Howard School of Technology St. George's Technical High School	Consumer Services, Science, Energy, and Drafting, Transportation
POLYTECH School District POLYTECH High School	Allied Health, Automotive Body, Automotive Technology, Aviation, Building Construction, Business Education Technology, Career Exploratory, Child Development, Computer-Aided Drafting, Cosmetology, Criminal Justice, Dental Assisting, Electrical Construction, Electronics, Environmental Science, Health Aide, Masonry, Medical Assisting, Nurse Assisting, Radio/TV Production, Visual Communication, Welding & Fabrication, Workplace Training
Red Clay Cons. School District A.I. DuPont High School John Dickinson High School Thomas McKean High School	Automotive Technology, Business Education, Family & Consumer Science, Jobs for DE Grads, Performing Arts, Technology, Visual Arts Academic, Accounting, Art, Automotive Technology, Band, Biotechnology, Business Technology, Chorus, Digital Media, Drafting & Design Technology, Family & Consumer Science, Graphic Arts, Jobs for DE Grads, Technology Foundations, Drama, World Languages, Yearbook Agricultural Science, Biotechnology, Business Technology, Family & Consumer Science, Jobs for DE Grads, Radio & TV Broadcasting, Technology & Design, Visual & Performing Arts
Seaford School District Seaford High School	Art, Business, Finance, & Marketing, Family & Consumer Science, Jobs for DE Grads, Technical Design, Technology Education,
Smyrna School District Smyrna High School	Accounting Applications, Air Force JROTC, Animal Science, Computer Technology Applications, Plant Science, Power & Systems, Professional Academic, Visual Art
Sussex Technical School District	

Sussex Technical High School	Automotive Technology, Communication & Information Technology, Health & Human Services, Industrial& Engineering Technology
Woodbridge School District Woodbridge High School	Accounting, Agriculture (Animal & Plant Science), Business Technology, Early Childhood Education, Jobs for DE Grads, Leadership Education, Medical Technology, Structural Systems

Appendix N

Teacher Unit Counts

District	Unit Count 20	Unit Count 19	Increase
Appoquinimink	92.44	97.3	4.86
Brandywine	152.95	161	8.05
Caesar Rodney	80.38	84.61	4.23
Cape Henlopen	50.81	53.49	2.68
Capital	66.03	69.5	3.47
Christina	220.64	232.25	11.61
Colonial	103.95	109.42	5.47
DAFB	3.62	3.81	0.19
Delmar	24.2	25.48	1.28
Indian River	86.1	90.63	4.53
Lake Forest	39.61	41.69	2.08
Laurel	22.36	23.53	1.17
Milford	43.48	45.77	2.29
NCC Votech	150.41	158.33	7.92
Polytech	53.15	55.95	2.8
Red Clay	171.58	180.61	9.03
Seaford	35.95	37.84	1.89
Smyrna	45.43	47.82	2.39
Sussex Technical	53.41	56.22	2.81
Woodbridge	20.68	21.77	1.09
Total	1517.18	1597.02	79.84
Average	75.86	79.85	

Charter Schools

Campus Community School	9.5	10	0.5
Charter School of Wilm.	46.7	49.16	2.46
DE Military Academy	24.5	25.79	1.29
Positive Outcomes	2.35	2.47	0.12
Total	83.05	87.42	4.37
Average	20.76	21.86	

Total # of new units	84.21
Average Unit Cost	\$68,439
Estimated Total Cost	\$5,763,248.19

Appendix O

Reference List

An Action Agenda for Improving America's High Schools

2005 National Education Summit on High Schools

www.nga.org

Claiming Common Ground: State Policymaking for Improving College Readiness and Success, March 2006

The Institute for Educational Leadership

www.iel.org

Closing the Expectations Gap 2006: An Annual 50-State Progress Report on the Alignment of High School Policies with the Demands of College and Work

Achieve, Inc.

www.achieve.org

Crisis at the Core: Preparing All Students for College and Work

ACT

www.act.org

Getting Smarter, Becoming Fairer: A Progressive Education Agenda for a Stronger Nation

The Center for American Progress & The Institute for America's Future.

www.americanprogress.org OR www.ourfuture.org/institute

Getting Students Ready for College and Careers

Southern Regional Education Board

www.sreb.org

Making Good on a Promise: What Policymakers Can Do To Support the Educational Persistence of Dropouts, April 2006

Jobs for the Future

www.jff.org

Reading Between the Lines: What the ACT Reveals About College Readiness in Reading

ACT

www.act.org

Ready for the Real World? Americans Speak on High School Reform

The Educational Testing Service

www.ets.org

Ready or Not: Creating a High School Diploma That Counts

The American Diploma Project

www.achieve.org

Reality Check 2006: Issue No. 1-Are Parents and Students Ready for More Math and Science?

Education Insights at Public Agenda

www.publicagenda.org

Redesigning Delaware's High Schools

NGA Honor States Grant Proposal

www.nga.org

Reinventing the American High School for the 21st Century

The Association for Career and Technical Education

www.acteonline.org

School and College, Spring 2006

The Chronicle of Higher Education

<http://schoolandcollege.com>

Taking Stock: An Analysis of Delaware's High School Standards and Course Requirement

Achieve, Inc.

www.achieve.org

The Expectations Gap: A 50-State Review of High School Graduation Requirements

Achieve, Inc.

www.achieve.org

The Silent Epidemic: Perspectives of High School Dropouts

Civic Enterprises

www.civicerprises.net

Appendix P

Focus Group Report

**UPDATING DELAWARE HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION
REQUIREMENTS**

FOCUS GROUP FINAL REPORT

For

Delaware State Board of Education

**Submitted by
Conflict Resolution Program
Institute for Public Administration
College of Human Services, Education and Public Policy
University of Delaware
April 21, 2006**

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UPDATING DELAWARE HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS FOCUS GROUP FINAL REPORT

Executive Summary

Under contract with the Delaware Department of Education and in collaboration with the Delaware State Board of Education (SBOE), the Conflict Resolution Program (CRP) facilitated statewide focus groups to capture opinions regarding the proposed update to Delaware high school graduation requirements. The proposed updates stem from suggestions made by the American Diploma Project (ADP), whose mission is to raise the rigor of high school standards, assessments, and curricula, and better align expectations with demands of college and work. Based on ADP's report, Delaware formed a Graduation Requirements Committee in 2005 and developed a mission to "update Delaware graduation requirements to ensure that students can better meet the demands of college and work."

From February 27 through April 12, 2006, CRP conducted thirteen (13) focus groups throughout Delaware (*see Appendix A, Participating Groups*). Stakeholders who participated in the focus groups included educators, community groups and students. Focus groups were selected by the SBOE, (*see Appendix B, Focus Group Participants*) and chosen for their diversity of opinions, viewpoints, missions, and goals as they pertain to the education system. Each of the focus groups ranged in size from six to forty-five (6 to 45) participants. Meetings, lasting two (2) hours in duration, were scheduled by SBOE.

Participants were asked to answer three (3) questions (*see Appendix C, Focus Group Questions*). For quality assurance purposes, questions and participants' responses were captured by a facilitator on a lap top computer and projected onto a large screen for immediate review with the participants. This ensured clarity and thorough representation of responses. Stakeholders not able to participate in a focus group session were given the

opportunity to submit opinions via a written survey or e-mail which could be sent directly to CRP or SBOE (see *Appendix C1, Focus Group Comment Sheet*).

A document was made of the original raw data collected from each focus group (see *Appendix D, Original Raw Data*). Each set of original raw data was then reformatted into a document categorized by “*strengths, concerns, suggestions, and questions*” (see *Appendix E, Formatted Data*) and then summarized, (see *Appendix F, Summary Data*).

Separate documents highlighted the collective group responses under strengths (see *Appendix G, Strengths by All Focus Groups*), concerns, (see *Appendix H, Concerns by All Focus Groups*), suggestions, (see *Appendix I, Suggestions by All Focus Groups*), questions, (see *Appendix J, Questions by All Focus Groups*) and the combined responses to question #3 of “who” and “how” (see *Appendix K, “Who” and “How” from Question 3, Responses by All Focus Groups*) are included in this report.

Additionally, a compilation of all focus group data was culled from each group’s summary data and compressed into tables that highlight major themes under each question regarding “strengths” and “concerns” (see *Table 1, Major Themes - Strengths and Concerns*), “suggestions”, (see *Table 2, Major Themes - Suggestions*) and “questions” (see *Table 3, Major Themes - Questions*). A summary of shared major themes between groups is reviewed in this report on pages 7-13.

Overall, the groups expressed some similarities in opinions in areas of strengths and concerns regarding the proposed increase in rigor and credit requirements. They offered numerous suggestions for consideration by the Graduation Requirements Committee. The groups posed many questions pertaining to the impact of the proposal. Groups also made additional data requests and queried the implementation strategies projected to begin in the 2007-2008 school year.

Focus Group Design

Purpose Statement

The purpose of the focus groups was to gather as much information as possible on the viewpoints that groups and individual stakeholders have regarding the proposed changes in Delaware's high school graduation requirements.

Format Development

The State Board of Education (SBOE) and the Conflict Resolution Program (CRP) worked collaboratively to design a focus group process that would first educate participants on why and how the Graduation Requirements Committee was created. SBOE presented statistical graduation data, both nationally and locally, regarding remediation rates of high school graduates, graduates' preparedness for college or employment, and economic projections as they affect future graduates. With Power Point presentation of the above information as a reference, each focus group was convened by a SBOE representative and offered participants an opportunity to ask clarifying questions about the Committee's intentions and proposed recommendations.

SBOE specifically selected groups (*see Appendix A, Participating Groups*) for their diversity of opinions, viewpoints, missions, and goals as they pertain to the education system. SBOE contacted the groups and coordinated the date, time and location for each session. CRP facilitated thirteen (13) focus groups throughout Delaware. The sessions were designed to be two (2) hours in length and ranged in size from six to forty-five (6 to 45) participants (*see Appendix B, Focus Group Participants*). They began on February 27 and concluded on April 12, 2006. The facilitators provided a handout of the three (3) questions at the beginning of each session (*see Appendix C, Focus Group Questions*).

Question #1 was deliberately intended to be broad in nature and was designed to stimulate robust dialogue on a wide spectrum. Questions #2 and #3 were designed to be narrow and specifically focus on individual issues. For quality assurance purposes, the

questions and participants' responses were captured by a facilitator on a lap top computer and projected onto a large screen and reviewed with the participants. This ensured clarity and thorough replication of responses. Stakeholders not able to participate in a focus group session were given the opportunity to submit opinions via a written survey (*see Appendix C1, Focus Group Comment Sheet*) or e-mail which could be sent directly to CRP or SBOE.

Focus Group Participants

The thirteen (13) focus groups facilitated totaled two hundred and one (201) participants (*see Appendix B, Focus Group Participants*). Several people submitted responses via e-mail and in written format.

The student focus group titled Delta Epsilon Chi Association (DECA) was comprised of current high school students from various Kent and Sussex County school districts and one (1) alumnus of Caesar Rodney School District who is currently a student at the University of Delaware.

Focus Group Data Reports

Data collected from each focus group was assembled into three (3) report formats. The first report is the original raw data recorded during the focus group session (*see Appendix D, Original Raw Data*).

The second report is a re-categorization of the original raw data but is reformatted into a bulleted breakdown that compresses participants' responses into areas of "strengths, concerns, suggestions" and "questions" for each of the three (3) questions (*see Appendix E, Formatted Data*).

The third report is a condensed and summarized version of the bulleted responses noted in the second report (*see Appendix F, Summary Data*). All reports were submitted to SBOE for review.

Overview of Focus Group Data

Overall, the groups expressed some similarities in opinions in areas of strengths and concerns regarding the proposed increase in rigor and credit requirements. They offered numerous suggestions for consideration by the Graduation Requirements Committee. The groups posed many questions pertaining to the impact of the proposal. Groups also requested additional data and queried the implementation strategies projected to begin in the 2007-2008 school year.

Major Themes

Due to the volume of responses, CRP created a document that synthesized all the data collected into categories of major themes per group, per question (*see Table 1, Major Themes - Strengths and Concerns, Table 2, Major Themes - Suggestions,*

Table 3, Major Themes - Questions). These documents outline the similarities and differences in opinions between groups. For clarity of reporting, groups were merged into two (2) sets of stakeholder groups; student/community groups (S/C) and education groups (E). S/C included: Parent Advisory Council, Governor’s Advisory Council for Exceptional Children and the Governor’s Council for Persons with Disabilities, Urban League of Wilmington, Delaware Advisory Council for Career/Vocational Education (DACCVE), Community Housing, Inc., and Delta Epsilon Chi Association (DECA). “E” included: guidance counselors, math teachers, Delaware State Board of Education (DSBE), Curriculum Cadre, Delaware State Education Association (DSEA), Science Curriculum Group, and Delaware Association of School Administrators (DASA).

Strengths and Concerns

Strengths and concerns were reported in three columns. The first column outlines the common themes shared by all groups, the second column is additional themes expressed only by S/C, and the third column indicates additional themes expressed only by E. The data was compressed and does not include repetitive statements.

Briefly stated, under strengths for question #1, groups were united in their support of the proposed increase in rigor and credit requirements for Delaware high school students.

Under concerns for question #1, groups shared common concerns in areas of:

- Elementary and middle school students

- Dropouts
- Hiring qualified teachers
- Funding
- Support services for students
- Votech and co-op students

Additional comments are noted by S/C and E that are unique to each group.

Under strengths for question #2, groups agreed that all core courses should be a four (4) year requirement.

Under concerns for question #2, groups were united in their opinions concerning the areas of:

- Options for seniors
- College courses offered in high school
- Impact of work load

Additional comments were noted by S/C and E that are unique to each group.

Finally, in question #3, when all groups were asked their opinions about “who” might be included in an alternative program option, all groups named special education students and students not meeting requirements as those students who should be eligible for an alternative program. Also part of question #3, “how” would the alternative program option work, groups were also in agreement that the Individualized Educational

Program (IEP) teams should make alternative program decisions and expressed the need for more alternative programs.

The shared strength under question #3 is their agreement that decisions regarding the alternative program should be made by the IEP team.

Shared concerns are noted in the areas of:

- Vocational options
- Elimination of alternative option
- Fear of “tracking”
- Encouraging less rigor for some
- Impact on students’ motivation

Additional comments are noted by S/C and E that are unique to each group (*see Table 1, Major Themes - Strengths and Concerns*). To review a complete list of strengths and concerns, see Appendix G, Strengths by All Focus Groups and Appendix H, Concerns by All Focus Groups.

Suggestions

Suggestions offered by all focus groups were extensive and spanned beyond the scope of the three (3) focus group questions. A total of two hundred and seventy-eight

(278) suggestions were recorded. For the purposes of this report, only the relevant suggestions are condensed and reported in this compressed format.

Suggestions are reported using the same format noted above, categorized by common themes shared by all groups, and includes additional suggestions from S/C and E.

Common suggestions were stated under question #1 in the areas of:

- Statewide standards
- Consistency between all grade levels across all districts

S/C offered several additional suggestions that were unlike those made by E and are noted as such.

Common suggestions were stated under question #2 in the areas of:

- School culture
- College bound students

Common suggestions were stated under question #3 in the areas of:

- Credits for learning disabled
- Career pathways
- Non-college bound students

Additional comments are noted by S/C and E that are unique to each group (*see Table 1, Major Themes – Suggestions*). To review a complete list of suggestions offered, see Appendix I, Suggestions by All Focus Groups.

Questions

Numerous questions were asked by all focus groups and extended beyond the scope of the three (3) focus group questions. A total of one hundred (100) questions were recorded. For the purposes of this report, only the relevant questions are condensed and reported in this compressed format.

Themes for questions are separated into three categories of:

- Impact
- Additional data requests
- Implementation

The question table format is the same as in Table 1 and 2 in that it reports questions that are shared by all groups and notes additional questions by S/C and E.

Shared questions under question #1 regarding the impact of the proposed changes were in the areas of:

- Sports credit
- Resources
- Hiring teachers

- Funding
- Special needs students
- Votech students

Additional questions by S/C and E that are unique to each group.

Although there were no shared questions under additional data requests, group E had several questions in this area.

In the area of implementation under question #1, the only shared question was in the area of student scheduling. No additional questions were asked by either group.

Under question #2, there were no shared questions about impact, additional data requests or implementation. Only E asked additional questions.

Under question #3, there were no shared questions about impact, additional data requests or implementation. However, both groups asked additional questions as noted (*see Table 3, Major Themes – Questions*). To review a complete list of questions asked, see Appendix J, Questions by All Focus Groups.

Attachments

The attached appendices and tables offer the Graduation Requirement Committee a variety of options for reviewing the opinions of the focus group stakeholders, from individual focus groups to an integration of opinions per question (*see Appendices D through K and Tables 1 through 3*).

**APPENDIX A:
Participating Groups**

Participating Groups

Guidance Counselors

Math Teachers

Delaware State Board Association

Parent Advisory Council

Governor's Advisory Council for Exceptional Children and
Governor's Council for Persons with Disabilities

Urban League of Wilmington

Curriculum Cadre

Delaware State Education Association

Delaware Advisory Council for Career/Vocational Education

Science Curriculum Group

Christina School District Title I Parent Advisory Committee

Delta Epsilon Chi Association

Delaware Association of School Administrators

APPENDIX B:
Participants

Focus Group Participants
Guidance Counselors– February 27, 2006
Dover, DE – Kent County

	<i>Participant</i>	<i>School District or Other Affiliation</i>
1.	Abbie Seifert	Red Clay
2.	Jim Schweiper	Capital
3.	Lolita C. Sims	Appoquinimink
4.	Renee Ivy	Appoquinimink
5.	Jane Griesa	Caesar Rodney
6.	Julie Harris	Caesar Rodney
7.	Melida Santiago	Red Clay
8.	Joanne Miro	Department of Education
9.	Elva Mosley	Colonial
10.	John Myers	Cape Henlopen
11.	Laura Melenstrom	Christina

Focus Group Participants
Math Teachers – March 8, 2006
Dover, DE – Kent County

<i>Participant</i>	<i>School District or Other Affiliation</i>
1. Mary Jo Benson	Capital
2. Karen Berry	Indian River
3. Christine Bichler	Colonial
4. Sally Caldwell	Department of Education
5. Joann Crouse	New Castle County Votech
6. Darnel Grandell	New Castle County Votech
7. Dawn Grzadzinski	Colonial
8. Brian Hollenger	Caesar Rodney
9. Kathy Hollowell	University of Delaware
10. Donna Johnson	Sussex Votech
11. Kathy Koppel	New Castle County Votech
12. Maureen LeClerc	Cape Henlopen
13. Jon Manon	University of Delaware
14. Valerie Maxwell	Mathematics & Science Education Resource Center
15. Kathleen McAneny	Colonial
16. Janice McCarthy	Mathematics & Science Education Resource Center
17. Sandy Mooney	Indian River
18. Danette Mumford	Indian River
19. Nancy Phillips	Sussex Votech
20. Diana Roscoe	Department of Education
21. Holly Sage	Colonial
22. Jan Shetzler	Caesar Rodney
23. Frances Smart	New Castle County Votech
24. Sandy Smith	Indian River
25. PJ Smith	Seaford
26. Marlene Smith	New Castle County Votech
27. Susan White	New Castle County Votech
28. Margery Windolph	Brandywine
29. Michelle Wollard	Brandywine

Focus Group Participants
Delaware School Board Association – March 8, 2006
Dover, DE – Kent County

<i>Participant</i>	<i>School District or Other Affiliation</i>
1. Enda Cale	Appoquinimink
2. Ed Czerwinski	Appoquinimink
3. Joanne Christian	Appoquinimink
4. Raymond Paylor	Capital
5. Phillip Martino	Capital
6. Darryl Scott	Capital
7. Mike Adams	Capital
8. George Evans	Christina
9. Kenneth Schilling	Colonial
10. Sandra Dwyer	Colonial
11. Bobby Benjamin	Colonial
12. Karen Gilbert	Colonial
13. Herb Wright	Delmar
14. Charles Bireley	Indian River
15. Nina Lou Bunting	Indian River
16. Chris Baker	Lake Forest
17. Marie Cunningham	Lake Forest
18. Jack Grimm	Lake Forest
19. John Schulties	Lake Forest
20. Dr. Curry	Lake Forest
21. Jerry White	Laurel
22. Bill Otwell	Laurel
23. Ed Jestice	Laurel
24. Harvey Hyland	Laurel
25. Roland Cohee	Milford
26. Marvin Schelhouse	Milford
27. Gary Wolfe	Milford
28. Debbie O'Neil	Milford
29. Ray Christian	New Castle County Votech
30. Cynthia Brown	Polytech
31. James Collins	Polytech
32. W. Dale Hammond	Polytech
33. Richard Kingree	Seaford
34. Jim Van Vleck	Seaford
35. Lynn Newlin	Smyrna
36. Jean Allen	State Board

Focus Group Participants
Delaware School Board Association – March 8, 2006
Dover, DE – Kent County

	<i>Participant</i>	<i>School District or Other Affiliation</i>
37.	Rich Farmer	State Board
38.	Greg Hastings	State Board
40.	Valerie Woodruff	State Board
41.	Barbara Rutt	State Board
42.	Charles Mitchell	Sussex Tech
43.	Walt Gilefski	Woodbridge
44.	Edith Vincent	Woodbridge
45.	Dave Santore	Woodbridge

**Focus Group Participants
Parent Advisory Council – March 11, 2006
Dover, DE – Kent County**

Twenty parent participants from districts across the state.

Focus Group Participants
Governor's Advisory Council for Exceptional Children and
Governor's Council for Persons with Disabilities – March 16, 2006
Dover, DE – Kent County

<i>Participant</i>	<i>School District or Other Affiliation</i>
1. Susan Hayes	
2. Kathie P. Cherry	
3. Deedra Robinson-Clark	
4. Robert D. Overmiller	
5. Pat Maichle	
6. Merle Chamberlin	
7. Bernhard Greenfield	
8. Terry Sinio	
9. Marie Anne Aghazadian	

Focus Group Participants
Metropolitan Wilmington Urban League Education
Advisory Council – March 21, 2006
Wilmington, DE – New Castle County

<i>Participant</i>	<i>School District or Other Affiliation</i>
1. Helen K. Foss	
2. J. Bert Freeman	
3. Edie Corbin	
4. Marge Verduchi	
5. Mary Mirabeau	
6. D. Russ Jones Avery	
7. Joan Spiegilman	
8. King Allen	
9. Nancy Doorey	

Focus Group Participants
Curriculum Cadre – March 22, 2006
Dover, DE – Kent County

<i>Participant</i>	<i>School District or Other Affiliation</i>
1. Debbie Panchisin	Appoquinimink
2. Lou Ann Carlson	Caesar Rodney
3. Sherry Kijowski	Caesar Rodney
4. Scott Lykens	Caesar Rodney
5. Mike Kelley	Cape Henlopen
6. Gail Ulp (representing Tina Huff)	Capital
7. Jerry Strum	Christina
8. Jim Sloan	Christina
9. Susan Bunting	Indian River
10. J. Glenn Davidson	Lake Forest
11. Bob Sutcliffe	Milford
12. Jeff Byrem	New Castle County Votech
13. Debbie Zych	New Castle County Votech
14. Joe Crossen	Polytech
15. Faith Newton	Red Clay
16. Sue Rash	Red Clay
17. Earl Cannon	Seaford
18. Sandy Shalk	Smyrna
19. Sandy Falatek	Sussex Technical
20. Dave Santore	Woodbridge
21. Elaine Elston	MOT Charter
22. Phyllis Handler	Delaware Teacher Center

Focus Group Participants
Delaware State Education Association – March 22, 2006
Dover, DE – Kent County

	<i>Participant</i>	<i>School District or Other Affiliation</i>
1.	Paulette Arnold	Smyrna EA
2.	John Berry	Lake Forest EA
3.	Kelli Bradley	Brandywine EA
4.	Robert Bye	Colonial EA
5.	Robert Desjardin	Colonial EA
6.	Helen Gieske	Woodbridge EA
7.	Kelly Green	Appoquinimink EA
8.	Adele Jones	Indian River EA
9.	Jan Kirk	Capital EA
10.	Anne Park	Appoquinimink EA
11.	Pete Parlette	Red Clay EA
12.	Barbara Shalley-Leonard	Milford EA
13.	Mike Tyndall	Lake Forest EA
14.	Barry Young	DSEA Treasurer/Christina EA
15.	Donna Johnson	Sussex Technical
16.	Diane Donohue	Indian River
17.	John Rohlich	Seaford

**Focus Group Participants
Delaware Advisory Council for
Career/Vocational Education – April 5, 2006
Dover, DE – Kent County**

<i>Participant</i>	<i>School District or Other Affiliation</i>
1. Sandra Daly	
2. Nelson Freidly	
3. Dr. Henry Harper	
4. John Land	
5. Sam Lathem	Council Chairman
6. Robert Suppe	
7. Dr. Thomas Welch	
8. Dr. Manera Constantine	Executive Director
9. Dr. Ed Wilchinski	
10. Jane Conly	
11. Janet Nichols	

Focus Group Participants
Science Curriculum Group – March 30, 2006
Dover, DE – Kent County

<i>Participant</i>	<i>School District or Other Affiliation</i>
1. Bob Sutcliffe	
2. Ron Russo	
3. Gail Ulp	
4. April McCrae	
5. J. Crossen	
6. Susan Frampton	
7. Patrick Gleeson	
8. Amy Quillen	

Focus Group Participants
Christina School District Title I Parent Advisory Committee – April 5, 2006
Wilmington, DE – New Castle County

<i>Participant</i>	<i>School District or Other Affiliation</i>
1. Kathleen Dorsey	
2. Caren Turner	
3. Agnes Grace	
4. Darnell Meekins	
5. Butley Wharton	
6. Carmen Word	

Focus Group Participants
Delta Epsilon Chi Association – April 10, 2006
Woodside, DE – Kent County

	<i>Participant</i>	<i>School District or Other Affiliation</i>
1.	Aaron Kinari	Caesar Rodney
2.	Katie Corso	Smyrna
3.	Brooke Alexander	Smyrna
4.	Ashley McGee	Smyrna
5.	Cody Lloyd	Lake Forest
5.	Christina Gallant	University of Delaware (Caesar Rodney graduate)
6.	Jennifer Crouse	Lake Forest
7.	Kara Roach	Indian River
8.	Tanner Allen	Polytech
9.	Caprichia Jeffers	Polytech

**Focus Group Participants
Delaware Association of
School Administrators – April 12, 2006
Dover, DE – Kent County**

<i>Participant</i>	<i>School District or Other Affiliation</i>
1. Bruce Curry	Polytech
2. Larry Monaghan	Newcastle County Votech (Delcastle Tech)
3. Donna Mitchell	Appoquinimink (Middletown High School)
4. Ray Grammer	Red Clay (Conrad Bio Tech)
5. Pete Basile	DASA

APPENDIX C:
Focus Group Questions

Updating Delaware High School Graduation Requirements

Focus Group Questions

Question 1

Please give us your opinion regarding the proposed increase in rigor and credit requirements for Delaware high school beginning with the freshman entering in 2007.

Question 2

Currently, it is possible for high school seniors to take one or two classes in order to graduate. Research indicated these students are not prepared for the work place or higher education. The committee intends to require a more rigorous senior year for the freshman entering in 2007. Please give us your opinions.

Question 3

The committee is considering an option for students who, along with their parents or guardians and school officials determine should meet some alternative requirements. What are your ideas about who might be included and how this option might work?

Sponsored by:
State Board of Education
Ann Case, Policy Analyst
acase@doe.k12.de.us

APPENDIX C1:
Focus Group Comment Sheet

Focus Group Comment Sheet

Question 1

Strengths:

Concerns:

Suggestions:

Questions:

Question 2

Strengths:

Concerns:

Suggestions:

Questions:

Question 3

Who might be included in this option?

How this option might work?

Strengths:

Concerns:

Suggestions:

Questions:

**Updating Delaware High School Graduation Requirements
Original Raw Data
Guidance Counselors – February 27, 2006**

Question 1

Please give us your opinion regarding the proposed increase in rigor and credit requirements for Delaware high school students beginning with the freshman entering in 2007.

Require increased credits for senior year for all courses.

Agree with need to increase credits.

World geography should be required all 4 years and should include social studies.

Need to be flexible with increasing number of credits so districts can choose how they design the course options.

Concern that students will “work the system” to minimize amount of work to do in order to graduate.

Delaware Tech needs to clarify what math requirements are needed for entrance into their programs.

Specific courses need to be defined to create pathways in different areas.

Pathways should be spelled out so students know what is required and in what order.

Create “interest” pathways.

Pathways need to be re-written to be “career” pathways not “academic” pathways.

Foreign language—state should require at least 2 years (maybe 3 years) and can be offered as a career pathway.

How will increase affect students who participate in 2 or more sports?

Increase P.E. requirement.

State invested money in science requirements to meet state standards and DSTP (physical science is missing) - will proposed rigor alter this practice?

Students need 4 years of math.

Four year requirement - including Algebra II will be difficult for many students and may hurt many.
Increase math to offer Algebra I-A and Algebra I-B for students who are struggling to meet requirement.
Each algebra class would be a one year offering and would be equal one credit. Having algebra offered over a 2 year period for a total of 2 credits.

Let districts decide 2 additional math requirements after Algebra II/Geometry to meet requirement.

Attempt to increase rigor may also inadvertently make room to “dumb down” math option — must create statewide math standard.

Math and science go hand in hand, require advance math to meet increased science requirement – skills and knowledge don't line up.

Hiring the number of math teachers needed to meet new requirement.

Currently, math taken in 8th grade will not meet math requirement of high school—should it be considered?

Four years of math required regardless when algebra is taken.

Four credits of high school English makes sense.

The current English courses taught do not prepare students for college level English—the state needs to increase the rigor.

Question 2

Currently, it is possible for high school seniors to take one or two classes in order to graduate. Research indicated these students are not prepared for the work place or higher education. The committee intends to require a more rigorous senior year for the freshman entering in 2007. Please give us your opinions.

Increase all major subject areas to 4 year requirement.

All seniors should be required to take 5 classes they must pass to graduate.

If a “senior project” is implemented, it will require staff development.

Senior project should tie into Individualized Learning Plan (ILP).

“Seminar” classes can be developed for credit.

Students should be permitted to participate in half day college class options.

Have college credits computed to meet both high school and college requirements.

Students in co-op and vocational programs should still be able to receive credit for this work.

Currently, if students have a job they can leave school early—increase requirements so they can't leave.

How will increases affect middle school students?

Create standards, other than DSTP, for middle school students to reduce opportunity of failure.

Middle school students need more requirements, currently they only have to “attend”, not “pass” their courses.

Middle school courses do not prepare students for high school courses.

How will the proposed increases impact middle school students who cannot meet current requirements?

Question 3

The committee is considering an option for students who, along with their parents or guardians and school officials determine should meet some alternative requirements. What are your ideas about who might be included and how this option might work?

Special education students.

Have support classes available for IEP students—they should have opt-out option

with the approval of their IEP team.

Non-IEP students who will have difficulty passing increased requirements.

Students who are 9th grade “repeaters”.

Identify students at the end of 10th grade year who can not do sequence of pathways.

ILP should identify these kids early in the 10th grade year or by age 16.

Middle school kids who already can't meet math requirements.

Offer credits through alternative programs offered outside of school, e.g., twilight program and Groves.

“Vocational” opt-out option for skill development i.e., tech schools – these options are limited.

Create “special interest” plan/pathway and devise senior project options.

Create “senior opportunities” structured around student's area of interest.

Not everyone needs 4 year college degree—flexibility of choices needed.

Optional programs will need rules and guidelines.

Do not use the term “opt-out” – sends the wrong message and students will think they can use this option instead of meeting requirements.

Message should be communicated that “other option” is not meaningless or is of less value.

Opt-out students still need to meet graduation requirements.

Students participating in a different/individualized program should not be penalized or given a lesser diploma.

Will students in opt-out program receive the same diploma as other students or a different diploma?

Updating Delaware High School Graduation Requirements
Original Raw Data
Math Teachers – March 8, 2006

Question 1

Please give us your opinion regarding the proposed increase in rigor and credit requirements for Delaware high school beginning with the freshman entering in 2007.

Why require a math credit the senior year when all courses are not required in the senior year?

Suggestion – math courses geared toward college or work place or seniors and that senior year math is a good idea.

Concern that elementary and middle school students will not be aligned with the new standards – they need to keep pace with high school requirements

Concern – has enough math data been collected, about students who take four years of math to earn three credits by school districts to understand the number of kids who will be impacted by this and not be able to meet the requirements.

July is way to soon to move this forward. Concern we are diminishing the quality and grade level standards that we already meet.

Concerned that districts will revert back to a two year Algebra 1 class in order to get four years of math.

Performance level I students entering h.s. are behind in math requirements and don't actually get a h.s. math requirement until 10th grade and will never have the opportunity to take 4 years of math.

Eighth grade academy might need to be a sixth grade academy (or earlier) because we need accountability at an earlier grade level.

Are the benchmark states based on performance or the written requirements? Is math rigor really being increased for all students? (in any model)

Agree with increasing rigor in three current math courses, but concerned that many students won't be able to meet the increased requirement and then they end up dropping out.

If our graduation rate goes down then NCLB will put the school on "academic review or watch".

Students attending Groves do not take the same math that is offered in high school. Alternative, summer, correspondence, online credits don't meet the rigor and must be addressed in the increased requirement.

Concern that votech and coop has not been considered in this and won't align with these requirements. Students will not have the time in their schedule in their senior year to take additional credits.

We will need more funding, more certified math teachers, more books, more classrooms.

Will there be additional funding when this is approved?

Concern that we will have the same number of students and won't get additional teachers (because it is based on unit count) not on the number of courses all students must take to meet graduation requirements. Larger classes will decrease teaching effectiveness.

Have you contacted Del State, UD, Salisbury State, etc. to find out how many highly qualified math teachers will graduate and stay in Delaware?

Concerned about students who have to double up in math classes. Integrated programs build on one another. Easier to double up in a traditional program than in a non-traditional program. Non traditional curriculum students are at a disadvantage.

Requirements should be written around a set of standards rather than around a number of credits. We have rigorous standards now and fear that the standard is being set aside in order to just have a higher number of credits. Who does this satisfy? We need to track how our students are doing in college, if they took a fourth year math, what did they take? We need proof that increasing the credit will impact student achievement.

Can we find out what remedial courses our students need to take at UD or other colleges so we can go back and look at what we need to teach?

University of Delaware currently "recommends" – not "require" four math credits. Concerned that we are moving ahead of University of Delaware and might be hurting our students.

Can't we find a way to increase the rigor for the non traditional math students, such as, no back tracking.

What is going to be accepted as the fourth rigorous math class? What is the quality of that class?

Has the right data been collected to address the concerns being raised by this group?

Will the Algebra 1 middle school credit count toward as a high school credit?

Question 2

Currently, it is possible for high school seniors to take one or two classes in order to graduate. Research indicated these students are not prepared for the work place or higher education. The committee intends to require a more rigorous senior year for the freshman entering in 2007. Please give us your opinions.

There should be some way that students have to stay in school and take at least a half day of classes.

There is a benefit to students in coop receiving credit and they should be permitted to continue.

If we set a number of credits that students need to complete, and they complete them prior to senior year, you are just forcing them to be in the building taking credits they really don't need to graduate. It doesn't make sense to force them to be there, just to be there.

Question 3

The committee is considering an option for students who, along with their parents or guardians and school officials determine should meet some alternative requirements. What are your ideas about who might be included and how this option might work?

Allow these students to participate in college programs for h.s. or college credit.

An opt program doesn't have to include a formal Algebra II but it can have the same standards and credit.

An alternate course list should be in place to help students meet the standards and graduate.

Isn't opting out the same as tracking and what we have been moving away from?

When will students be allowed to opt-out?

How many of the students in the benchmark states opt-out?

Special education students and students who don't push themselves would be the students in the opt-out program. Special education has to be addressed because most won't be able to complete Algebra II. The IEP team should make this decision.

Students facing socio-economic issues need to be considered here.

Who makes these decisions and how do they make these decisions?

Concerned it doesn't matter what we say. Has this decision already been reached? Don't believe there are any high school math teachers on the committee.

Concerned it is aligned with content and standards rather than years. Opt-out should be for special ed and for the very high achiever who meets the standards early.

**Updating Delaware High School Graduation Requirements
Original Raw Data
Delaware State Board Association – March 8, 2006**

Question 1

Please give us your opinion regarding the proposed increase in rigor and credit requirements for Delaware high school students beginning with the freshman entering in 2007.

Some students take three math credits in their sophomore year (block scheduling) so they are prepared for the state testing. How will these students fit into the new requirements?

Committee has not done much to increase rigor, 22 credits is too low to graduate. The committee wasted a lot of time.

In support of increasing rigor, but concerned with middle school reform, concerned about funding for this, also, if we are keeping more students in schools we'll need more teachers. Do not want to see AP left behind and want to be sure students can still take AP courses. It can't just be filler work to get you to these credits, they have to have meaning to them. Right now there is a disconnect.

Concern over the term rigor. The local boards have the responsibility of making sure the curriculum has rigor. Glad they kept 22 credits. The more credits we require of students, the more students we will lose. Wouldn't it be more rigorous just to require one math credit per year? Math teachers are expensive. Is the work in the integrated science curriculum going to stay or be tossed aside? This is not more rigorous for districts requiring more than 22 credits.

These requirements look like college prep requirements. What are we going to do with special education students? What about our dropouts?

In favor of increase in rigor.

Need to get back to the basics, teaching the subject matter, rather than the integrated approach.

English needs to include Literature.

English needs to include spoken English.

Many health problems begin in a person's early years. Health prevention and survival skills are also important and need to be addressed. Would like to see innovative ways to address life issues.

Why can't we increase the number of physical education requirements and allow students participating in varsity sports to earn credit for those sports.

There is a disconnect between high school foreign language requirements and what colleges require for admittance.

Foreign language does not have to be a definite course requirement for all students, it should be offered as an elective.

European students are expected to speak a minimum of two languages, if we want our students to compete we need to give them the rigorous requirements, in language, that other countries have.

Question 2

Currently, it is possible for high school seniors to take one or two classes in order to graduate. Research indicated these students are not prepared for the work place or higher education. The committee intends to require a more rigorous senior year for the freshman entering in 2007. Please give us your opinions.

Students should be in school for their senior year.

Seniors completing their 22 high school credits should be permitted to attend college courses during their senior year.

For college bound students, Latin is a great course to have available in high school. Any course that would assist in a student's career path should be available as an option for those students as an elective.

It is going to be tough to keep kids in school who meet their 22 credit requirement and want to get out of school senior year to work.

Look at our AP students and move them into larger classes, 60-70 students so we can free up our teachers to work with students who are not AP and need additional help and smaller classes.

Keep it a local issue re: seniors in school for a full day and the number of credits.

A senior project is a good idea to keep kids focused in their senior year.

Teach life skills courses to those students not going on to college (credit card use, balancing checkbook, personal finance).

Local boards should make the decision about credits and how they want to deal with seniors.

Students should have choices about how they spend their senior year, once they have met their 22 credit requirements.

Add a life skills course for all students.

Do a survey of students who only take 22 credits to see who they are. When schools only require 2 credits in a senior year, the student wants to take the minimum and puts pressure on parents to be able to do this.

Link extra curricular activities, including sports, to the senior year credit requirements.

Students completing 22 credits early is not a problem.

Question 3

The committee is considering an option for students who, along with their parents or guardians and school officials determine should meet some alternative requirements. What are your ideas about who might be included and how this option might work?

Special education students should not be held to the proposed requirements. We need to adjust to accommodate these students and be realistic in our expectations.

The opt-out should not be for the general population who do not want to do the work.

The opt-out should be night school or GED, unless they are special education students.

The opt-out should be limited to students with a physical disability.

We need to find ways to engage low performing students and not put them in an opt-out program.

These requirements look like college prep courses, but we need an alternative for students who will not be able to meet the requirements.

Students who want to receive trade classes during high school are not able to take those classes in Delaware. We need to have those classes available to them.

Votechs are not available to all students interested in attending.

Rigorous courses should be for those going on to college. Students who want to go to trade school and an apprentice program should have that available to them.

Rigor and the number of credits are two different things. We need the rigor in our courses increased for all students. The state board needs to define opt-out. It should not include trade schools. The opt-out should be an alternative program.

All students need to meet a high level of rigor, regardless of whether they are going to college.

Votech use to be for students who couldn't succeed in regular high schools. Now, votechs pick the cream of the crop to attend their schools. Need a definition of opt-out.

I'd like the courses to be "relevant" more than "rigorous". We do not want our students to feel like failures if they are not going on to college.

Votechs traditionally got students with discipline problems, so they moved to a comprehensive program so they could be more selective in the students they accept. Any student needs to be competent in the basics – reading and writing.

Look at a career pathway for those students who do not want college prep curriculum, and put rigor in all of those areas.

High schools do not have enough money to fund shops and other career pathway options.

Some votechs select special education students; not only the high achievers.

We need someone to look at Europe's education system, because we are constantly compared to them. Let's take a look at it and see if we can use it.

Need to get back to the real mission of votech schools.

We should let the votech schools opt-out of the new requirements and allow them to train students for a trade/occupation.

Updating Delaware High School Graduation Requirements
Original Raw Data
Parent Advisory Council – March 11, 2006

Question 1

Please give us your opinion regarding the proposed increase in rigor and credit requirements for Delaware high school students beginning with the freshman entering in 2007.

Students should be identified by their learning style and needs.

Credit recovery programs such as the Twilight programs should be used.

Support increased rigor which yields better paying jobs and bring in more employers.

Need challenges in high school years to meet life challenges.

Make credit requirements rigorous.

Address technology needs to be competitive.

Need more corporate mentors for students to help them understand why it's important to stay in school and go to college.

Guidance counselors to make sure computer classes are scheduled.

Need computer classes to continue in high school for certification in Microsoft Office Products.

Provide computer equipment / support for Twilight program.

Mentors need to show students how reading/writing and math are needed in a job.

Increased rigor in all years not just senior year.

Students need to know who elected officials are.

Students need to know Delaware history.

Need volunteer "credits" to encourage students to give back to the community.

Computer classes should begin at the elementary level and progress through school.

Need resources in lower grades to prepare them for increased rigor throughout their schooling.

Professional training for administrators / teachers / guidance counselors to increase rigor (and parents).

All students should work a PT job for a few weeks to get a feel for the work world.

More defined measurable objectives and goals for educating staff.

Too many tests.

Give test to know the level of knowledge (their foundation).

Teach basics.

For those schools who do not have good tests scores, look at schools who teach well and see what they do differently.

Math in high school did not prepare for student for college.

How math teachers teach can make a difference.

Well-defined and appropriate testing materials based on experiences are needed show what has been learned.

Expectation and accountability should be defined for staff and students and put in writing especially in situations where students are failing.

Parents need to be aware and involved with the curriculum.

Parents need training.

More frequent progress reports should be given to parents and not wait for report card or mid-terms.

Provide parental training (not a handbook) in 8th grade to understand proposed classes for high school.

Question 2

Currently, it is possible for high school seniors to take one or two classes in order to graduate. Research indicated these students are not prepared for the work place or higher education. The committee intends to require a more rigorous senior year for the freshman entering in 2007. Please give us your opinions.

Let students take college credit in senior year or work or learn a trade.

Seniors stay in school.

Get credits needed in college.

Some students need to make money for “senior expenses” (year book, class trip, etc.) to help with parent expenses.

Seniors don’t know about scholarships, they need to learn how to write letters, etc. and use resources such as Outward Bound, FAME and TRIO to point them in the right direction, especially for students not going to college.

More cooperation and entrepreneurial courses.

Need business math and other basics for living.

Class trips have gotten out of hand.

Students who work in senior year need to do it for the right reason (not based on the need for money and school expenses).

Parents need help to change their perception of college so they can encourage students to go to college.

Parents, students, staff, administrators, guidance counselors, etc. need to increase their awareness of SEED programs and financial forms.

Educate parents on financial issues such as savings bond, etc. to be used in college or business.

Question 3

The committee is considering an option for students who, along with their parents or guardians and school officials determine should meet some alternative requirements. What are your ideas about who might be included and how this option might work?

Kids who are failing core courses after freshman year.

Children who have been in services such as Title I (not only special education) or who are caught in the middle, like the high count of students who don't pass the DSTP but don't qualify for extra services. Need alternatives that can assist them to get a diploma for their skills.

Change alternative programs to meet the 33% of population who can't read.

Increase level of alternative programs.

Extent Title I services beyond 8th grade.

Special education (IEP) students should have increased services to help meet standards.

Have extra help available to all students who want to increase score on SATs.

Group students by learning styles in alternative programs.

Every 9th grader should take the PSAT.

Change requirements of alternative programs and current alternative programs.

Parents need written information on all alternative programs.

Hispanic or students with other languages who can't speak the language, how will they meet the increased rigor?

**Updating Delaware High School Graduation Requirements
Original Raw Data
Governor’s Advisory Council for Exceptional Children and
Governor’s Council for Persons with Disabilities – March 16, 2006**

Question 1

Please give us your opinion regarding the proposed increase in rigor and credit requirements for Delaware high school beginning with the freshman entering in 2007.

There are not enough qualified math teachers in the state. We should increase the salaries of math and science/physics teacher’s and speech therapist’s, rather than administrative salaries.

Our nineteen school districts should be consolidated in order to be more cost effective and productive. Districts could offer magnet schools or customized schools that specialize in various programs, such as, science, math, business, agriculture, etc. and teach general subjects as well.

Would like to see more high schools offering machine shops.

Our school districts do not offer enough school choice options.

The curriculum for elementary and middle school students needs to be investigated to see how it prepares students for high school and where and why we are losing students.

Would like to be assured that “all” truly means all students, including those with disabilities. They should get the supports they need in order to meet the new requirements and a variety of assessment practices should be utilized in order allow them to demonstrate their abilities.

Concerned about the feeding pattern of students getting to high school who are not prepared to meet the new requirements. We need to strengthen the elementary and middle school curriculums at the same time we are working on the high school.

Need to provide more support for all students in need of it, not just the special education students. There are students who need the extra support now, at all levels of education, and will need it more with the new requirements.

Support the increase of rigor, with support for those who need it. Also believe that it might cause more students to drop out.

We need to make extra time available to students lagging behind in order to help them catch up, especially those in middle school and those who will be impacted by the new requirements.

If kids are not succeeding now, how will increasing rigor make them more successful? I do not believe that keeping kids in school during their senior year will better prepare them for college. Whatever is not working now won’t be addressed by only increasing rigor.

Concerned that the drop out rate will increase if we increase graduation requirements.

Would like to know how many, if any, of the students responding to the survey stating “they would have taken more rigorous classes” were special needs students?

Concerned students with disabilities might drop out at a higher rate than they currently do if we increase high school graduation requirements.

Suggest that the embedded credits in vocational programs count as science credit.

These new requirements are not dealing with the real problems we have with students and education.

The state should dictate one curriculum that all districts must follow rather than allowing districts to create their own.

Department of Education needs to verify what districts/schools are actually doing rather than just rely on what they say they are doing.

Social workers, with masters' degrees, should be in the schools for students with problems that are not being addressed elsewhere and are struggling in school.

Teachers need to be trained in how to train/manage the students in their classroom.

Question 2

Currently, it is possible for high school seniors to take one or two classes in order to graduate. Research indicated these students are not prepared for the work place or higher education. The committee intends to require a more rigorous senior year for the freshman entering in 2007. Please give us your opinions.

Keeping students in school all day for their senior will not help students. It is about what they have learned and how well they prepared they are prior to the senior year that matters most. The problem is more complex than just adding a few more classes to the senior year.

Students should have the option of whether they want a rigorous senior year with AP classes or not. Students should have the option of working rather than staying in school for the whole day.

Seniors should be able to choose how they spend their senior year, work/job vs. school and more classes. Students should not be pushed into staying in school just to keep them there. We should include a work education program for high school students so they understand the importance of education.

Students should have the option of spending part of their day working, taking college level classes if that is what they want, or leave if they want to leave. They should have all three options.

Let students graduate in three years so they can go from full time high student directly to college and meet college admission requirements.

Students who exceed the requirements should have some options for senior year, but others need a basic program without options.

Question 3

The committee is considering an option for students who, along with their parents or guardians and school officials determine should meet some alternative requirements. What are your ideas about who might be included and how this option might work?

Do not use the term "opt-out".

Parents and guardians should be included in the decision.

Need to increase program options for students not going on to college, such as more vocational programs.

Need to have respect and value for students choosing a trade rather than college.

Need more support at the high school level to help students find colleges and complete the application process.

We are too focused only on a college track for students and need to be more supportive of those seeking a trade or vocational education. Students need more options for those courses in high school.

A life skills course that teaches real skills, such as balancing a checkbook or creating a household budget, should be offered to students in high school.

White collar jobs have an increasing potential to be exported.

Offer an academic program geared toward college bound students and one for those who do not plan to attend college.

Increase career pathway programs in order to increase options to meet the needs for all students.

Special education students who can not meet the new requirements should be offered another option.

Students who do not meet the standards should be allowed to be on a different track.

Students should be given more options for which math course they take based on their interests and abilities. A separate track that permits this might be more successful.

Students should have optional, more hands on courses that are applicable to their interests.

Insure that graduation requirements reflect the variety of knowledge and skills that students are learning in school and will need after high school – use indicators of the knowledge and skills necessary for learning and successful work and living after high school.

Updating Delaware High School Graduation Requirements
Original Raw Data
Urban League of Wilmington – March 21, 2006

Question 1

Please give us your opinion regarding the proposed increase in rigor and credit requirements for Delaware high school beginning with the freshman entering in 2007.

Science should be four credits.

Social Science should be four credits.

Require our students to take four credits in foreign language. Offer Spanish, Asian, Mandarin, French and Latin as foreign language courses. Our goal should be to have our children become bi-lingual.

Being specific about the substance of the credits is important and we should do this.

Would like to see Introduction to Organic Chemistry offered in high schools because it is required for several science degrees in colleges.

Service learning and students giving back to the community is important and students should be given an opportunity to do this for credit.

Life skills are important and should be integrated into the curriculum as long as it is not trivialized. Perhaps integrating it into civics and economics is a possibility.

Students need to learn to be citizens of the community and participate in elections, home ownership and other areas.

Need to provide opportunities for students to explore areas of interests and career options through electives or career pathways in addition to the academic requirements.

Offer more electives that are an expansion of core courses in order for students to take additional credits that tie into English, Math, Science, etc., rather than electives that deal only with careers. We should not tie students into career electives.

We should have an arts requirement for students to graduate.

Have a life skills requirement and offer a set of electives for life skills that students may choose from.

We should increase the number of credits beyond the 22 being proposed. The state should increase the number of credits in health, art and foreign language. The state and districts need to be aligned re: the number of credits required to graduate from high school.

We need to maximize the number of students participating in a more rigorous curriculum at the same time we are assisting those in need of support; such as performance level I and II students.

We need to teach reading to high school students, and offer it for credit, to those not reading on grade level. Do not penalize students for skills they are lacking.

The state needs to address the curriculum rigor of elementary and middle schools so that students can meet the rigor of high school.

We need to address the achievement gap we have in the state. There is a significant number of students who currently do not meet the standards. Increasing the rigor and credit requirements should coincide with helping those students meet the requirements and graduate.

We need to ensure that all kids succeed. The schools/districts need to have support for those students in place.

This is not the systemic change we need to get to schools and districts in order to make that type of change.

Requiring more high school credits is meaningless without good curriculum in place, better trained teachers, deeper personalization and guidance, very powerful career pathways that are aligned to Delaware Futures Program, better guidance counseling services to assist students with a map for their four years of high school and a well developed advisory curriculum that takes students beyond high school.

Actively make students and parents aware of the availability of courses outside of the normal school setting, such as, online, community colleges, summer course offerings, etc.

Question 2

Currently, it is possible for high school seniors to take one or two classes in order to graduate. Research indicated these students are not prepared for the work place or higher education. The committee intends to require a more rigorous senior year for the freshman entering in 2007. Please give us your opinions.

This is a reflection of inadequate academic counseling. With better advisory curriculum in place, students would not be leaving during their senior year because they will have a program in place that they are committed to and are constructively engaged. An example of advisory curriculum is a minimum of bi-weekly meetings with a faculty advisor in small groups over a period of two or more years. The faculty advisor needs to be trained in the advisory curriculum.

The courses in the senior year career pathway have to be a dual credit that is aligned with higher education or technical degree/certification programs.

The senior year should require more rigor and credit.

Question 3

The committee is considering an option for students who, along with their parents or guardians and school officials determine should meet some alternative requirements. What are your ideas about who might be included and how this option might work?

The group is opposed to an optional program for students.

Do not use the term "opt-out".

An optional program is letting the districts off the hook and releasing them from accountability. It undermines the mandate to raise rigor and standards for all students.

There is no benefit to offering students an optional program.

We need to explore alternatives for students (not opt-out) to get to the minimum number of credits to graduate.

Parents are not able to make an informed decision about their student because the only information they have is what the school gives them.

Updating Delaware High School Graduation Requirements
Original Raw Data
Curriculum Cadre – March 22, 2006

Question 1

Please give us your opinion regarding the proposed increase in rigor and credit requirements for Delaware high school beginning with the freshman entering in 2007.

If this research, which indicates that adding credits has not statistically significantly increased student achievement, is valid then the state needs to look for other ways to increase the challenges we ask of students.

There needs to be a financial analysis done of the requirements. Will the unit count system be changed in order to meet the expectations of additional math requirements and others?

The requirements seem to support integrated science curriculums,(as long as the term “or the equivalent” remains) that we currently have but the term “lab” should be “laboratory exercises that are integrated into the content”.

The Delaware science standards are written for four years and the new requirements do not include earth science and astronomy (standard four and five).

This sends a mixed message to high school teachers that we want them to offer integrated courses but the requirements suggest discreet courses.

The science requirements reflect what the Committee of 10 made in 1895 and they are even in the same order (alphabetical). There has been a lot of thought into developing and piloting a science program that is meaningful to all kids. This does not appear to be advancing curriculum for all kids. Progress is slow, but we are making progress in our science curriculum.

Listing the courses in alphabetical order suggests that is the ordered in which they should be taught. Given what we know today, we need to have Chemistry before Biology. Biology is no longer organismic but it is on a chemical level.

We do not want students to have to take Physics in ninth grade because they may not be at the math readiness level.

There is a lot of research out there re: Physics First Movement that gives the benefits of having a conceptual physical science course first in ninth grade. The committee should look at this research.

The word “integrated” needs to be added explicitly to the science curriculum proposal.

The emphasis on credit focuses more on seat time rather than competency.

Has the committee considered foreign language and the fine arts in the high school requirements?

Has the committee looked at the research as it relates to the drop out rate and the increased number of credits in respect to that? We need to be concerned about all students.

Give credence to the standards, the GLEs and instructional practices.

Should do some studies in Delaware to see how our students are doing with standards based education.

Is there a plan with this that we have qualified math teachers to hire even if we have the cash to hire them?

The new requirements should explicitly state and emphasize reading at a secondary level rather than the word “literature: because the standards talk about reading instruction.

The new requirements reflect a disconnect for what our students will be prepared to do at a post secondary level. Shouldn’t we be preparing our students to be able to get into any state institution?

Our universities have long accepted integrated or coordinated science courses.

Is the 1.5 physical education and health credit enough to meet the wellness criteria?

Seat time vs. achievement. My idea is to award “credits” by course and grade earned and achievement on state test. This would increase rigor. Making students sit through more courses doesn’t necessarily increase rigor. Sitting in a high school course earning a “C” or lower does not prepare our students. They are just getting by. Being expected to perform to earn a grade to receive more credits to graduate may prove to be more motivating to students. Students not earning the higher grades could take more courses to get their credits. This builds more time into the system for students who need more time to achieve. (thus meeting the needs of all students).

All students should be challenged in their coursework. Alignment with state standards seems to be realignment in science and social studies. Align science and social studies requirements with state standards. Our physics, chemistry, etc. courses are integrated not discrete.

Include a world language requirement.

What about world languages? Students are required to take 3 years for University of Delaware!

Science standards are written for 4 years. The proposed 3 credits does not take this into consideration. The Delaware Science Coalition’s curriculum is of higher rigor than traditional biology, chemistry, and physics. Suggesting these three courses will decrease the rigor at high school and go back to a traditional program that has been documented as a failure. The National Science Education standards, BSCS, AAAS and other science agencies have completed research in high school requirements. This seems to have not been taken into consideration. Foundational physics (Physics First Movement) and chemistry concepts need to be learned prior to biology as biology is now learned on a chemical level, requiring knowledge of chemistry and energy. Delaware science at high school has not been given the chance to succeed as the program has grown from K-8 to K-12. The model is cited nationally as one other states should follow.

The ELA requirements should be emphasizing reading rather than literature.

Love the increased rigor. Should ELA be oral communication which is presentation and communication? The Math requirement language says a student should take 1 credit in senior year in Math or test out. Can this be a requirement not an option? ELA should say Reading not Literature. World Languages required for most colleges—it needs to be a graduation requirement (2 or more years). Also we need to keep our students educated in a “global” society.

ELA should say “reading” not “literature”

“Social science”? What about “Social Studies”

Recommended curriculum should not state courses—should meet standards. Bravo to increasing math to 4 credits.

Science should be 4 credits; this is decreasing the rigor. DE standards written for 4 years. Where’s Earth Science, Astronomy, etc.? All with a lab—should be integrated.

What does “presentation” mean in ELA?

I applaud your efforts to increase rigor.

Math teachers, labs, opt-out. How will changes be funded? What is the financial impact?

Question 2

Currently, it is possible for high school seniors to take one or two classes in order to graduate. Research indicated these students are not prepared for the work place or higher education. The committee intends to require a more rigorous senior year for the freshman entering in 2007. Please give us your opinions.

An increase in the math credit, alone, won't keep the student in school their senior year. It will take something in addition to address that senior year.

We need more resources to have stronger program for seniors. We need more guidance personnel to assist our students. Guidance personnel are already stretched to far.

What steps are being taken to insure that what is taught in the classroom is really rigorous and is not just a name change on a schedule to meet the requirements?

The committee has been concentrating on increasing quantity of courses and not the rigor or quality.

You can not legislate rigor.

The senior year issue should be dealt with as a separate issue. Perhaps a committee should study it as a separate issue.

Re: math, it is the only place that skills are mentioned. Skills and essential understanding speak to rigor.

By requiring the one credit in math for the senior year and at the same saying it should be equivalent to Algebra II do we allow students to set their schedules to take Algebra II then rather than more rigorous math? Should we take a look at other courses that we might require during the senior year that will help students achieve their goals?

The committee can look at the high schools that have the same standards being proposed to find the success and failure they have had with these requirements.

Why is the wording different in some places it says “curricula should” or “curricula must”. In the regulations it will have to say “shall”. Curricula must include reading, writing, oral communication, listening and viewing. Reasoning and logic are not in the DE ELA standards / GLEs. “Literature” only refers to standard. Four-term should be “reading”. “Presentation and communication skills” should be oral communication, listening and viewing to match standards / GLEs. The requirements should be written as “must include” not “should emphasize”.

Since the plan does not meet all of the science standards did the committee look at the senior year in regard to the rest of standards that have not been met by this plan?

An unintended consequence of this is that in order to take math in the senior year in a block schedule school a student may not have math instruction for two years in order to save a credit to take in the senior year.

Think that students should have a meaningful senior year. The senior year should count for something. Not sure increasing graduation requirements will result in increased student achievement. I believe the number of students opting out will be significant.

My concern is that this appears to also be going back to a “seat time” mentality. Not sure that will result in rigor. Where is the expectation for mastery/competency? Simply sitting in 4 English classes earning a “D” (passing grade) does not mean a student is more ready for the workplace or college. Look at other means for increasing rigor.

The rigor needs to continue to prepare our students for life after high school. Also, colleges told us they look for the rigor continued in the students’ senior year. It is time to step up not down. ELA should also be required in the students’ senior year.

Is there a discussion about a senior project? Can you legislate rigor? Appoint a sub-committee.

Question 3

The committee is considering an option for students who, along with their parents or guardians and school officials determine should meet some alternative requirements. What are your ideas about who might be included and how this option might work?

How we approach this will determine whether or not this becomes a loophole for students to get around the proposed rigor.

It can seriously retard high school reform by not allowing us to hold high expectations and standards for all kids.

Do not offer an optional program, require students to meet the requirements if they want a diploma.

Many students want to take easier courses in their senior year to keep their GPA high.

Please give some consideration for delaying this decision and looking for some way to bridge between high school rigor and the curriculum work that is already underway.

High school graduation requirements should answer what is a good expectation for all kids. We should not offer an opt-out program. We have a plan with standards that has been underway for 15 years and has not yet come to fruition in high schools and we need to give it time to do so.

The fact that this has come from the Achieve report has colored the proposed requirements.

The initiative is about motivation but the very students for whom this is directed have exhibited they are not responsive to external control. The focus of the state board should be directed at how to insure that educators implement that which research indicates increases students intrinsic motivation to learn.

Any consideration for science and social studies to have four credits in four years?

Research suggests students should have each core course each year in high school – they experience the content in each year.

This will impact seniors who want to take early admission to college and would not have had to put in a senior year otherwise.

Financially and personnel wise the four credits in four years won’t be achieved in some districts because of the lack of teachers and money.

For any program that we want our students to achieve, we need to have the resources – time, money and teachers – to achieve it.

The recommended graduation requirements should state that students have to meet the standards not a specific course.

Include teachers and guidance counselors along with peers and administration in the decision.

Differentiating to meet the needs of students who need the option is great.

There still needs to be rigor, consistency and a detailed plan for all stakeholders, and enforced properly, without lowering standards.

Include students who have completed grade 9—failed 3 courses.

Indian's program looks promising? Scary!

Parents definitely should have input as well as guidance counselors and teachers.

Is this canceling out rigor?

Look at Florida's program!

**Updating Delaware High School Graduation Requirements
Original Raw Data
Delaware State Education Association – March 22, 2006**

Question 1

Please give us your opinion regarding the proposed increase in rigor and credit requirements for Delaware high school students beginning with the freshman entering in 2007.

The University of Delaware does not allow students to use a calculator when they take the math placement test, yet in high school they are allowed to use the calculator. The students should be evaluated on math courses taught in the twenty-first century rather than the 1950's. Del-Tech also does not allow calculators.

Students participating in block scheduling will take the equivalent of three years of math in 1.5 years, therefore, they would not have math in their junior or senior year.

Students in academic programs already take at least four credits in math.

We should not require another credit in math if it has to be higher than Algebra II.

Increasing the math credit will increase the drop out rate. ESL and special education students will not be able to complete another math credit. Students taking math courses through a correspondence program, Grove

How will we deal with the students who fail math classes?

Until the committee collects data of how many students currently need four years or more to complete three math credits, can this proposal be halted?

There needs to be an emphasis of alternative settings and how they meet any state standards.

We are only looking at students going to college and that is not the majority of our students.

How many student teachers will be coming out of University of Delaware this year to teach math?

There should be four years of math, however, there should be an option that counts toward credit, such as a consumer math course.

The increase in rigor does not have to come from the number of credits or through higher level math. The rigor comes from the quality of what students are getting in the classroom and counting that rather than just adding another credit.

Middle school students who take high school Algebra I/Geometry should be receiving a high school credit.

If we are to increase and require a fourth credit in math, where will the funding come from for additional staffing so as not to sacrifice the decrease in class sizes which would impact the improvements we have already seen in DSTP math scores?

If we are going to require more students to be in class at the same time, how has this proposal been looked at in comparison to building renovations, funding and timelines?

With the implementation of full day kindergarten on the horizon, is there money available for a fourth math credit?

How does this fall in line with the PE Task Force that has been proposed to the General Assembly that would require 150 minutes every week for K-12 students of physical education, where do students have time for all of this?

Biggest concern is that all of the data we have been presented with is anecdotal rather than quantitative.

Has the data been collected on how this will impact the enrollment of foreign language classes, arts, music, advanced sciences which help create the well-rounded students that we try to send to our communities?

This will impact not only the drop out rate but the four year graduation cell in NCLB.

We can increase rigor without changing the content areas by giving math credit for work students are doing in other courses. For example, drafting classes require math skills and they could receive credit for this class. Would like to see the fourth math credit coming from classes or training in experiential settings.

The infrastructure has to be able to support any extra math. The drop out rate will increase if a fourth year of math is added.

Four years of math is good. There has to be common sense application of the four year math requirement to take into consideration various populations of students (for example special education, slow learners, ELL), for example, college bound, work place/trades-bound, military bound.

The committee is not addressing the real problem which is a lack of trade education options for our students.

Most of the requirements came from the committee listening to the University of Delaware. UD has the right to require four year of math credits and students with only three math credits are not admitted there. Agree that students going to a four-year college should have four math credits.

There is a need for consistency from K-12 regarding any program. Need to address the concerns and programs needed for the ESL students and their parents right now rather than focusing our attention on this initiative. This is another demand on educators and nothing is ever good enough. The committee should be responding to what educators are saying rather than the business leaders.

Students' success in science is largely associated with their success in math. The teachers teaching physics will need to be certified in the particular science they teach and sometime they vary from year to year depending on the scheduling.

We do not have the facilities to have all sciences taught with a lab and we do not have the time. Labs require lab preparation and without a lab assistant or additional time in a teacher's schedule the lab will not happen. We need more teachers, more supplies and equipment and more labs and it all requires more money. The majority of teachers design, prepare and clean up the labs on their own time. This ideal scenario the committee is proposing is making it impossible to be a dedicated professional with a private life.

Concerned about the rigor requirements because students can leave middle school without passing all of their subjects. Students are already coming into high school unprepared to meet the rigorous math and science of high school.

Our school's schedule has so much extra time built into it more than graduation requirements. Students are choosing alternative sources rather than pass the rigorous courses.

The math sequence is not realistic for many of our students and need a different sequence than is being proposed.

Why aren't we talking about increasing science credits in a world we call science and technology?

Do not support four credits in math due to the lack of staffing and taking away from the focus of DSTP test scores.

These proposals will cause labor strife and problematic contract negotiations regarding the work load provisions of collective bargaining agreements.

We need to prepare students for college or teach them a trade or skill, not all of our students are going to college.

If we try to move the technology credit to the middle schools we'll need to add teachers there, we'll need to track the credit and make sure that all students get the technology course.

Middle schools will need more staff, money and computers.

The committee should look at America's Lab report published by National Academy of Sciences.

It will be a travesty if any of these additional requirements are put in at the expense of the arts.

If students are required to take more than Algebra II level courses and only scored a 1 on the 8th grade DSTP, thus being placed in a remedial math class for zero credit in ninth grade it would be impossible for them to achieve four math credits in a traditional setting thus sending them to Groves or less rigorous facilities to find that credit.

Question 2

Currently, it is possible for high school seniors to take one or two classes in order to graduate. Research indicated these students are not prepared for the work place or higher education. The committee intends to require a more rigorous senior year for the freshman entering in 2007. Please give us your opinions.

College prep students should be taking a full load during their senior year. Schools must have the courses available for the students to take their senior year.

Students working co-op should be allowed to go out to work and earn credits for the work.

If the students spread out the courses they may not have everything they need to be successful on the SATs.

Students should not be allowed to go to college to take a course that is offered in their home high school. Students will do this because those courses are easier. If the high school offers the AP test than students should take it at the high school, if it is not, then they should be allowed to take it at the college.

Look at the scheduling in individual schools to determine how much dead time there is rather than mandating the courses taken specifically in their senior year.

The school gets the unit for the senior if the senior takes two classes and leaves that frees up staff for other things. We need to have our schools properly funded the way vocational schools are funded so that we don't have to keep going back to referendum when we need money.

A blanket requirement for a rigorous senior year is a mistake. There are students who need to work to earn money for tuition and students who are disruptive should be allowed to leave.

If the students have met the requirements we should not try to keep them in school.

Question 3

The committee is considering an option for students who, along with their parents or guardians and school officials determine should meet some alternative requirements. What are your ideas about who might be included and how this option might work?

Anytime you hold people accountable and offer an opt-out you are giving students an opportunity to not meet minimum standards. Disagree with an opt-out option. It is too similar to the tiered diploma.

Since we are not meeting the needs of all student populations we need an opt-out program.

If an opt-out option exists, when will sanctions be leveled against a school/district for having an excessive number of students choosing the opt-out?

Have to consider a student's IEP and recognize their completion of high school.

An opt-out program makes the rigorous proposal a façade because we are not increasing anything.

If there is an opt-out option we can not leave it up to parents to make the decision. There should be a committee to make that decision with consistent guidelines throughout the state.

There needs to be a serious look at how our standards have been interpreted in our graduation requirement document. Apparently there is a disconnect between our requirements and how it is perceived by Achieve.

Updating Delaware High School Graduation Requirements
Original Raw Data
Delaware Advisory Council for Career/Vocational Education - March 30, 2006

Question 1

Please give us your opinion regarding the proposed increase in rigor and credit requirements for Delaware high school beginning with the freshman entering in 2007.

There is a broader issue, which is what is the current environment in schools and how do we accomplish more rigor without addressing the following issues: We need younger teachers who can motivate students better. We have a lot of teachers going into retirement. We are losing too many students to other options, such as, private and charter schools.

By making the curriculum more rigorous does not mean the student will be more successful if we do not address the environment, their individual learning styles, teaching methods, facilities, supplies, etc.

Students need to see meaning in what is offered in school. They have to understand why they need certain courses and how it relates to their individual career goals. Students need to have mentors. They need to taste success.

Concerned if the high school administration with new requirements that must be met and do not receive additional support, including positions being filled, and financial support in order to be successful.

Too many districts look at the requirements as optional rather than mandated.

Initial reaction is yes, we need more rigor. However, we need to address what we need to do to support this. There are so many variables that impact the student's success that we need to address as well in order for students to be successful.

Support the new requirements, not giving students a choice and less electives. There should be rigorous academic requirements for all students. Students who can not meet the requirements can attend private school public school should be for the elite and serious student, like it use to be.

We are preparing students for college not a vocational career or a skilled trade. We don't give students alternatives to participate in these programs and we should. Algebra is required to pass skilled trades test.

The new requirements are on target because they address what has been lacking in high school students participating in co-op, especially in the highly technical businesses. These students need to be proficient in verbal and written communication and math.

Like the new requirements but it is my hope that we give the students entering high school 2007 the requirement and let them know where they are in relation to the new requirements.

Question 2

Currently, it is possible for high school seniors to take one or two classes in order to graduate. Research indicated these students are not prepared for the work place or higher education. The committee intends to require a more rigorous senior year for the freshman entering in 2007. Please give us your opinions.

We need to put something else in place to get students ready for college or industry, such as internships/apprenticeship or in a mentoring program in high school. Students need a direction and have too many choices to make regarding their curriculum.

Businesses should adopt a school to mentor students and give them things they might not have otherwise. Their employees become a part of the school by mentoring and giving their time. It doesn't have to only be financial.

Students should be more focused and have fewer distractions.

Colleges will require a rigorous senior year and counselors and parents need to make students aware of the importance of their senior year. They need to be more focused and prepared to immediately enter college or the work place.

Guidance counselors should be more focused and involved with seniors to help them to prepare for what they will do once they graduate.

We need additional guidance counselors and services to support students. Resources are needed to fund career counselors and services in every high school to accomplish #2.

Support the intent of Question 2.

Question 3

The committee is considering an option for students who, along with their parents or guardians and school officials determine should meet some alternative requirements. What are your ideas about who might be included and how this option might work?

The students looking for the easy way out or not doing well will want the optional program, but they are students who need it the most. An opt-out destroys everything being proposed.

An opt-out program is going backwards and goes back to tracking and the three tier diploma and should not be offered. We do not want to stigmatize kids and allow them to choose an opt-out. Special education students might need to be exempt from certain courses.

No opt-out program.

Can not support an opt-out for students who do not want to do the work. If it is academically or work related, it might be acceptable to opt-out. We have proven that all students can learn if we give them the time and resources they need.

When students choose to drop out, they have other options such as Groves or other programs. It doesn't look good for the state. However the students may enter another program and go on to get their diploma and be successful. It is a bad choice to drop out but it is the student's choice. We just need to be there when they decide to come back and continue their education. We should not offer an opt-out program.

OTHER

Want vocational and career program to be of high quality. Believe a large number of students need those programs. Career pathways are required as 3 courses in sequence and are not always implemented and enforced at the high school level and this needs to be addressed. Career pathways should be supported and documented by schools. Any additional graduation requirements should not negatively impact the ability of the school to schedule and the student to complete them.

Want to commend the work of the committee and wish them well and appreciate them conducting this focus group.

The council endorses... (see the report)

Updating Delaware High School Graduation Requirements
Original Raw Data
Science Curriculum Group – March 30, 2006

Question 1

Please give us your opinion regarding the proposed increase in rigor and credit requirements for Delaware high school beginning with the freshman entering in 2007.

Earth Science should be included.

Currently inquiry activities are used in science courses and not taught separately as a lab. Students need the construct continually.

Research done by physics teachers says that high school and college students do not learn through lecture/lab but through folding activity into learning.

Consideration should be given to backing up some of the high school science courses to the middle school level and getting more coordination beginning at Pre-K.

We've just had realignment of the science standards and creating grade level expectations during the past year and by June 07 are required to have the state recommended curriculum. There is a disconnect of what we have done with the realignment and what is being proposed.

Need to hear a commitment this is within the ongoing work of state standards and statewide recommended curriculum.

For all students who are graduating this seems to be moving away from an integrated curriculum.

The wording for the science requirements is old language and leaves open the opportunity to revert to instruction based on the separation of sciences by discipline. Earth Science is not included and should be. For a general student not going into the sciences it will take away from a well rounded science program. It will hurt the current reform effort.

Standards need to be communicated better.

Leave off the specific language that names science courses and go back to "3 credits in science". Need the state board's support and endorsement of an integrated approach. Reform is taking time but it is working. The chart is so broad it glosses over the reform effort that is going on. The Achieve report is cast in the old mind set and DE is beyond that now.

Hope someone does a financial analysis of this proposal. A fourth math credit is stretching our resources and maybe other items will require additional resources.

Science lab will cost additional money. Labs will require additional space and teachers.

Need to do a serious analysis of students participating in block scheduling. Getting a fourth math credit in the senior year will be challenging in block scheduling.

Question 2

Currently, it is possible for high school seniors to take one or two classes in order to graduate. Research indicated these students are not prepared for the work place or higher education. The committee intends to require a more rigorous senior year for the freshman entering in 2007. Please give us your opinions.

Increased course load does not increase rigor. That is a big fallacy.

Need to have more discussion around rigor – what it is and what is expected.

A complete study should be done about the scope of the senior year in the context of high school and high school reform. It is a complex problem that needs more than a simple solution, such as adding credits. The number of students who begin as freshman and don't make it to their senior year is a serious problem. It is compounded by the DSTP promotion requirements.

Right now, middle school students can earn high school credit; will these credits continue to count?

The business community is seriously dropping the ball in checking on whether students graduate high school. They should be checking with the high school to see if they have graduated and request a copy of the transcript.

Do a study to see which companies hire full-time high school graduates and what their expectations are of the students. Would like to know what these students will do and the expectations of their skills.

Fear classes will be split into 2 class for 4 credits, e.g., Algebra IA and Algebra IB. However, if this student can reach the requirement via this method, there shouldn't be a problem for this student.

Question 3

The committee is considering an option for students who, along with their parents or guardians and school officials determine should meet some alternative requirements. What are your ideas about who might be included and how this option might work?

There are different needs between students who are graduating so there should be a different way of dealing with these students. If all students are to be included in "reform", then opt-out should not let students or teachers off the hook.

Do not go back to tracking.

How do you legally do this under NCLB?

What will this do to drop out rates for the students who cannot reach these requirements?

Need to find alternative ways to reach students who will not meet the requirements. Must add additional options for these students.

Possibly add a fifth year to high school?

This is a very complex question depending on circumstances. We need to meet student's needs.

Other:

Why not 4 years of science i.e., engineering course, earth science, integrated science, etc. The science coalition. Has a proposal for a 9-12 science progression.

How will increased rigor increase attendance?

Updating Delaware High School Graduation Requirements
Focus Group Data
Christina School district Title I Parent Advisory Committee – April 5, 2006

Question 1

Please give us your opinion regarding the proposed increase in rigor and credit requirements for Delaware high school students beginning with the freshman entering in 2007.

The current system has not kept up with the changing times, e.g., students do not get enough financial information in order to communicate with people globally. Beginning in elementary school, our students need to learn about banking, investing, Wall Street, economics and finances in general.

Schools need to share newspapers with students and help them to be aware of issues around the world.

We are in favor of a more rigorous curriculum.

Need to teach more about establishing businesses and entrepreneurialship because all students do not plan to attend college.

Teachers need to be trained in how to teach students so that they will pass the DSTP. The teachers are a main reason students are not passing these tests. Teachers should be required to take the DSTP.

There is too much pressure placed on students and parents re: the state testing.

Any new curriculum should be tied to the state tests administered to the students.

Increase the GPA students must meet to participate in athletics and extracurricular activities.

We need to reward students for accomplishments other than grades, e.g., perfect attendance, community activism and volunteer work, “most improved” and mentoring their peers.

Require all high school students to wear uniforms so they know how to dress, feel good about themselves and come to school prepared to work. Skirts should go to the knee and pants should come up the waist and be worn with a belt. The teachers should also have a dress code they are required to follow.

Students need more health and gym requirements.

Nutrition should be a primary focus of schools and provide students with healthy meals in the cafeteria. Remove soda machines from schools.

Create a homework hotline so parents can find out what their students need to do each night.

Students’ absent from school should not be excused from homework assignments and should be required to make up all missed work.

Students should be given two sets of books, one that stays home and one that stays in the school. Students will be less apt to lose the books and less wear and tear on the book.

Every student should be able to bring textbooks home because they need them to do work and to study.

Delaware should have an informational television channel that shows how to solve math problems (Baltimore has this in place).

Need to do a better job in disseminating information to parents re: extra help, resources, money for improving students' academic performance.

Create more academic contests for students.

We should provide all students who graduate high school with a free college education.

Question 2

Currently, it is possible for high school seniors to take one or two classes in order to graduate. Research indicated these students are not prepared for the work place or higher education. The committee intends to require a more rigorous senior year for the freshman entering in 2007. Please give us your opinions.

Require that all core courses be spread out throughout the four years of high school.

In eighth grade, all students should have a strategic plan that outlines each high school year courses, goals, expectations, etc. and evaluations should be completed so students and parents know when they have met the requirements.

Students should not be allowed to drop out of school at the age of 16 because they are minors. We need to change the law.

In situations where students are dropping out to financially support their families, the state needs to be providing help to these students and their families.

Question 3

The committee is considering an option for students who, along with their parents or guardians and school officials determine should meet some alternative requirements. What are your ideas about who might be included and how this option might work?

All students should be able to meet these requirements and should not be given the option of an alternative program.

Students should be given an optional program because not all students will be able to graduate twelfth grade and/or be college material.

Parents should know what their students are capable of and be able to participate in the decision of choosing an optional program for their child.

If you give students an optional program you are giving them the easy way out.

Choosing an optional program should be a decision made by the parents, guidance counselors and teachers together in the best interest of the student.

Offer alternative programs for students who might be likely to drop out.

Updating Delaware High School Graduation Requirements
Original Raw Data
Delta Epsilon Chi Association – April 10, 2006

Question 1

Please give us your opinion regarding the proposed increase in rigor and credit requirements for Delaware high school beginning with the freshman entering in 2007.

Technology classes should be required in high school.

Increased math and science are important because college classes are much harder. Even advanced placement classes were not as hard in high school as college. Agree with 4 years of math and science.

I agree with raising the requirements because I meet the requirements without much effort.

Agree with increase to fill the schedule.

Agree with increase math. But if your force students to take science and they are not really interested in taking it then students will be forced to take classes just to meet the bar.

Science classes should be more challenging. Keep as 3 credits, just make content harder. Many classes are repetitive.

Math should include calculus and statistics because you'll get it in college.

Levels of calculus should be offered for those who can't do the harder math.

Integrated math is not preparing students for college. This math is in small chunks and don't give enough.

Four years of English is just something you have to go through and doesn't have a purpose. Don't do much writing.

Not everyone is on the same level between school districts. All core courses should be the same throughout the state.

Three or four year of languages should equal an English requirement and offer a language in sixth grade or earlier.

Need more English because it's important.

Put more English classes in middle school.

Computer classes should be taught in middle school and should include a variety of computer classes (unix, etc). Need to do more than basics. Keyboarding classes are a waste of time because you can develop those skills while leaning the other programs.

Reduce gym credit to one credit and offer physical education and gym a half year and a half year of health class. This would allow students to take another elective or a computer science course.

Give credit for sports as a gym credit.

Driver's education should be a taken out and learned at an alternative time or through alternative places or after school.

Having driver's education during school is helpful for some students.

Language should be required.

Math should not be increased because it will take away from electives especially at schools like Polytech.

Require a "communication" class such as oral communication or communication in business and use it as an English credit choice.

Senior year English is useless.

Student aides should be limited to one or two classes during high school

Student aide should not be taken away because they are important for some students who won't be going to college.

Increase should be flexible with votech schools.

Question 2

Currently, it is possible for high school seniors to take one or two classes in order to graduate. Research indicated these students are not prepared for the work place or higher education. The committee intends to require a more rigorous senior year for the freshman entering in 2007. Please give us your opinions.

It's ok to do co-op but it must be job related.

Leave this up to the senior if they want more rigor or if they take co-op.

Use to take college courses.

Require an essay be written about co-op experience.

Like easy day option.

College bound students should have more requirements because they'll have more work to do in college. Students should have more support from guidance counselors who have realistic suggestions for the future.

Give help to students with college scholarships forms, etc. and use study hall time to do this or take the place of an elective.

Question 3

The committee is considering an option for students who, along with their parents or guardians and school officials determine should meet some alternative requirements. What are your ideas about who might be included and how this option might work?

If a committee ok's it and there is a special circumstance and after all options have been looked out then an alternative should be offered.

Will they get the same diploma?

Math needs to be targeted with students who need help long before high school or middle school.

Special education teachers are there to help students.

Just because someone is bad in math, they still should have the opportunity to go to college.

This is allowing students to do less.

Learning disabled students still take the same amount of credits.

Lower level math should be offered to help students who are struggling.

In high school there should be enough people to help lower functioning students get needed help and get them through graduation.

A five year option may be helpful, but may allow some students to take the easy out.

Students should have an option to do an alternative program.

Alternative options should be available for learning disabled or handicapped.

Consider extending to a five year high school.

Committee should approve option by looking at the circumstances.

Average students take full math, but alternative math should be offered to other students so they get more than a certificate of attendance.

Not for lazy students.

Special education students should not be set up to fail.

Should be a committee decision.

An option could be a “recovery” option not how a student goes thru high school.

Why focus on math courses.

Not all college bound students need calculus.

Must take calculus OR statistics.

School districts should be more even in the more challenging classes (AP). Same core credits should be taught by all school districts. If they are not offered, students won't have the option to take these courses.

If a school doesn't offer AP classes, have option to take these courses at Delaware Tech and Delaware State University.

Do these increases include community service hours?

All this should be keeping the teacher in mind so they don't get overwhelmed. Give them options to teach. There are many requirements to meet.

For the kids who are just trying to get thru high school and graduate there should be an option for them. Some kids cannot do lower level math functions. Especially for the students who will never be able to take calculus.

Updating Delaware High School Graduation Requirements
Original Raw Data
Delaware Association of School Administrators – April 12, 2006

Question 1

Please give us your opinion regarding the proposed increase in rigor and credit requirements for Delaware high school beginning with the freshman entering in 2007.

Adding credits without the rigor will not strengthen the curriculum.

Students who earn high school Algebra I credit in 8th grade could earn three credits in math by junior year. Requiring a student to take one more credit in math in their senior year will be a restriction or penalty for some students.

Create a policy that permits students to opt-out of taking math in their senior year if they request to do that and their school record and educational goals support this or allow them to replace the 4th math requirement with another core course that meets their individual goal.

Four credits in math is a good recommendation.

The goal of creating a meaningful senior year is the right direction for the state.

We have not increased the rigor by adding a fourth year of math.

Some students can reach calculus, pre-calculus or statistics by the time they are seniors and should be permitted to take other courses of their choice. Students who have already met their math requirements prior to their senior year should not be penalized by the requirement of one more math.

Make sure that the courses/credits do include the rigor that is needed.

Need to change the mind set of students and parents to move them beyond the minimalist attitude re: students taking the least amount of courses in order to meet the minimum requirements just to graduate.

By their junior year, students and parents should be required to sign a contract to commit them to following through with their senior year courses and schedule.

Require 8th graders to sign a contract that outlines high school expectations and requirements of the student.

Require a computer class upon entering high school that ensures all students have the skills and abilities they need in this area to successfully complete the technology requirements of their curriculum. Offer a half credit for this course.

Require students to take a competency test before entering high school.

Make a statewide requirement that all eighth graders are completing the same math course.

If students don't complete the math requirements will they graduate high school?

We should award high school credit for high school courses taken during middle school.

Move driver's education to the junior or senior year.

Continue reviewing the physical education and health requirements so we can offer more meaningful courses in these areas.

Need to review and possibly overhaul how the state calculates the graduation rate.

Question 2

Currently, it is possible for high school seniors to take one or two classes in order to graduate. Research indicated these students are not prepared for the work place or higher education. The committee intends to require a more rigorous senior year for the freshman entering in 2007. Please give us your opinions.

There should be a minimum number of credits required in the senior year.

Seniors should be required to take a majority of credits in their senior year, e.g., for schools requiring 8 classes per day the senior would be required to take 5 classes.

All students, including special education students, should be required to create an “exhibition project” in order to graduate. This is a project that includes in-depth research, an APA paper and an oral presentation. Their exhibition project should be based on the student’s area of interest and approved by a faculty group.

Offer positive ways to help students succeed. Offer minors (two courses of the student’s choice above and beyond the state requirements) for students in their area of interest. Students may do their minor in English, Art, whatever they choose. Requiring seniors to take one more credit in math in their senior year seems punitive. Students should be given options.

Need to think of high school as a means to an end, not the end. We need to be creative in how we get our students ready for life after high school.

We are going in the wrong direction when we look at course credits only.

Culture in schools needs to improve to fosters a student’s creativity and desire to learn as to provides them with success and motivate them for future endeavors.

Question 3

The committee is considering an option for students who, along with their parents or guardians and school officials determine should meet some alternative requirements. What are your ideas about who might be included and how this option might work?

Some special education students will have more difficulty with the proposed requirements (those with learning and physical disabilities or brain injuries) and we need to have optional programs for those students.

The IEP process determines student’s curriculum and should continue to do so along with the state requirements.

The alternative program should not be a short cut to avoid a rigorous curriculum.

**APPENDIX E:
Formatted Data**

Updating Delaware High School Graduation Requirements
Formatted Data
Guidance Counselors – February 27, 2006

Question 1

Please give us your opinion regarding the proposed increase in rigor and credit requirements for Delaware high school students beginning with the freshman entering in 2007.

STRENGTHS

- Increasing rigor is a good idea.
- All major subjects should require four credits.

CONCERNS

- Concern that students will figure out how to “work the system” to minimize the amount of work required in order to graduate.
- Four year requirement - including Algebra II will be difficult for many students and may hurt many students.
- Hiring the number of math teachers needed to meet new requirement will be a challenge.
- Attempt to increase rigor may also inadvertently make room to “dumb down” math option — must create statewide math standard.
- The current English courses taught do not prepare students for college level English—the state needs to increase the rigor.

SUGGESTIONS

- Math and science go hand in hand, require advance math to meet increased science requirement – skills and knowledge don’t line up.
- Require increased credits for senior year for all courses.
- World geography should be required all 4 years and should include social studies.
- Ask to clarify what course/credit requirements (especially math) are needed for entrance into their programs.
- Specific courses need to be defined to create pathways in different areas.
- Pathways should be spelled out so students know what is required and in what order the courses should be taken.
- Create “interest” pathways.
- Pathways need to be re-written to be “career” pathways not “academic” pathways.
- Need to be flexible when increasing the number of credits so districts can choose how they design the course options.
- The state should require at least two consecutive years (maybe three years) of a foreign language and offer it as a career pathway.
- Increase math to offer Algebra I-A and Algebra I-B for students who are struggling to meet requirement. Each algebra class would be a one year offering and would be equal to one credit. Having Algebra offered over a two year period for a total of two credits.
- Let districts decide on two additional math requirements after Algebra II/Geometry to meet requirement.

QUESTIONS

- How will increase affect students who participate in two or more sports?
- State invested money in science requirements to meet state standards and DSTP (physical science is missing) - will proposed rigor alter this practice?
- Currently, math taken in 8th grade will not meet math requirement of high school - should it be considered?
- If Algebra is taken in middle school, should four years of math still be required in high school?

Question 2

Currently, it is possible for high school seniors to take one or two classes in order to graduate. Research indicated these students are not prepared for the work place or higher education. The committee intends to require a more rigorous senior year for the freshman entering in 2007. Please give us your opinions.

STRENGTHS

- Increase all major subject areas to four year requirement.

CONCERNS

- Middle school courses do not prepare students for high school courses.

SUGGESTIONS

- All seniors should be required to take five classes they must pass to graduate.
- If a “senior project” is implemented, it will require staff development.
- Senior project should tie into Individualized Learning Plan (ILP).
- “Seminar” classes can be developed for credit.
- Students should be permitted to participate in half day college class options.
- Have college credits computed to meet both high school and college requirements.
- Students in co-op and vocational programs should still be able to receive credit for this work.
- Currently, if students have a job they can leave school early—increase requirements so they can’t leave.
- Create standards other than DSTP for middle school students to reduce opportunity of failure.
- Middle school students need more requirements, currently they only have to “attend”, not “pass” their courses.

QUESTIONS

How will the proposed increases impact middle school students who cannot meet current requirements?

How will increases affect middle school students?

Question 3

The committee is considering an option for students who, along with their parents or guardians and school officials determine should meet some alternative requirements. What are your ideas about who might be included and how this option might work?

WHO MIGHT BE INCLUDED IN THIS OPTION?

- Special education students.
- Non-IEP students who will have difficulty passing increased requirements.
- Students who are 9th grade “repeaters”.
- Identify students at the end of 10th grade year who can not do sequence of pathways.
- ILP should identify these kids early in the 10th grade year or by age 16.
- Middle school kids who already can’t meet math requirements.

HOW THIS OPTION MIGHT WORK?

- Have support classes available for IEP students—they should have opt-out option with the approval of their IEP team.
- Offer credits through alternative programs offered outside of school, e.g., twilight program and Groves.
- “Vocational” opt-out option for skill development i.e., tech schools – these options are limited.
- Create “special interest” plan/pathway and devise senior project options.
- Create “senior opportunities” structured around student’s area of interest.

STRENGTHS

None specifically stated.

CONCERNS

- Not everyone needs a four year college degree—flexibility of choices needed.
- Do not use the term “opt-out” – sends the wrong message and students will think they can use this option instead of meeting requirements.

SUGGESTIONS

- Optional programs will need rules and guidelines.
- Message should be communicated that “other option” is not meaningless or is of less value.
- Opt-out students still need to meet graduation requirements.
- Students participating in a different/individualized program should not be penalized or given a lesser diploma.

QUESTIONS

- Will students in opt-out program receive the same diploma as other students or a different diploma?

**Updating Delaware High School Graduation Requirements
Formatted Data
Math Teachers – March 8, 2006**

Question 1

Please give us your opinion regarding the proposed increase in rigor and credit requirements for Delaware high school students beginning with the freshman entering in 2007.

STRENGTHS

- Math in the senior year is a good idea.

CONCERNS

- Elementary and middle school students will not be aligned with the new standards – they need to keep pace with high school requirements.
- July is way too soon to move this forward.
- Concerned we are diminishing the quality and grade level standards we already meet.
- Districts will revert back to a two year Algebra 1 class in order to get four years of math.
- Performance Level I students entering high schools are behind in math requirements and don't actually get a high school math requirement until tenth grade, therefore, will never have the opportunity to take four years of math.
- Many students won't be able to meet the increased requirement and will end up dropping out.
- If our graduation rate goes down then NCLB will put the school on "academic review" or "watch".
- Concerned that we will have the same number of students and won't get additional teachers because the number of teachers is based on unit count not on the number of courses all students must take to meet graduation requirements.
- If classes are made larger, teaching effectiveness will decrease.
- Students attending Groves are not taught the same math that is offered in high school.
- Alternative courses such as summer school, correspondence courses and online credits don't meet the rigor and must be addressed if the requirement is increased.
- Concerned that votech and co-op programs have not been considered in this and won't align their courses with increased requirements. These students will not have the time in their schedule in their senior year to take additional credits.
- We will need more funding, more certified math teachers, more books and more classroom space.
- Concerned about students who have to double up on math classes. Integrated programs build on one another. Easier to double up in a traditional program than in a non-traditional program. Non-traditional curriculum students are at a disadvantage.
- University of Delaware currently "recommends" – not "requires" four math credits. Concerned we are moving ahead of the university and might be hurting students.
- Our administrators are looking for ways to add more rigor into the middle schools through Algebra and Geometry, and losing the credits in middle school would defeat this approach.
- Most new initiatives need time and money to accomplish. With schools having the legislated mandate to align the math curriculum in each district to the GLEs (grade level expectations) by June 2007, there will be little "free time" for schools to work on the professional development to create new classes and to focus on improved teaching strategies.
- We definitely want our students to continue to graduate in four years. For students who struggle in mathematics, we will need to find ways to help them achieve at higher levels. These ways may be outside of the normal school day.
- Justifying the need for additional math courses in high school will be much easier when higher education changes their entrance requirements.

SUGGESTIONS

- Math course should be geared toward college or work place for seniors.
- Eighth grade academy might need to be a sixth grade academy (or earlier) because accountability is needed at an earlier grade level.
- Requirements should be written around a set of standards rather than around a number of credits.
- Increase rigor in three current math courses.
- We need proof that increasing the credit will impact student achievement.

QUESTIONS

- Why require a math credit the senior year when all courses are not required in the senior year?
- Are the benchmark states information based on performance or the written requirements? Is math rigor really being increased for all students in any of the other models?
- Will there be additional funding when this is approved?
- Have you contacted Delaware State University, University of Delaware, Salisbury State University, etc. to find out how many “highly qualified” math teachers will graduate and how many of the graduates plan to stay in Delaware?
- We have rigorous standards now and fear that the standard is being set aside in order to just have a higher number of credits. Who does this satisfy?
- We need to track how students are doing in college and if they took a fourth year math in high school what did they take?
- Can we find out what remedial courses our students need to take at the University of Delaware, or other colleges, so we can go back and look at what we need to teach?
- Can we find a way to increase the rigor for the non-traditional math students, such as, no back tracking?
- What course will be accepted as the fourth rigorous math class? What is the quality of that class?
- Will the Algebra I middle school credit count toward a high school credit?
- Have school districts collected enough data to understand how many students take four years of math to earn three credits? What is the number of students who will be impacted by this change and may not be able to meet the requirements?
- Has the right data been collected to address the concerns being raised by this group?
- Where is the data that will help us determine what districts are currently doing and how students are progressing in mathematics? For a decision as difficult to implement as this one will be, anecdotal data is not sufficient. What math courses are currently required for graduation in the districts? How many students are unable to graduate in four years because of math credits? How many students are doubling up in their senior year to get the second and third math credit that they currently need to graduate? How successful are they in getting those credits? What is the current trend in drop-out rates? What does the success rate in math class look like for all NCLB sub-groups?
- Where will the highly qualified teachers come from to teach math to all of these additional students? How will we pay for additional teachers? Will extra units be given to schools?
- Would the graduation requirement be four years (or four credits) of math with nothing lower than Algebra I? (We would not want to see districts using consumer math, business math, pre-Algebra or Algebra I part I and II as the math courses to get these four credits.) Could we achieve the same impact on students by requiring them to have three credits that are from Algebra I, Geometry, and Algebra II only?
- How will we find the time and money to provide for the professional development needed to meet this new requirement? Teaching all students four years of mathematics (Algebra I, Geometry, and Algebra II, and an additional course beyond these subjects) requires a focus on differentiated instruction.
- When will teachers have the time to plan, develop, and implement new math courses?
- Will the credit for Algebra I that is earned in middle school be removed as an option?
- Will there be additional funding for the necessary support services (tutoring, extra time, night schools, summer schools, etc.)?

- Will Delaware colleges and universities change their entrance requirements to expect four years of math from the students?
- What impact does this change have on the students entering eighth grade in the fall of 2006 (the Class of 2011)? They may be finding out this summer that the Algebra course they are registered for will not count for high school credit. Last minute rescheduling of students will be difficult if they decide to wait until high school to take the course. Will this cause more students to go to private schools or other programs (such as Academic Challenge) that give credits at the eighth grade level for algebra?
- Are we envisioning increased rigor in mathematics for only the top students in the schools?

Question 2

Currently, it is possible for high school seniors to take one or two classes in order to graduate. Research indicated these students are not prepared for the work place or higher education. The committee intends to require a more rigorous senior year for the freshman entering in 2007. Please give us your opinions.

STRENGTHS

- None specifically stated.

CONCERNS

- If we set a number of credits students need to complete, and they complete them prior to senior year, you are just forcing them to be in the building taking credits they really don't need to graduate. It doesn't make sense to force them to be there just to be there.

SUGGESTIONS

- There should be some way that students have to stay in school and take at least a half day of classes.
- There is a benefit to students in co-op receiving credit and they should be permitted to continue.

QUESTIONS

- None specifically stated.

Question 3

The committee is considering an option for students who, along with their parents or guardians and school officials determine should meet some alternative requirements. What are your ideas about who might be included and how this option might work?

WHO MIGHT BE INCLUDED IN THIS OPTION?

- Special education students and students who don't push themselves would be the students in the opt-out program. Special education has to be addressed because most won't be able to complete Algebra II.
- Opt-out should be for special education and for the very high achiever who meets the standards early.
- Students facing socio-economic issues need to be considered.

HOW THIS OPTION MIGHT WORK?

- The IEP team should make this decision.

STRENGTHS

- None specifically stated.

CONCERNS

- Don't believe there are any high school math teachers on the Graduation Requirements Committee.
- Concerned it doesn't matter what we say.
- Concerned it is aligned with years rather than content and standards.

- Why are we considering “opt-out” programs? Opt-out programs seem to be a way of lowering the expectations for students and would be next to impossible to implement fairly and equitably for all students.
- Will an opt-out program send more students than ever into vocational programs? When reading the “opt out” descriptions from other states, it seems that the students who are given an option are those that go into the career and technical (vocational) programs. Currently students in the vocational programs in IRSD have a very low rate of meeting the standards on the DSTP. Do we want to give the message that it is acceptable for approximately 42% of the school population to not meet the standards in tenth grade mathematics?

SUGGESTIONS

- Allow these opt-out students to participate in college programs for high school or college credit.
- An opt-out program doesn’t have to include a formal Algebra II but it can have the same standards and credit.
- An alternate course list should be in place to help students meet the standards and graduate.

QUESTIONS

- Isn’t opting-out the same as tracking and what we have been moving away from?
- When will students be allowed to opt-out?
- How many of the students in the benchmark states opt-out?
- Who will make these decisions and how will they be made?
- Has this decision already been reached?

**Updating Delaware High School Graduation Requirements
Formatted Data
Delaware State Board Association – March 8, 2006**

Question 1

Please give us your opinion regarding the proposed increase in rigor and credit requirements for Delaware high school students beginning with the freshman entering in 2007.

STRENGTHS

- Support for increasing rigor.
- Glad plan keeps 22 credits.
- In favor of increase in rigor.

CONCERNS

- Committee has not done much to increase rigor. The committee wasted a lot of time.
- Twenty-two credits is too low to graduate.
- Concerned with middle school reform, right now there is a disconnect.
- Concerned about funding.
- Keeping more students in school will require more teachers.
- Do not want to see AP left behind. Must ensure these students can still take AP courses.
- The increase in rigor must provide meaningful courses and not be designed as “filler” courses.
- Concern over the term “rigor”. Local boards should have the responsibility of making sure the curriculum has rigor.
- The more credits we require of students, the more students we will lose.
- Math teachers are expensive.
- This is not more rigorous for districts already requiring more than 22 credits.
- There is a disconnect between high school foreign language requirements and what colleges require for admittance.

SUGGESTIONS

- Need to get back to the basics, teaching the subject matter rather than the integrated approach.
- English needs to include literature.
- English needs to include spoken English.
- Many health problems begin in a person’s early years. Health prevention and survival skills are also important and need to be addressed.
- Would like to see innovative ways to address life issues.
- Foreign language does not have to be a definite course requirement for all students, it should be offered as an elective.
- European students are expected to speak a minimum of two languages. If we want our students to be competitive, then we need to give them the rigorous requirements in language that other countries have.

QUESTIONS

- Some students take three math credits in their sophomore year (block scheduling) so they are prepared for the state testing. How will these students fit into the new requirements?
- Wouldn’t it be more rigorous just to require one math credit per year?
- Is the work in the integrated science curriculum going to stay or be tossed aside?
- These requirements look like college prep requirements. What are we going to do with special education students?
- What about dropouts?

- Why can't we increase the number of physical education requirements and allow students participating in varsity sports to earn credit for those sports.

Question 2

Currently, it is possible for high school seniors to take one or two classes in order to graduate. Research indicated these students are not prepared for the work place or higher education. The committee intends to require a more rigorous senior year for the freshman entering in 2007. Please give us your opinions.

STRENGTHS

- Students should be in school for their senior year.

CONCERNS

- Seniors completing their 22 high school credits should be permitted to attend college courses during their senior year.
- It is going to be tough to keep kids in school who meet their 22 credit requirements and want to work during their senior year.
- Students should have choices about how they spend their senior year once they have met their 22 credit requirements.
- When schools only require two credits in a senior year, the student wants to take the minimum and puts pressure on parents to be able to do this.
- Students completing 22 credits early are not a problem.

SUGGESTIONS

- For college bound students, Latin is a great course to have available in high school.
- Any course that would assist in a student's career path should be available as an option for those students as an elective.
- Look at college bound AP students who will be expected to attend larger class size. We could prepare them now but putting them into classes with 60-70 students and thereby free up teachers to work with students who are not AP and need additional help in smaller classes.
- Whether seniors are in school for a full day or not and how many credits they take should be under local control.
- A senior project is a good idea to keep kids focused in their senior year.
- Teach life skills courses to those students not going on to college (credit card use, balancing checkbook and personal finance).
- Add a life skills course for all students.
- Do a survey of students who only take 22 credits to see who they are.
- Link extra curricular activities, including sports to the senior year credit requirements.
- Local boards should make the decision about credits and how they want to deal with seniors.

QUESTIONS

- None specifically stated.

Question 3

The committee is considering an option for students who, along with their parents or guardians and school officials determine should meet some alternative requirements. What are your ideas about who might be included and how this option might work?

WHO MIGHT BE INCLUDED IN THIS OPTION?

- Special education students should not be held to the proposed requirements.
- The opt-out should not be for the general population who do not want to do the work.
- The opt-out should be limited to students with a physical disability.
- We should let the votech schools opt-out of the new requirements and allow them to train for a trade/occupation.

HOW THIS OPTION MIGHT WORK?

- We need to adjust to accommodate special education students and be realistic in our expectations.
- The opt-out program should be night school or GED, unless they are special education students.

STRENGTHS

- None specifically stated.

CONCERNS

- We need to find ways to engage low performing students and not put them in an opt-out program.
- These requirements look like college prep courses so we need an alternative for students who will not be able to meet the requirements.
- Students who want to receive trade classes during high school are not able to take those classes in Delaware.
- Vo-tech schools are not available to all students interested in attending.
- The State Board needs to define opt-out.
- All students need to meet a high level of rigor, regardless of whether they are going to college.
- Need a definition of opt-out.
- Vo-tech use to be for students who couldn't succeed in regular high schools. Now, votechs pick the cream of the crop to attend their schools.
- We do not want our students to feel like failures if they are not going on to college.
- High schools do not have enough money to fund trades and other career pathway options.
- Every student needs to be competent in the basics such as reading and writing.
- Some votechs select special education students, not only the high achievers.
- Vo-techs traditionally got students with discipline problems, so they moved to a comprehensive program so they could be more selective in the students they accept.

SUGGESTIONS

- We need to have trade school classes available to students.
- Rigorous courses should be for those going on to college.
- Students who want to go to trade school and participate in an apprentice program should have that option available to them.
- The opt-out should be an alternative program.
- Opt-out should not include trade schools.
- Rigor and the number of credits are two different things. We need increased rigor in all courses for all students.
- I'd like the courses to be called "relevant" more than "rigorous".
- Need to get back to the real mission of votech schools.
- We need someone to look at Europe's education system because we are constantly compared to them. Let's take a look at it and see if we can use it.
- Look at a career pathway for those students who do not want college prep curriculum and put rigor in all of those areas.

QUESTIONS

- None specifically stated.

**Updating Delaware High School Graduation Requirements
Formatted Data
Parent Advisory Council – March 11, 2006**

Question 1

Please give us your opinion regarding the proposed increase in rigor and credit requirements for Delaware high school students beginning with the freshman entering in 2007.

STRENGTHS

- Support increased rigor which yields better paying jobs and bring in more employers.
- Increased rigor in all years not just senior year.
- Need challenges in high school years to meet life challenges.
- Make credit requirements rigorous.
- How math teachers teach can make a difference.

CONCERNS

- Guidance counselors to make sure computer classes are scheduled.
- Need resources in lower grades to prepare them for increased rigor throughout their schooling.
- Professional training for administrators / teachers / guidance counselors to increase rigor (and parents).
- There are too many tests.
- Math in high school does not prepare students for college.
- Well-defined and appropriate testing materials based on experiences are needed to show what has been learned.
- Parents need to be aware and involved with the curriculum.
- Parents need training to understand curriculum changes.
- More frequent progress reports should be given to parents and not wait for report card or mid-terms.

SUGGESTIONS

- Students should be identified by their learning style and needs.
- Credit recovery programs such as the Twilight Program should be used.
- Address technology needs to be competitive.
- Need more corporate mentors for students to help them understand why it's important to stay in school and go to college.
- Need computer classes to continue in high school for certification in Microsoft Office Products.
- Provide computer equipment / support for Twilight Program.
- Mentors need to show students how reading/writing and math are needed in a job.
- Students need to know their elected officials.
- Students need to know Delaware history.
- Need volunteer "credits" to encourage students to give back to the community.
- Computer classes should begin at the elementary level and progress through school.
- All students should work a part time job for a few weeks to get a feel for the work world.
- More defined measurable objectives and goals for educating staff.
- Give test to know the level of knowledge (their foundation).
- Teach the basics.
- For those schools who do not have good tests scores, look at schools who teach well and see what they do differently.
- Expectation and accountability should be defined for staff and students and put in writing especially in situations where students are failing.

- Provide parental training (not a handbook) in 8th grade so parents can understand proposed classes for high school.

QUESTIONS

- None specifically stated.

Question 2

Currently, it is possible for high school seniors to take one or two classes in order to graduate. Research indicated these students are not prepared for the work place or higher education. The committee intends to require a more rigorous senior year for the freshman entering in 2007. Please give us your opinions.

STRENGTHS

- Seniors should stay in school.

CONCERNS

- Some students need to make money for “senior expenses” (year book, class trip, etc.) to help their parents.
- Seniors don’t know about scholarships, they need to learn how to write letters, etc. and use resources such as Outward Bound, FAME and TRIO to point them in the right direction, especially for students not going to college.
- Need business math and other basics for living.
- Class trips have gotten out of hand.
- Students who work in senior year need to do it for the right reason (not based on the need for money and school expenses).
- Let students take college credit in senior year or work or learn a trade.
- Senior stay in school and get credits needed for college.

SUGGESTIONS

- Parents need help to change their perception of college so they can encourage students to go to college.
- Parents, students, staff, administrators, guidance counselors, etc. need to increase their awareness of SEED programs and financial forms.
- Educate parents on financial issues such as savings bond, etc. to be used in college or business.
- More cooperation and entrepreneurial courses.

QUESTIONS

- None specifically stated.

Question 3

The committee is considering an option for students who, along with their parents or guardians and school officials determine should meet some alternative requirements. What are your ideas about who might be included and how this option might work?

WHO MIGHT BE INCLUDED IN THIS OPTION?

- Kids who are failing core courses after freshman year.
- Children who have been in services such as Title I (not only special education) or who are caught in the middle, like the high count of students who don’t pass the DSTP but don’t qualify for extra services. Need alternatives that can assist them to get a diploma for their skills.

HOW THIS OPTION MIGHT WORK?

- Increase the level of alternative programs.
- Extend Title I services beyond 8th grade.
- Special education (IEP) students should have increased services to help meet standards.
- Have extra help available to all students who want to increase score on SATs.

- Group students by learning styles in alternative programs.

STRENGTHS

- None specifically stated.

CONCERNS

- How will Hispanic or students with other languages meet the increased rigor?

SUGGESTIONS

- Change alternative programs to meet the 33% of population who can't read.
- Every 9th grader should take the PSAT.
- Change requirements of alternative programs and current alternative programs.
- Parents need written information on all alternative programs.

QUESTIONS

- None specifically stated.

**Updating Delaware High School Graduation Requirements
Formatted Data
Governor's Advisory Council for Exceptional Children and
Governor's Council for Persons with Disabilities – March 16, 2006**

Question 1

Please give us your opinion regarding the proposed increase in rigor and credit requirements for Delaware high school students beginning with the freshman entering in 2007.

STRENGTHS

- Support the increase of rigor, with support for those who need it.

CONCERNS

- There are not enough qualified math teachers in the state.
- Our school districts do not offer enough school choice options.
- The curriculum for elementary and middle school students needs to be investigated to see how it prepares students for high school and where and why we are losing students.
- Concerned about the feeding pattern of students getting to high school who are not prepared to meet the new requirements. We need to strengthen the elementary and middle school curriculums at the same time we are working on the high school.
- Need to provide more support for all students in need of it, not just the special education students. There are students who need the extra support now, at all levels of education, and will need it more with the new requirements.
- Also believe that it might cause more students to drop out.
- Concerned that the drop out rate will increase if we increase graduation requirements.
- Concerned students with disabilities might drop out at a higher rate than they currently do if we increase high school graduation requirements.
- Suggest that the embedded credits in vocational programs count as science credit.
- These new requirements are not dealing with the real problems we have with students and education.

SUGGESTIONS

- We should increase the salaries of math and science/physics teacher's and speech therapist's, rather than administrative salaries.
- Our nineteen school districts should be consolidated in order to be more cost effective and productive.
- Districts should offer magnet schools or customized schools that specialize in various programs, such as, science, math, business, agriculture, etc. and teach general subjects as well.
- Would like to see more high schools offering machine shops.
- Would like to be assured that "all" truly means all students, including those with disabilities. They should get the supports they need in order to meet the new requirements and a variety of assessment practices should be utilized in order allow them to demonstrate their abilities.
- We need to make extra time available to students lagging behind in order to help them catch up, especially those in middle school and those who will be impacted by the new requirements.
- The state should dictate one curriculum that all districts must follow rather than allowing districts to create their own.
- Department of Education needs to verify what districts/schools are actually doing rather than just rely on what they say they are doing.
- Social workers, with masters' degrees, should be in the schools for students with problems that are not being addressed elsewhere and are struggling in school.
- Teachers need to be trained in how to train/manage the students in their classroom.

QUESTIONS

- If kids are not succeeding now, how will increasing rigor make them more successful?
- Would like to know how many, if any, of the students responding to the survey stating “they would have taken more rigorous classes” were special needs students?

Question 2

Currently, it is possible for high school seniors to take one or two classes in order to graduate. Research indicated these students are not prepared for the work place or higher education. The committee intends to require a more rigorous senior year for the freshman entering in 2007. Please give us your opinions.

STRENGTHS

- None specifically stated.

CONCERNS

- I do not believe that keeping kids in school during their senior year will better prepare them for college. Whatever is not working now won't be addressed by only increasing rigor.
- Keeping students in school all day for their senior will not help students. It is about what they have learned and how well they prepared they are prior to the senior year that matters most. The problem is more complex than just adding a few more classes to the senior year.

SUGGESTIONS

- Students should have the option of whether they want a rigorous senior year with AP classes or not. Students should have the option of working rather than staying in school for the whole day.
- Seniors should be able to choose how they spend their senior year, work/job vs. school and more classes. Students should not be pushed into staying in school just to keep them there. We should include a work education program for high school students so they understand the importance of education.
- Students should have the option of spending part of their day working, taking college level classes if that is what they want, or leave if they want to leave. They should have all three options.
- Let students graduate in three years so they can go from full time high student directly to college and meet college admission requirements.
- Students who exceed the requirements should have some options for senior year, but others need a basic program without options.

QUESTIONS

- None specifically stated.

Question 3

The committee is considering an option for students who, along with their parents or guardians and school officials determine should meet some alternative requirements. What are your ideas about who might be included and how this option might work?

WHO MIGHT BE INCLUDED IN THIS OPTION?

- Special education students who can not meet the new requirements should be offered another option.
- Students who do not meet the standards should be allowed to be on a different track.

HOW THIS OPTION MIGHT WORK?

- Parents and guardians should be included in the decision.

STRENGTHS

- None specifically stated.

CONCERNS

- Do not use the term “opt out”.
- We are too focused only on a college track for students and need to be more supportive of those seeking a trade or vocational education. Students need more options for those courses in high school.
- White collar jobs have an increasing potential to be exported.

SUGGESTIONS

- Need to increase program options for students not going on to college, such as more vocational programs.
- Need to have respect and value for students choosing a trade rather than college.
- Need more support at the high school level to help students find colleges and complete the application process.
- A life skills course that teaches real skills, such as balancing a checkbook or creating a household budget, should be offered to students in high school.
- Offer an academic program geared toward college bound students and one for those who do not plan to attend college.
- Increase career pathway programs in order to increase options to meet the needs for all students.
- Students should be given more options for which math course they take based on their interests and abilities. A separate track that permits this might be more successful.
- Students should have optional, more hands on courses that are applicable to their interests.
- Insure that graduation requirements reflect the variety of knowledge and skills that students are learning in school and will need after high school – use indicators of the knowledge and skills necessary for learning and successful work and living after high school.

QUESTIONS

- None specifically stated.

**Updating Delaware High School Graduation Requirements
Formatted Data
Urban League of Wilmington – March 21, 2006**

Question 1

Please give us your opinion regarding the proposed increase in rigor and credit requirements for Delaware high school students beginning with the freshman entering in 2007.

STRENGTHS

- We need to maximize the number of students participating in a more rigorous curriculum at the same time we are assisting those in need of support; such as, performance level I and II students.
- Being specific about the substance of the credits is important and we should do this.

CONCERNS

- This is not the systemic change we need.
- Requiring more high school credits is meaningless without good curriculum in place, better trained teachers, deeper personalization and guidance, very powerful career pathways that are aligned to Delaware Futures Program, better guidance counseling services to assist students with a map for their four years of high school and a well developed advisory curriculum that takes students beyond high school.

SUGGESTIONS

- Science should be four credits.
- Social Science should be four credits.
- Require our students to take four credits in foreign language. Offer Spanish, Asian, Mandarin, French and Latin as foreign language courses. Our goal should be to have our children become bi-lingual.
- Would like to see Introduction to Organic Chemistry offered in high schools because it is required for several science degrees in colleges.
- Service learning and students giving back to the community is important and students should be given an opportunity to do this for credit.
- Life skills are important and should be integrated into the curriculum as long as it is not trivialized. Perhaps integrating it into civics and economics is a possibility.
- Students need to learn to be citizens of the community and participate in elections, home ownership and other areas.
- Need to provide opportunities for students to explore areas of interests and career options through electives or career pathways in addition to the academic requirements.
- Offer more electives that are an expansion of core courses in order for students to take additional credits that tie into English, Math, Science, etc., rather than electives that deal only with careers. We should not tie students into career electives.
- We should have an arts requirement for students to graduate.
- Have a life skills requirement and offer a set of electives for life skills that students may choose from.
- We should increase the number of credits beyond the 22 being proposed. Would like the state to increase the number of credits in health, art, and foreign language. The state and districts need to be aligned re: the number of credits required to graduate from high school.
- We need to teach reading to high school students, and offer it for credit, to those not reading on grade level. Do not penalize students for skills they are lacking.
- The state needs to address the curriculum rigor of elementary and middle schools so that students can meet the rigor of high school.

- We need to address the achievement gap we have in the state. There is a significant number of students who currently do not meet the standards. Increasing the rigor and credit requirements should coincide with helping those students meet the requirements and graduate.
- We need to ensure that all kids succeed. The schools/districts need to have support for those students in place.
- Actively make students and parents aware of the availability of courses outside of the normal school setting, such as, online, community colleges, summer course offerings, etc.

QUESTIONS

- None specifically stated.

Question 2

Currently, it is possible for high school seniors to take one or two classes in order to graduate. Research indicated these students are not prepared for the work place or higher education. The committee intends to require a more rigorous senior year for the freshman entering in 2007. Please give us your opinions.

STRENGTHS

- None specifically stated.

CONCERNS

- This is a reflection of inadequate academic counseling. With better advisory curriculum in place, students would not be leaving during their senior year because they would have a program in place that they are committed to and are constructively engaged.

SUGGESTIONS

- An example of advisory curriculum is a minimum of bi-weekly meetings with a faculty advisor in small groups over a period of two or more years. The faculty advisor needs to be trained in the advisory curriculum.
- The courses in the senior year career pathway should be a dual credit that is aligned with higher education or technical degree/certification programs.
- The senior year should require more rigor and credit.

QUESTIONS

- None specifically stated.

Question 3

The committee is considering an option for students who, along with their parents or guardians and school officials determine should meet some alternative requirements. What are your ideas about who might be included and how this option might work?

WHO MIGHT BE INCLUDED IN THIS OPTION?

- None specifically stated.

HOW THIS OPTION MIGHT WORK?

- Nothing specifically stated.

STRENGTHS

- None specifically stated.

CONCERNS

- The group is opposed to an optional program for students because there is no benefit for students. An optional program is letting the districts off the hook and releasing them from accountability. It undermines the mandate to raise rigor and standards for all students. Parents are not able to make an informed decision about their student because the only information they have is what the school gives them.

SUGGESTIONS

- Do not use the term “opt-out”.
- Explore alternatives for students (not opt out) to get to the minimum number of credits to graduate.

QUESTIONS

- None specifically stated.

Updating Delaware High School Graduation Requirements
Formatted Data
Curriculum Cadre – March 22, 2006

Question 1

Please give us your opinion regarding the proposed increase in rigor and credit requirements for Delaware high school students beginning with the freshman entering in 2007.

STRENGTHS

- Love the increased rigor.
- Bravo to increasing math to 4 credits.
- I applaud your efforts to increase rigor.

CONCERNS

- The Delaware science standards are written for four years and the new requirements do not include earth science and astronomy (standard four and five).
- This sends a mixed message to high school teachers that we want them to offer integrated courses but the requirements suggest discreet courses.
- The science requirements reflect what the Committee of 10 made in 1895 and they are even in the same order (alphabetical). There has been a lot of thought into developing and piloting a science program that is meaningful to all kids. This does not appear to be advancing curriculum for all kids. Progress is slow, but we are making progress in our science curriculum.
- The emphasis on credit focuses more on seat time rather than competency.
- The new requirements reflect a disconnect of what our students will be prepared to do at a post secondary level.
- What about world languages? Students are required to take 3 years for University of Delaware!
- Science standards are written for 4 years. The proposed 3 credits does not take this into consideration. The Delaware Science Coalition's curriculum is of higher rigor than traditional biology, chemistry, and physics. Suggesting these three courses will decrease the rigor at high school and go back to a traditional program that has been documented as a failure. The National Science Education standards, BSCS, AAAS and other science agencies have completed research in high school requirements. This seems to have not been taken into consideration. Foundational physics (Physics First Movement) and chemistry concepts need to be learned prior to biology as biology is now learned on a chemical level, requiring knowledge of chemistry and energy. Delaware science at high school has not been given the chance to succeed as the program has grown from K-8 to K-12. The model is cited nationally as one other states should follow.

SUGGESTIONS

- If this research, which indicates that adding credits has not statistically significantly increased student achievement is valid, then the state needs to look for other ways to increase the challenges we ask of students.
- There needs to be a financial analysis done of the requirements.
- The requirements seem to support integrated science curriculums (as long as the term “or the equivalent” remains) that we currently have but the term “lab” should be “laboratory exercises that are integrated into the content”.
- Listing the courses in alphabetical order suggests that is the ordered in which they should be taught. Given what we know today, we need to have Chemistry before Biology. Biology is no longer organismic but it is on a chemical level.
- We do not want students to have to take Physics in ninth grade because they may not be at the math readiness level.
- There is a lot of research out there re: Physics First Movement that gives the benefits of having a conceptual physical science course first in ninth grade. The committee should look at this research.
- The word “integrated” needs to be added explicitly to the science curriculum proposal.

- Give credence to the standards, the GLE's and instructional practices.
- Should do some studies in Delaware to see how our students are doing with standards based education.
- The new requirements should explicitly state and emphasize reading at a secondary level rather than the word "literature: because the standards talk about reading instruction.
- Our universities have long accepted integrated or coordinated science courses.
- We are looking at seat time versus achievement. My idea is to award "credits" by course and grade earned and achievement on state test. This would increase rigor. Making students sit through more courses doesn't necessarily increase rigor. Sitting in a high school course earning a "C" or lower does not prepare our students. They are just getting by. Being expected to perform to earn a grade to receive more credits to graduate may prove to be more motivating to students. Students not earning the higher grades could take more courses to get their credits. This builds more time into the system for students who need more time to achieve. (thus meeting the needs of all students).
- All students should be challenged in their coursework. Alignment with state standards seems to be realignment in science and social studies. Align science and social studies requirements with state standards. Our physics, chemistry, etc. courses are integrated not discrete.
- Include a world language requirement.
- The ELA requirements should be emphasizing reading rather than literature.
- ELA should say Reading not Literature.
- World Languages required for most colleges—it needs to be a graduation requirement (2 or more years). Also we need to keep our students educated in a "global" society.
- ELA should say "reading" not "literature".
- Recommended curriculum should not state courses but should meet standards.
- Science should be four credits; this is decreasing the rigor. Delaware standards are written for four years. Where is Earth Science, Astronomy, etc.? All courses with a lab should be integrated.

QUESTIONS

- Will the unit count system be changed in order to meet the expectations of additional math requirements and others?
- Has the committee considered foreign language and the fine arts in the high school requirements?
- Has the committee looked at the research as it relates to the drop out rate and the increased number of credits in respect to that? We need to be concerned about all students.
- Is there a plan with this that we have qualified math teachers to hire even if we have the cash to hire them?
- Shouldn't we be preparing our students to be able to get into any state institution?
- Is the 1.5 physical education and health credit enough to meet the wellness criteria?
- Should ELA be oral communication which is presentation and communication?
- The Math requirement language says a student should take 1 credit in senior year in Math or test out. Can this be a requirement not an option?
- "Social Science" what about "Social Studies"?
- What does "presentation" mean in ELA?
- Math teachers, labs, opt-out; how will these changes be funded? What is the financial impact?

Question 2

Currently, it is possible for high school seniors to take one or two classes in order to graduate. Research indicated these students are not prepared for the work place or higher education. The committee intends to require a more rigorous senior year for the freshman entering in 2007. Please give us your opinions.

STRENGTHS

- None specifically stated.

CONCERNS

- An increase in the math credit, alone, won't keep the student in school their senior year. It will take something in addition to address that senior year.
- The committee has been concentrating on increasing quantity of courses and not the rigor or quality.
- You can not legislate rigor.
- An unintended consequence of this is that in order to take math in the senior year in a block schedule school a student may not have math instruction for two years in order to save a credit to take in the senior year.
- Think that students should have a meaningful senior year. The senior year should count for something. Not sure increasing graduation requirements will result in increased student achievement. I believe the number of students opting out will be significant.
- My concern is that this appears to also be going back to a "seat time" mentality. Not sure that will result in rigor. Where is the expectation for mastery/competency? Simply sitting in 4 English classes earning a "D" (passing grade) does not mean a student is more ready for the workplace or college. Look at other means for increasing rigor.

SUGGESTIONS

- We need more resources to have stronger program for seniors. We need more guidance personnel to assist our students. Guidance personnel are already stretched to far.
- The senior year issue should be dealt with as a separate issue. Perhaps a committee should study it as a separate issue.
- Re: math, it is the only place that skills are mentioned. Skills and essential understanding speak to rigor.
- The committee can look at the high schools that have the same standards being proposed to find the success and failure they have had with these requirements.
- Why is the wording different in some places it says "curricula should" or "curricula must". In the regulations it will have to say "shall". Curricula must include reading, writing, oral communication, listening and viewing. Reasoning and logic are not in the DE ELA standards / GLES. "Literature" only refers to standard. Four-term should be "reading". "Presentation and communication skills" should be oral communication, listening and viewing to match standards / GLES. The requirements should be written as "must include" not "should emphasize".
- The rigor needs to continue to prepare our students for life after high school. Also, colleges told us they look for the rigor continued in the students' senior year. It is time to step up not down. ELA should also be required in the students' senior year.
- Is there a discussion about a senior project? Can you legislate rigor? Appoint a sub-committee.

QUESTIONS

- What steps are being taken to insure that what is taught in the classroom is really rigorous and is not just a name change on a schedule to meet the requirements?
- Since the plan does not meet all of the science standards did the committee look at the senior year in regard to the rest of standards that have not been met by this plan?

Question 3

The committee is considering an option for students who, along with their parents or guardians and school officials determine should meet some alternative requirements. What are your ideas about who might be included and how this option might work?

WHO MIGHT BE INCLUDED IN THIS OPTION?

- Include students who have completed grade 9—failed 3 courses.

HOW THIS OPTION MIGHT WORK?

- Parents definitely should have input as well as guidance counselors and teachers.
- Include teachers and guidance counselors along with peers and administration in the decision.

STRENGTHS

- Differentiating to meet the needs of students who need the option is great.

CONCERNS

- How we approach this will determine whether or not this becomes a loophole for students to get around the proposed rigor.
- It can seriously retard high school reform by not allowing us to hold high expectations and standards for all kids.
- Many students want to take easier courses in their senior year to keep their GPA high.
- High school graduation requirements should answer what is a good expectation for all kids. We should not offer an opt-out program. We have a plan with standards that has been underway for 15 years and has not yet come to fruition in high schools and we need to give it time to do so.
- The fact that this has come from the Achieve report has colored the proposed requirements.
- The initiative is about motivation but the very students for whom this is directed have exhibited they are not responsive to external control. The focus of the state board should be directed at how to insure that educators implement that which research indicates increases students intrinsic motivation to learn.
- This will impact seniors who want to take early admission to college and would not have had to put in a senior year otherwise.
- Financially and personnel wise the four credits in four years won't be achieved in some districts because of the lack of teachers and money.
- For any program that we want our students to achieve, we need to have the resources – time, money and teachers – to achieve it.
- Indiana's program looks promising? Scary!

SUGGESTIONS

- Do not offer an optional program, require students to meet the requirements if they want a diploma.
- Please give some consideration for delaying this decision and looking for some way to bridge between high school rigor and the curriculum work that is already underway.
- Any consideration for science and social studies to have four credits in four years?
- Research suggests students should have each core course each year in high school – they experience the content in each year.
- The recommended graduation requirements should state that students have to meet the standards not a specific course.
- There still needs to be rigor, consistency and a detailed plan for all stakeholders, and enforced properly, without lowering standards.
- Look at Florida's program!

QUESTIONS

- Is this canceling out rigor?

**Updating Delaware High School Graduation Requirements
Formatted Data
Delaware State Education Association – March 22, 2006**

Question 1

Please give us your opinion regarding the proposed increase in rigor and credit requirements for Delaware high school students beginning with the freshman entering in 2007.

STRENGTHS

- Students in academic programs already take at least four credits in math.
- There should be four years of math, however, there should be an option that counts toward credit, such as a consumer math course.
- Four years of math is good. There has to be common sense application of the four year math requirement to take into consideration various populations of students (for example special education, slow learners, ELL), for example, college bound, work place/trades-bound, military bound.

CONCERNS

- The University of Delaware does not allow students to use a calculator when they take the math placement test, yet in high school they are allowed to use the calculator. The students should be evaluated on math courses taught in the twenty-first century rather than the 1950's. Del-Tech also does not allow calculators.
- Students participating in block scheduling will take the equivalent of three years of math in 1.5 years, therefore, they would not have math in their junior or senior year.
- We should not require another credit in math if it has to be higher than Algebra II.
- Increasing the math credit will increase the drop out rate. ESL and special education students will not be able to complete another math credit.
- There needs to be an emphasis of alternative settings and how they meet any state standards.
- We are only looking at students going to college and that is not the majority of our students.
- The increase in rigor does not have to come from the number of credits or through higher level math. The rigor comes from the quality of what students are getting in the classroom and counting that rather than just adding another credit.
- Biggest concern is that all of the data we have been presented with is anecdotal rather than quantitative.
- This will impact not only the drop out rate but the four year graduation cell in NCLB.
- We can increase rigor without changing the content areas by giving math credit for work students are doing in other courses. For example, drafting classes require math skills and they could receive credit for this class. Would like to see the fourth math credit coming from classes or training in experiential settings.
- The infrastructure has to be able to support any extra math. The drop out rate will increase if a fourth year of math is added.
- The committee is not addressing the real problem which is a lack of trade education options for our students.
- Most of the requirements came from the committee listening to the University of Delaware. UD has the right to require four year of math credits and students with only three math credits are not admitted there. Agree that students going to a four-year college should have four math credits.
- There is a need for consistency from K-12 regarding any program. Need to address the concerns and programs needed for the ESL students and their parents right now rather than focusing our attention on this initiative. This is another demand on educators and nothing is ever good enough. The committee should be responding to what educators are saying rather than the business leaders.
- Students' success in science is largely associated with their success in math.

- The teachers teaching physics will need to be certified in the particular science they teach and sometime they vary from year to year depending on the scheduling.
- We do not have the facilities to have all sciences taught with a lab and we do not have the time. Labs require lab preparation and without a lab assistant or additional time in a teacher's schedule the lab will not happen. We need more teachers, more supplies and equipment and more labs and it all requires more money. The majority of teachers design, prepare and clean up the labs on their own time. This ideal scenario the committee is proposing is making it impossible to be a dedicated professional with a private life.
- Concerned about the rigor requirements because students can leave middle school without passing all of their subjects. Students are already coming into high school unprepared to meet the rigorous math and science of high school.
- Our school's schedule has so much extra time built into it more than graduation requirements. Students are choosing alternative sources rather than pass the rigorous courses.
- The math sequence is not realistic for many of our students and need a different sequence than is being proposed.
- Do not support four credits in math due to the lack of staffing and taking away from the focus of DSTP test scores.
- These proposals will cause labor strife and problematic contract negotiations regarding the work load provisions of collective bargaining agreements.
- We need to prepare students for college or teach them a trade or skill, not all of our students are going to college.
- If we try to move the technology credit to the middle schools we'll need to add teachers there, we'll need to track the credit and make sure that all students get the technology course.
- Middle schools will need more staff, money and computers.
- The committee should look at America's Lab report published by National Academy of Sciences.
- It will be a travesty if any of these additional requirements are put in at the expense of the arts.
- If students are required to take more than Algebra II level courses and only scored a 1 on the 8th grade DSTP, thus being placed in a remedial math class for zero credit in ninth grade it would be impossible for them to achieve four math credits in a traditional setting thus sending them to Groves or less rigorous facilities to find that credit.

SUGGESTIONS

- Middle school students who take high school Algebra I/Geometry should be receiving a high school credit.

QUESTIONS

- How will we deal with the students who fail math classes?
- Until the committee collects data of how many students currently need four years or more to complete three math credits, can this proposal be halted?
- How many student teachers will be coming out of UD this year to teach math?
- If we are to increase and require a fourth credit in math, where will the funding come from for additional staffing so as not to sacrifice the decrease in class sizes which would impact the improvements we have already seen in DSTP math scores?
- If we are going to require more students to be in class at the same time, how has this proposal been looked at in comparison to building renovations, funding and timelines?
- With the implementation of full day kindergarten on the horizon, is there money available for a fourth math credit?
- How does this fall in line with the PE Task Force that has been proposed to the General Assembly that would require 150 minutes every week for K-12 students of physical education, where do students have time for all of this?
- Has the data been collected on how this will impact the enrollment of foreign language classes, arts, music, advanced sciences which help create the well-rounded students that we try to send to our communities?

- Why aren't we talking about increasing science credits in a world we call science and technology?

Question 2

Currently, it is possible for high school seniors to take one or two classes in order to graduate. Research indicated these students are not prepared for the work place or higher education. The committee intends to require a more rigorous senior year for the freshman entering in 2007. Please give us your opinions.

STRENGTHS

- College prep students should be taking a full load during their senior year. Schools must have the courses available for the students to take their senior year.

CONCERNS

- Students working co-op should be allowed to go out to work and earn credits for the work.
- If the students spread out the courses they may not have everything they need to be successful on the SATs.
- Students should not be allowed to go to college to take a course that is offered in their home high school. Students will do this because those courses are easier. If the high school offers the AP test than students should take it at the high school, if it is not, then they should be allowed to take it at the college.
- A blanket requirement for a rigorous senior year is a mistake. There are students who need to work to earn money for tuition and students who are disruptive should be allowed to leave.
- If the students have met the requirements we should not try to keep them in school.

SUGGESTIONS

- Look at the scheduling in individual schools to determine how much dead time there is rather than mandating the courses taken specifically in their senior year.
- The school gets the unit for the senior if the senior takes two classes and leaves that frees up staff for other things. We need to have our schools properly funded the way vocational schools are funded so that we don't have to keep going back to referendum when we need money.

QUESTIONS

- None specifically stated.

Question 3

The committee is considering an option for students who, along with their parents or guardians and school officials determine should meet some alternative requirements. What are your ideas about who might be included and how this option might work?

WHO MIGHT BE INCLUDED IN THIS OPTION?

- None specifically stated.

HOW THIS OPTION MIGHT WORK?

- None specifically stated.

STRENGTHS

- Since we are not meeting the needs of all student populations we need an opt-out program.

CONCERNS

- Anytime you hold people accountable and offer an opt-out you are giving students an opportunity to not meet minimum standards. Disagree with an opt-out option. It is too similar to the tiered diploma.
- An opt-out program makes the rigorous proposal a façade because we are not increasing anything.
- If there is an opt-out option we can not leave it up to parents to make the decision. There should be a committee to make that decision with consistent guidelines throughout the state.

- There needs to be a serious look at how our standards have been interpreted in our graduation requirement document. Apparently there is a disconnect between our requirements and how it is perceived by Achieve.

SUGGESTIONS

- Have to consider a student's IEP and recognize their completion of high school.

QUESTIONS

- If an opt-out option exists, when will sanctions be leveled against a school/district for having an excessive number of students choosing the opt-out?

**Updating Delaware High School Graduation Requirements
Formatted Data
Delaware Advisory Council for Career/Vocational Education
March 30, 2006**

Question 1

Please give us your opinion regarding the proposed increase in rigor and credit requirements for Delaware high school students beginning with the freshman entering in 2007.

STRENGTHS

- Support the new requirements.
- There should be rigorous academic requirements for all students. Students who can not meet the requirements can attend a private school. Public schools should be for the elite and serious student, like it used to be.
- The new requirement is on target because it addresses what has been lacking in high school students especially those who participate in co-ops and highly technical businesses. These students need to be proficient in verbal and written communication and math.
- Initial reaction is yes, we need more rigor. However, we need to address what we need to do to support this. There are so many variables that impact a student's success that need to be addressed as well in order for students to be successful.
- I like the new requirements but it is my hope that we make students entering high school in 2007 aware of these requirements and that we let them know where they are in relation to the new requirements.

CONCERNS

- Making the curriculum more rigorous does not mean that students will be more successful. We need to address the school environment, individual learning styles of students, teaching methods, facilities, resources, supplies, etc.
- If high school administrations are to be successful in meeting these new requirements they need to receive additional help such as people to fill positions, and financial support.
- Too many districts look at the requirements as optional rather than mandated.
- We are preparing students for college not a vocational career or a skilled trade. We don't give students alternatives to participate in these programs and we should. Algebra is required to pass skills trades test.

SUGGESTIONS

- There is a broader issue of what the current environment in schools is and how to accomplish more rigor without addressing the following issues: need for younger teachers who can motivate students better, the large number of teachers going into retirement and losing too many students to other options, such as, private and charter schools.
- Students need to see meaning in what is offered in school. They have to understand why they need certain courses and how it relates to their individual career goals.
- Students need to have mentors. They need to taste success.
- Do not give students a choice.
- Offer fewer electives.

QUESTIONS

- None specifically stated.

Question 2

Currently, it is possible for high school seniors to take one or two classes in order to graduate. Research indicated these students are not prepared for the work place or higher education. The committee intends to require a more rigorous senior year for the freshman entering in 2007. Please give us your opinions.

STRENGTHS

- Colleges will require a rigorous senior year and counselors and parents need to make students aware of the importance of their senior year. They need to be more focused and prepared to immediately enter college or the work place.
- Support the intent of this question.

CONCERNS

- Students need direction and currently have too many choices to make regarding their curriculum.

SUGGESTIONS

- Guidance counselors should be more focused and involved with seniors to help them prepare for what they will do once they graduate.
- We need additional guidance counselors and services to support students.
- Resources are needed to fund “career counselors” and related services in every high school in order to accomplish this goal.
- Businesses should adopt a school to mentor students and give them things they might not have otherwise. Their employees become a part of the school by mentoring and giving their time. It doesn’t have to only be financial.
- We need to put something else in place to get students ready for college or industry, such as internships/apprenticeship or a mentoring program in high school.
- Students should be more focused and have fewer distractions.

QUESTIONS

- None specifically stated.

Question 3

The committee is considering an option for students who, along with their parents or guardians and school officials determine should meet some alternative requirements. What are your ideas about who might be included and how this option might work?

WHO MIGHT BE INCLUDED IN THIS OPTION?

- Special education students might need to be exempt from certain courses.

HOW THIS OPTION MIGHT WORK?

- None specifically stated.

STRENGTHS

- None specifically stated.

CONCERNS

- The students looking for the easy way out or not doing well will want the optional program, but they are students who need it the most. An opt-out program destroys everything being proposed.
- An opt-out program is going backwards and goes back to tracking and the three- tiered diploma. It should not be offered. We do not want to stigmatize students and allow them to choose an opt-out.
- No opt-out program.
- We should not offer an opt-out program.

SUGGESTIONS

- Can not support an opt-out for students who do not want to do the work. If it is academic or work related, it might be acceptable to opt-out. We have proven that all students can learn if we give them the time and resources they need.
- When students choose to drop out, they have other options such as Groves or other programs. Drop-outs don't look good for the state. However the drop-out students may enter another program and go on to get their diploma and be successful. It is a bad choice to drop-out but it is the student's choice. We just need to be there when they decide to come back and continue their education.
- Vocational and career program need to be of high quality because a large number of students need these programs.
- Career pathways are required as three courses in sequence and are not always implemented and enforced at the high school level. This needs to be addressed. Career pathways should be supported and documented by schools. Any additional graduation requirements should not negatively impact the ability of the school to schedule pathway classes or the student's ability to complete them.
- The council endorses ACTE's position as published in the report: "Reinventing the American High School for the 21st Century."

QUESTIONS

- None specifically stated.

OTHER

- Want to commend the work of the committee and wish them well and appreciate the opportunity to participate in this focus group.

**Updating Delaware High School Graduation Requirements
Formatted Data
Science Curriculum Group – March 30, 2006**

Question 1

Please give us your opinion regarding the proposed increase in rigor and credit requirements for Delaware high school students beginning with the freshman entering in 2007.

STRENGTHS

- None specifically stated.

CONCERNS

- Currently, inquiry activities are used in science courses and not taught separately as a lab. Students need the construct continually.
- Research done by physics teachers says that high school and college students do not learn through lecture/lab but through folding activities into learning.
- We've just had realignment of the science standards and creating grade level expectations during the past year and by June 2007 are required to have the state recommended curriculum. There is a disconnect between what we have done with the realignment and what is being proposed.
- Need to hear a commitment that this proposal is within the ongoing work of state standards and statewide recommended curriculum.
- For all students who are graduating this seems to be moving away from an integrated curriculum.
- The wording for the science requirements is old language and leaves open the opportunity to revert to instruction based on the separation of sciences by discipline.
- Earth Science is not included and should be.
- For a general student not going into the sciences it will take away from a well rounded science program. It will hurt the current reform effort.
- Standards need to be communicated better.
- Need the state board's support and endorsement of an integrated approach. Reform is taking time but it is working. The chart is so broad it glosses over the reform effort that is going on. The Achieve Report is cast in the old mind set and Delaware is beyond that now.
- Science lab will cost additional money. Labs will require additional space and teachers.

SUGGESTIONS

- Earth Science should be included in the science curriculum.
- Consideration should be given to backing up some of the high school science courses to the middle school level and getting more coordination beginning at Pre-Kindergarten level.
- Need to do a serious analysis of students participating in block scheduling. Getting a fourth math credit in the senior year will be challenging in block scheduling.
- Leave off the specific language that names science courses and go back to "3 credits in science".
- Hope someone does a financial analysis of this proposal. A fourth math credit is stretching our resources and maybe other items will require additional resources.

QUESTIONS

- None specifically stated.

Question 2

Currently, it is possible for high school seniors to take one or two classes in order to graduate. Research indicated these students are not prepared for the work place or higher education. The committee intends to require a more rigorous senior year for the freshman entering in 2007. Please give us your opinions.

STRENGTHS

- None specifically stated.

CONCERNS

- Increased course load does not mean increased rigor. That is a big fallacy.
- Need to have more discussion around rigor – what it is and what is expected.
- Fear classes will be split into 2 class for 4 credits, e.g., Algebra IA and Algebra IB. However, if this student can reach the requirement via this method, there shouldn't be a problem for this student.

SUGGESTIONS

- The business community is seriously dropping the ball in checking on whether students graduate high school. They should be checking with the high school to and requesting a copy of student's transcript.
- Do a study to see which companies hire full-time high school graduates and what their expectations are of the students. Would like to know what these students will do and the expectations of their skills.
- A complete study should be done about the scope of the senior year in the context of high school and high school reform. It is a complex problem that needs more than a simple solution, such as adding credits. The number of students who begin as freshman and don't make it to their senior year is a serious problem. It is compounded by the DSTP promotion requirements.

QUESTIONS

- Right now, middle school students can earn high school credits; will these credits continue to count?

Question 3

The committee is considering an option for students who, along with their parents or guardians and school officials determine should meet some alternative requirements. What are your ideas about who might be included and how this option might work?

WHO MIGHT BE INCLUDED IN THIS OPTION?

- None specifically stated.

HOW THIS OPTION MIGHT WORK?

- None specifically stated.

STRENGTHS

- None specifically stated.

CONCERNS

- Do not go back to tracking.
- This is a very complex question depending on circumstances. We need to meet student's needs.

SUGGESTIONS

- There are different needs between students who are graduating so there should be a different way of dealing with students. If all students are to be included in "reform", then opt-out should not let students or teachers off the hook.
- Need to find alternative ways to reach students who will not meet the requirements. Must add additional options for these students.
- Possibly add 5th year to high school.
- Why not 4 years of science i.e., engineering course, earth science, integrated science, etc. The science coalition has a proposal for a 9-12 science progression.

QUESTIONS

- How will increased rigor increase attendance?
- What will this do to drop-out rates for the students who cannot reach these requirements?
- How do you legally do this under NCLB?

**Updating Delaware High School Graduation Requirements
Formatted Data
Christina School District Title I Parent Advisory Committee – April 5, 2006**

Question 1

Please give us your opinion regarding the proposed increase in rigor and credit requirements for Delaware high school students beginning with the freshman entering in 2007.

STRENGTHS

- We are in favor of a more rigorous curriculum.

CONCERNS

- The current system has not kept up with the changing times, e.g., students do not get enough financial information in order to communicate with people globally.
- There is too much pressure placed on students and parents re: the state testing.

SUGGESTIONS

- Beginning in elementary school, our students need to learn about banking, investing, Wall Street, economics and finances in general.
- Schools need to share newspapers with students and help them to be aware of issues around the world.
- Schools need to teach more about establishing a business and entrepreneurialship because all students do not plan to attend college.
- Teachers need to be trained to teach students so that they will pass the DSTP. The teachers are a main reason students are not passing these tests. Teachers should be required to take the DSTP.
- Any new curriculum should be tied to the state tests administered to the students.
- Increase the GPA students must meet to participate in athletics and extracurricular activities.

QUESTIONS

- None specifically stated.

Question 2

Currently, it is possible for high school seniors to take one or two classes in order to graduate. Research indicated these students are not prepared for the work place or higher education. The committee intends to require a more rigorous senior year for the freshman entering in 2007. Please give us your opinions.

STRENGTHS

- Require that all core courses be spread out throughout the four years of high school.

CONCERNS

- None specifically stated.

SUGGESTIONS

- In eighth grade, all students should have a strategic plan that outlines each high school year courses, goals, expectations, etc. and evaluations should be completed so students and parents know when they have met the requirements.
- Students should not be allowed to drop out of school at the age of 16 because they are minors. We need to change the law.
- In situations where students are dropping out to financially support their families, the state needs to be providing help to these students and their families.
- We need to reward students for accomplishments other than grades, e.g., perfect attendance, community activism and volunteer work, “most improved” and mentoring their peers.

- Require all high school students to wear uniforms so they know how to dress, feel good about themselves and come to school prepared to work. Skirts should go to the knee and pants should come up the waist and be worn with a belt. The teachers should also have a dress code they are required to follow.
- Students need more health and gym requirements.
- Nutrition should be a primary focus of schools and provide students with healthy meals in the cafeteria. Remove soda machines from schools.
- Create a homework hotline so parents can find out what their students need to do each night.
- Students' absent from school should not be excused from homework assignments and should be required to make up all missed work.
- Students should be given two sets of books, one that stays home and one that stays in the school. Students will be less apt to lose the books and less wear and tear on the book.
- Every student should be able to bring textbooks home because they need them to do work and to study.
- Delaware should have an informational television channel that shows how to solve math problems (Baltimore has this in place).
- Need to do a better job in disseminating information to parents re: extra help, resources, money for improving students' academic performance.
- Create more academic contests for students.
- We should provide all students who graduate high school with a free college education.

QUESTIONS

- None specifically stated.

Question 3

The committee is considering an option for students who, along with their parents or guardians and school officials determine should meet some alternative requirements. What are your ideas about who might be included and how this option might work?

WHO MIGHT BE INCLUDED IN THIS OPTION?

- Offer alternative programs for students who might be likely to drop out.

HOW THIS OPTION MIGHT WORK?

- Students should be given an optional program because not all students will be able to graduate twelfth grade and/or be college material.

STRENGTHS

- None specifically stated.

CONCERNS

- All students should be able to meet these requirements and should not be given the option of an alternative program.
- If you give students an optional program you are giving them the easy way out.

SUGGESTIONS

- Parents should know what their students are capable of and be able to participate in the decision of choosing an optional program for their child.
- Choosing an optional program should be a decision made by the parents, guidance counselors and teachers together in the best interest of the student.

QUESTIONS

- None specifically stated.

Updating Delaware High School Graduation Requirements
Formatted Data
Delta Epsilon Chi Association – April 10, 2006

Question 1

Please give us your opinion regarding the proposed increase in rigor and credit requirements for Delaware high school students beginning with the freshman entering in 2007.

STRENGTHS

- Increased math and science requirements are important because college classes are much harder. Even advanced placement classes were not as hard in high school as they are in college.
- Agree with four years of math and science.
- Agree with raising the requirements because I currently meet the requirements without much effort.
- Agree with increase to fill the schedule.
- Agree with increase math.
- Need more English because it's important.

CONCERNS

- Increasing the science requirement will force students into a class they don't want to take just to meet the bar.
- Math should not be increased because it will take away from electives especially at schools like Polytech.
- Integrated math is not preparing students for college. This math is taught in small chunks and doesn't have enough substance.
- Four years of English is just be something you have to go through which doesn't have a purpose. There is little writing required.
- Senior year English is useless.
- Increase should be flexible with votech class scheduling.

SUGGESTIONS

- Technology classes should be required in high school.
- Keep three credits in science classes just make the content harder and more challenging because many classes are repetitive.
- Math should include calculus and statistics because it is required in college.
- Levels of calculus should be offered for those who can't do the harder math.
- Not everyone is on the same level between school districts. Core course requirements should be the same throughout the state.
- Three or four years of a language should equal an English requirement.
- Offer a language in sixth grade or earlier.
- Put more English classes in middle school.
- Computer classes should be taught in middle school and should include a variety of computer classes (Unix, etc). Middle school should require more than computer basics. Keyboarding classes are a waste of time because you can develop those skills while learning the other programs.
- Reduce gym credits to 1 credit, e.g., half year of physical education and half year of a health class. This would allow students to take another elective or a computer science course.
- Give a gym credit for sports.
- Driver's education should be a taken out and learned at an alternative time and through an alternative program or after school.
- Having driver's education during school is helpful for some students.
- Language should be required.

- Require a “communication” class such as “oral communication or business communication” and use it as an English credit choice.
- “Student aide” activities should be limited to one or two classes during high school, not every year.
- “Student aides” should not be taken away because they are important for some students who won’t be going to college.

QUESTIONS

- None specifically stated.

Question 2

Currently, it is possible for high school seniors to take one or two classes in order to graduate. Research indicated these students are not prepared for the work place or higher education. The committee intends to require a more rigorous senior year for the freshman entering in 2007. Please give us your opinions.

STRENGTHS

- None specifically stated.

CONCERNS

- Its okay to participate in a co-op program but it must be job related.
- Like easy day option.

SUGGESTIONS

- Leave the choice of more rigor or participating in a co-op up to the senior.
- Use time to take college courses.
- Require an essay be written about co-op experience.
- College bound students should have more requirements because they’ll have more work to do in college.
- Students should have more support from guidance counselors who have realistic suggestions for their future.
- Guidance counselors should offer help to students with college scholarship forms, etc. Study hall time could also be used for this activity and take the place of an elective.

QUESTIONS

- None specifically stated.

Question 3

The committee is considering an option for students who, along with their parents or guardians and school officials determine should meet some alternative requirements. What are your ideas about who might be included and how this option might work?

WHO MIGHT BE INCLUDED IN THIS OPTION?

- Alternative options should be available for learning disabled or handicapped students.
- An alternative should be for the students who are just trying to get through high school to graduate.
- Students who cannot do lower level math functions and especially the students who will never be able to take calculus.

HOW THIS OPTION MIGHT WORK?

- Consider extending high school to five years.
- Special education teachers are there to help students.

STRENGTHS

- An alternative should be offered if a committee approves the alternative or there is a special circumstance and only after all options have been looked at.

- Students should have an option to do an alternative program.
- Committee should approve option by looking at the circumstances.
- Should be a committee decision.

CONCERNS

- This is predestine to allowing students to do less.
- Not for lazy students.
- Special education students should not be set up to fail.
- Not all college bound students need calculus.
- All increases should be done keeping teachers in mind. Teachers should not be overwhelmed with all the requirements they must meet. They should be given options on what to teach.

SUGGESTIONS

- Math needs to be targeted to students who need help long before they reach high school or even middle school.
- Just because someone is bad in math, they still should have the opportunity to go to college.
- Learning disabled students should still take the same amount of credits.
- Lower level math should be offered to help students who are struggling.
- In high school there should be enough people to help lower functioning students get the help they need to get them through graduation.
- A five year option may be helpful, but may allow some students to take the easy out.
- Average students should take full math, but alternative math classes should be offered to other students so they can graduate with more than a “certificate of attendance.”
- An opt-out program could be used as a “recovery” option not for as a program to stay in all through high school.
- Students must take calculus OR statistics.
- School districts should be similar in their offering of AP classes. All districts should also offer the same core credits courses. If AP classes are not offered, students won’t have the option to take these courses.
- If a school doesn’t offer AP classes, have options to take these courses at an alternative site like DelTech or Delaware State College.

QUESTIONS

- Will students in an alternative program get the same diploma?
- Do these increase requirements include credit for community service hours?

Updating Delaware High School Graduation Requirements
Formatted Data
Delaware Association of School Administrators – April 12, 2006

Question 1

Please give us your opinion regarding the proposed increase in rigor and credit requirements for Delaware high school beginning with the freshman entering in 2007.

STRENGTHS

- Four credits in math is a good recommendation.

CONCERNS

- Adding credits without the rigor will not strengthen the curriculum.
- We have not increased the rigor by adding a fourth year of math.
- Students who earn high school Algebra I credit in 8th grade could earn three credits in math by junior year. Requiring a student to take one more credit in math in their senior year will be a restriction or penalty for some students.

SUGGESTIONS

- Create a policy that permits students to opt out of taking math in their senior year if they request to do that and their school record and educational goal supports this or allow them to replace the 4th math requirement with another core course that meets their individual goal.
- Some students can reach calculus, pre-calculus or statistics by the time they are seniors and should be permitted to take other courses of their choice. Students who have already met their math requirements prior to their senior year should not be penalized by the requirement of one more math.
- Make sure that the courses/credits do include the rigor that is needed.
- Need to change the mind set of students and parents to move them beyond the minimalist attitude re: students taking the least amount of courses in order to meet the minimum requirements just to graduate.
- By their junior year, students and parents should be required to sign a contract to commit them to following through with their senior year courses and schedule.
- Require 8th graders to sign a contract that outlines high school expectations and requirements of the student.
- Require a computer class upon entering high school that ensures all students have the skills and abilities they need in this area to successfully complete the technology requirements of their curriculum. Offer a half credit for this course.
- Require students to take a competency test before entering high school.
- Make a statewide requirement that all eighth graders are completing the same math course.
- We should award high school credit for high school courses taken during middle school.
- Move driver's education to the junior or senior year.
- Continue reviewing the physical education and health requirements so we can offer more meaningful courses in these areas.
- Need to review and possibly overhaul how the state calculates the graduation rate.

QUESTIONS

- If students don't complete the math requirements will they graduate high school?

Question 2

Currently, it is possible for high school seniors to take one or two classes in order to graduate. Research indicated these students are not prepared for the work place or higher education. The committee intends to require a more rigorous senior year for the freshman entering in 2007. Please give us your opinions.

STRENGTHS

- The goal of creating a meaningful senior year is the right direction for the state.

CONCERNS

- Requiring seniors to take one more credit in math in their senior year seems punitive. Students should be given options.
- We are going in the wrong direction when we look at course credits only.

SUGGESTIONS

- There should be a minimum number of credits required in the senior year.
- Seniors should be required to take a majority of credits in their senior year, e.g., for schools requiring 8 classes per day the senior would be required to take 5 classes.
- All students, including special education students, should be required to create an “exhibition project” in order to graduate. This is a project that includes in-depth research, an APA paper and an oral presentation. Their exhibition project should be based on the student’s area of interest and approved by a faculty group.
- Offer positive ways to help students succeed. Offer minors (two courses of the student’s choice above and beyond the state requirements) for students in their area of interest.
- Students may do their minor in English, Art, whatever they choose.
- Need to think of high school as a means to an end, not the end. We need to be creative in how we get our students ready for life after high school.
- Culture in schools need to improve to fosters a student’s creativity and desire to learn as to provide them with success and motivate them for future endeavors.

QUESTIONS

- None specifically stated.

Question 3

The committee is considering an option for students who, along with their parents or guardians and school officials determine should meet some alternative requirements. What are your ideas about who might be included and how this option might work?

WHO MIGHT BE INCLUDED IN THIS OPTION?

- Some special education students will have more difficulty with the proposed requirements (those with learning and physical disabilities or brain injuries) and we need to have optional programs for those students.

HOW THIS OPTION MIGHT WORK?

- The IEP process determines student’s curriculum and should continue to do so along with the state requirements.

STRENGTHS

- None specifically stated.

CONCERNS

- The alternative program should not be a short cut to avoid a rigorous curriculum.

SUGGESTIONS

- None specifically stated.

QUESTIONS

- None specifically stated.

APPENDIX F:
Summary Data

**Updating Delaware High School Graduation Requirements
Summary Data
Guidance Counselors – February 27, 2006**

Question 1

Please give us your opinion regarding the proposed increase in rigor and credit requirements for Delaware high school students beginning with the freshman entering in 2007.

STRENGTHS

Overall, this group was in agreement that the state should increase rigor and all major subjects should require four credits.

CONCERNS

Concerns expressed in this group focused on the math requirements. Counselors are concerned that not all students will be able to complete the required math courses. Some students currently take Algebra in eighth grade; under the proposed requirements, credit for the course will not count at the high school level. In addition, hiring the number of math teachers needed to meet the new requirements will be a challenge for the state. The counselors also expressed concern that students might figure out how to “work the system” in order to minimize the amount of work required to meet graduation requirements. An additional concern was that without a standardized math requirement, the math curriculum may get “dumb down” in order to meet the four-year requirement. And, finally, the current science curriculum is geared to meet state standards and the Delaware State Testing Program. They fear the proposed changes will alter this practice.

SUGGESTIONS

Suggestions offered included several subject areas: the math and science curriculums should be aligned because students will not have the math skills to meet an increased science requirement, World Geography should be a four year requirement and should include Social Studies, increase the number of years required for a foreign language (two years to three years), create an Algebra class that extends over two years (for two credits) for the students who are challenged in this subject and increase the Physical Education requirements. Suggestions were offered about the Career Pathways program with several ideas as to how to clarify, modify and expand on the current program. This group also stated that districts should have the flexibility to determine how to increase course requirements. They also stated that clarification as to Delaware Technical Community College’s entrance requirements are needed, especially in the area of math.

QUESTIONS

The guidance counselors had several questions that fell in the realm of “how” the increased requirements would work particularly with students who are involved in two or more sports. Also questioned was the impact on the current science curriculum which is taught to meet state standards and the DSTP – will this practice be altered? And in regards to math, if algebra is taken in middle school, is a student still required to take four years of high school math or could successful completion of Algebra in middle school be credited toward the high school requirement?

Question 2

Currently, it is possible for high school seniors to take one or two classes in order to graduate. Research indicated these students are not prepared for the work place or higher education. The committee intends to require a more rigorous senior year for the freshman entering in 2007. Please give us your opinions.

STRENGTHS

The group agreed with increasing the rigor and the time frame.

CONCERNS

Concern was expressed that current middle school classes do not prepare students for high school courses and increasing rigor may increase student's possibility of failure.

SUGGESTIONS

Several counselors believed that students should stay in school for the entire senior year and suggested creating a "senior project" or "seminar" as credit options based on the student's ILP. Some counselors expressed that taking college classes for dual credit would be a good option while others supported students obtaining credit for co-op and vocational opportunities. Again, discussion centered on the middle school students both in the rigor of their current curriculum and their level of preparation for the high school curriculum. A suggestion was made to reexamine the middle school standards by which students are evaluated in an effort to reduce their risk of failure.

QUESTIONS

The guidance counselors questioned the impact and consequences of this proposal on middle school students who are already having difficulty meeting current course requirements.

Question 3

The committee is considering an option for students who, along with their parents or guardians and school officials determine should meet some alternative requirements. What are your ideas about who might be included and how this option might work?

WHO MIGHT BE INCLUDED IN THIS OPTION?

In the category of students to be considered for an opt-out or alternative program, counselors included the following groups: students with an IEP, the middle school student in ninth grade who has already repeated a year, tenth graders (or by age 16) who are not successful in their pathway, and students having difficulty meeting the curriculum requirements.

HOW THIS OPTION MIGHT WORK?

Counselors struggled with the concept of an opt-out option but expressed ideas about creating "support classes", "alternative programs" such as Twilight and Groves, additional votech opportunities, and designing "senior opportunities" and "special interest" projects based on the student's area of interest.

STRENGTHS

None specifically stated.

CONCERNS

A concern was expressed regarding the title or name of the alternative program. The counselors agreed the program should not sound like an easy out opportunity for students who didn't want to do the work to meet the requirements. Counselors also stated that since not everyone needs a four-year degree, flexibility and options are needed.

SUGGESTIONS

The group stressed students in this program must meet graduation requirements and that rules and guidelines will need to be established so as not to send the message that the alternative program is of lesser value. Students in this program should not be penalized or given a lesser diploma.

QUESTIONS

The counselors questioned if there would be a different diploma associated with this program.

Updating Delaware High School Graduation Requirements
Summary Data
Math Teachers – March 8, 2006

Question 1

Please give us your opinion regarding the proposed increase in rigor and credit requirements for Delaware high school students beginning with the freshman entering in 2007.

STRENGTHS

Overall, the group was in agreement with increasing the rigor in math.

CONCERNS

Several concerns involved resources, e.g., locating and hiring certified teachers, space, textbooks, and time to provide professional development in order to adjust to a new curriculum especially since districts need to also meet the GLE mandate by 2007. Concerns were expressed about maintaining the quality of math instruction and not reverting back to making Algebra I a two-year course. They also questioned whether small class size should be maintained so that teaching effectiveness will not decrease. This group voiced concerns about the impact this would have on non-traditional curriculum students and on students who would struggle to meet the requirement and as a result would be more likely to drop out of school. Thus, there will be a need to find ways to help struggling students achieve at higher levels which could include a course option that extends beyond the normal school day. They also noted that Performance Level I students will not have the opportunity to take four years of math. Also noted is the need to align middle school and elementary school curriculum to prepare the students for increased rigor; moreover, is the concern of potentially losing credit options in the middle school curriculum. Also of concern is the fact that alternative math options such as Groves, summer school, on-line courses, votech classes, etc. would need to increase their rigor to comply with increased standards. Further noted was the difficulty for a votech student to schedule four years of math. It was stated that July 2006 was too soon to move forward on this recommendation especially since the University of Delaware was not currently requiring four years of math as an entrance requirement.

SUGGESTIONS

The math teachers believed that proof was needed to substantiate that increasing credits would impact student achievement. It was suggested that seniors should have a math option that was geared toward college or the work place. It was further suggested the rigor be increased in the current three math courses and that requirements should be written to a set of standards rather than a number of credits. Lastly, it was suggested that math support begin at the sixth grade level as a way to increase accountability.

QUESTIONS

This group asked many questions regarding research and data collection. The desired data can be grouped into categories of “how”, “what” and “who”. How are students doing in college, how many students took four years to earn three credits, how students are currently progressing in math, how many students are not able to graduate in four years because of math credits, how many students are doubling up in their senior year to meet the math requirement before graduation and how successful are they in getting the credits? What remedial courses did students need to take in college, what are districts currently doing, and what does the success rate in math class look like for all NCLB subgroups? And who will be impacted by this change and not be able to meet the requirements? Several questions were directed toward resources; funding for the curriculum, training and implementation time, availability of highly qualified teachers, teacher compensation and the development of support services. Additional questions of how the proposed increase will impact the current methods of teaching to standards and what kind of math would satisfy the fourth year requirement. Several more general questions were raised regarding the impact of taking Algebra I for credit in middle school, the possibility of increasing the rigor within the current three-year curriculum and finally, the impact to the students entering eighth grade in the fall of 2006.

Question 2

Currently, it is possible for high school seniors to take one or two classes in order to graduate. Research indicated these students are not prepared for the work place or higher education. The committee intends to require a more rigorous senior year for the freshman entering in 2007. Please give us your opinions.

STRENGTHS

None specifically stated.

CONCERNS

The teachers believed that students who had completed graduation requirements should not be forced to stay in school.

SUGGESTIONS

It was suggested that students be obligated to stay in school for at least a half day and students involved in co-op should continue to receive credit for their work.

QUESTIONS

None specifically stated.

Question 3

The committee is considering an option for students who, along with their parents or guardians and school officials determine should meet some alternative requirements. What are your ideas about who might be included and how this option might work?

WHO MIGHT BE INCLUDED IN THIS OPTION?

The math teachers identified four groups of students who might be included in the opt-out option: very high achievers, special education, low socio-economic and students who don't push themselves.

HOW THIS OPTION MIGHT WORK?

For special education students the IEP team would make the decision.

STRENGTHS

None specifically stated.

CONCERNS

The group was concerned that there did not appear to be any math teachers on the Graduation Requirements Committee and that their input would not matter. Also expressed was the fear that math would be aligned with the number of years in high school rather than with content and standards.

SUGGESTIONS

Math teachers suggested students in the opt-out program should have a specific list of options to choose from that offers a choice of courses to take in order to meet the standards for graduation. It was also suggested that a less formalized Algebra II course be available which offered the same credit and standards. The final suggestion was offering these students the option of participating in college programs for high school or college credit.

QUESTIONS

Questions centered around the issue of how the opt-out option would be utilized such as, how did this option differ from tracking, when will students be allowed to opt-out, who will make the decision and how the decision will be made. The teachers inquired how the benchmark states utilize the opt-out option. It was queried if the decision had already been made to implement these new requirements.

**Updating Delaware High School Graduation Requirements
Summary Data
Delaware State Board Association – March 8, 2006**

Question 1

Please give us your opinion regarding the proposed increase in rigor and credit requirements for Delaware high school students beginning with the freshman entering in 2007.

STRENGTHS

Overall the group was in agreement of increasing the rigor. One specific comment was made in support of maintaining the requirement of 22 credits.

CONCERNS

Several concerns were noted regarding funding issues and the need for more teachers. It was also stated that for the districts that already require more than 22 credits, this was not a more rigorous requirement and that only requiring 22 credits was too low. It was stated the requirements did not address foreign language which is a requirement for college entrance. It was also stated the responsibility for increasing rigor should be directed by local boards. Concern was expressed that an increase in rigor will result in losing more students and AP students would be left behind. It was further noted that middle school curriculum would need to be reformed.

SUGGESTIONS

Several suggestions included teaching a course in life skills, survival skills and health prevention. A suggestion was made to get back to teaching the basics and including literature and the proper use of language in English courses. It was suggested that foreign language be offered as an elective rather than a requirement, while another countered if we were to be competitive with other countries, language requirements were essential.

QUESTIONS

Questions focused on how the increase would impact students who take three math credits in the sophomore year, the current science curriculum, special education students and drop outs. A final question spoke to the possibility of offering Physical Education credits for students in sports.

Question 2

Currently, it is possible for high school seniors to take one or two classes in order to graduate. Research indicated these students are not prepared for the work place or higher education. The committee intends to require a more rigorous senior year for the freshman entering in 2007. Please give us your opinions.

STRENGTHS

A statement was made that students should be required to stay in school for the entire senior year.

CONCERNS

Overall, this group believed that students who complete their 22 credits should have choices on how to spend their senior year including the option of participating in college courses or going to work. Conversely, if students are only required to take 22 credits, it puts pressure on parents to not require more of the student.

SUGGESTIONS

A wide range of suggestions were offered such as adding the choice of courses which included Latin, life skills and a senior project for specific career pathway students. It was suggested that AP students could be grouped together into a larger classroom environment to get them prepared for the type of classroom they would encounter in college. This would free up teachers to provide instruction to students who needed additional help. It was stated that local boards should have control over senior requirements. A further

suggestion was made to do a survey to find out who the students are that only took 22 credits. A final suggestion was made of linking credit for extra curricular activities to the senior year.

QUESTIONS

None specifically stated.

Question 3

The committee is considering an option for students who, along with their parents or guardians and school officials determine should meet some alternative requirements. What are your ideas about who might be included and how this option might work?

WHO MIGHT BE INCLUDED IN THIS OPTION?

It was suggested that special education students, students with physical disabilities and votech students should be considered in the opt-out option. It was expressed that this option should not be for the general student population who just didn't want to do the work.

HOW THIS OPTION MIGHT WORK?

Night school and a GED option were the only suggestions made but it was noted that special education students would need to be accommodated.

STRENGTHS

None specifically stated.

CONCERNS

This group felt a definition of opt-out from the state board would be helpful. Much discussion focused on votech students and their ability to pick their students and the fact that votech options are limited in Delaware and funding is needed to increase these options. It was stated that all students should be competent in the basics such as reading and writing regardless of whether they plan to go to college or work and that low performing students should be engaged and not put in an opt-out program. It was generally agreed that alternatives for students who can't meet the requirement should be considered and students should not be made to feel like a failure if they didn't plan to go to college.

SUGGESTIONS

Some members of this group felt increased rigor was needed for only college bound students while others felt it should be a requirement for all students regardless of their career pathway. Again it was suggested more votech school options including apprentice programs were needed in Delaware, but these programs should not be used as an opt-out option. A statement was made that the word rigorous should be changed to relevant. A final suggestion was made to evaluate the European educational system to see how it compares to ours.

QUESTIONS

None specifically stated.

**Updating Delaware High School Graduation Requirements
Summary Data
Parent Advisory Council – March 11, 2006**

Question 1

Please give us your opinion regarding the proposed increase in rigor and credit requirements for Delaware high school students beginning with the freshman entering in 2007.

STRENGTHS

Overall, the group was in agreement for increased credit requirement and rigor. They believe that it will help yield better paying jobs, bring in more employees, and add challenges that will help students to meet life challenges. Furthermore, they believe that such increases should apply to all years of high school.

CONCERNS

Several concerns focused on the need to increase parent knowledge, involvement and training in the overall education curriculum. They desired more frequent progress reports in addition to report cards and mid-terms. The advocates felt it could be a challenge to guidance counselors to ensure they schedule computer classes for all students and believe that increasing rigor would require training for administrators, teachers and guidance counselors. One parent stated that high school math did not prepare her daughter for college math. Additional concerns noted were too many tests and the need for resources to prepare students in middle school for the increased rigor.

SUGGESTIONS

The Parent Advisory Council believed that to determine the effects of increasing credits, students first need to be identified by their learning styles and needs. Twilight Programs are one way that can help aid in credit recovery for those who fall behind. It was suggested that schools need to begin computer courses in elementary school and continue them through high school so students can become proficient in the use of Microsoft Office Products. Schools also need to return to teaching the basics. Furthermore, schools need to provide more corporate mentors to educate students on the importance of staying in high school (esp. developing reading and math skills) and the relevance of a high school education for attending college and finding a job. Students need to be provided work opportunities to learn the realities of the work world. A suggestion was offered that teaching Delaware history and information on elected officials would help shape more well rounded students. They suggested applying volunteer “credits” to encourage students to give back to their community. It was further suggested that staff needs to be held accountable for student performance; this can be done through more defined measurable objectives and goals in educating staff. Schools need to collaborate—those who have poor test scores need to learn from what those with high test scores have done. Parents also suggest parental training be offered in other formats than a handbook and the training should begin in eighth grade so that they have a greater understanding of what to expect when their child reaches high school.

QUESTIONS

None specifically stated.

Question 2

Currently, it is possible for high school seniors to take one or two classes in order to graduate. Research indicated these students are not prepared for the work place or higher education. The committee intends to require a more rigorous senior year for the freshman entering in 2007. Please give us your opinions.

STRENGTHS

Overall, the group agreed that students should stay in school for the senior year.

CONCERNS

The group expressed some concerns with keeping seniors in school the entire day. Some believe that students should be allowed to have time to work a job to make extra money to help their parents with “senior expenses” such as year book and class trips. If working students are holding a job for other reasons they should be allowed to do so depending on the situation. Others stated that seniors need to learn more about the opportunities for scholarships, how to draft letters, and how to apply resources such as Outward Bound, FAME, and TRIP to help point those not going to college in the right direction. Students should also be allowed to take college credit or work to learn a trade.

SUGGESTIONS

The group suggested that the senior year could be improved if a variety of areas are addressed. First, parents need help to change their perceptions of college so that they can encourage students to attend college. Parents, students, staff, administrators, and guidance counselors must also have an understanding of SEED programs, financial forms and other financial items like savings bonds that can be helpful for college attendance or starting a business. Last, there needs to be more cooperation and entrepreneurial courses incorporated into the curriculum.

QUESTIONS

None specifically stated.

Question 3

The committee is considering an option for students who, along with their parents or guardians and school officials determine should meet some alternative requirements. What are your ideas about who might be included and how this option might work?

WHO MIGHT BE INCLUDED IN THIS OPTION?

The Parent Advisory Council identified three groups of students who might be included in the opt-out option: students who are failing courses after freshman year, students who have been in services such as Title I (not only special education), and students who are caught in the middle such as those who do not pass the DSTP and do not qualify for extra services.

HOW THIS OPTION MIGHT WORK?

This option might work if there is an increase in the level of alternative programs, an extension of Title I services beyond 8th grade, an increase in the services for special education (IEP) students, and additional help for students who want to increase SAT scores. Furthermore, grouping students according to learning styles in alternative programs may also help in an opt-out program.

STRENGTHS

None specifically stated.

CONCERNS

The group was concerned that Hispanic students and others speaking non-English languages will have trouble meeting the increased rigor.

SUGGESTIONS

Parents suggested that alternative programs need to have requirements changed to meet the opt-out option. Furthermore, such programs should be constructed to help meet the needs of the 33% of the population who can't read. Parents also need more written information about such alternative programs. Last, the PSAT was suggested as a requirement for every 9th grader.

QUESTIONS

None specifically stated.

**Updating Delaware High School Graduation Requirements
Summary Data
Governor's Advisory Council for Exceptional Children and
Governor's Council for Persons with Disabilities – March 16, 2006**

Question 1

Please give us your opinion regarding the proposed increase in rigor and credit requirements for Delaware high school students beginning with the freshman entering in 2007.

STRENGTHS

There is support for increasing rigor as long as support is in place for those who need it.

CONCERNS

The proposed graduation requirements do not address the real problems we have with students and education. The concerns focused on math teachers, curriculum alignment, support systems and the drop out rate. Delaware presently does not have enough qualified math teachers and this proposal will require more. The elementary and middle school curriculums need to be aligned with the high school requirements and prepare students to succeed in high school. We need to provide support for our students who are struggling and those who will need extra help to meet the new requirements. All students, especially special education students, are at risk of dropping out at a higher rate if we raise the graduation requirements.

SUGGESTIONS

Our nineteen school districts should be consolidated in order to be more cost effective and productive. The state should dictate one curriculum that all districts must follow and follow up with schools to verify they are using it. Our districts should offer more choice options, such as magnet schools or specialized schools that teach basic subjects but focus on science, math, business, machine shop, agriculture, etc. Credits embedded in vocational programs should count as science credit. Instead of increasing administrator salaries, we should increase the salaries of math and science/physics teachers and speech therapists. Train teachers in classroom management so they are better prepared to deal with students. Hire social workers, with masters' degrees to work in the schools to help students with problems and those who are struggling. Make sure that "all" truly means "all students", including those with disabilities. They should get the supports they need in order to meet the new requirements and a variety of assessment practices should be utilized in order to allow them to demonstrate their abilities. We need to make extra time available to students lagging behind in order to help them catch up, especially those in middle school and those who will be impacted by the new requirements.

QUESTIONS

Questions focused on how increasing rigor will make students more successful and how many, if any, of the students responding to the survey stating "they would have taken more rigorous classes" were students with special needs.

Question 2

Currently, it is possible for high school seniors to take one or two classes in order to graduate. Research indicated these students are not prepared for the work place or higher education. The committee intends to require a more rigorous senior year for the freshman entering in 2007. Please give us your opinions.

STRENGTHS

None specifically stated.

CONCERNS

The idea to keep high school seniors in school all day does not help the student or better prepare them for college. What matters most is how well we prepare students prior to their senior year. The problem is

more complex than simply adding a few more classes to the senior year and we are not addressing the real problems our students currently face.

SUGGESTIONS

Seniors should have the option of spending part of their day working, taking college level classes or leaving school. Students should not be pushed into staying in school just to keep them there. We should include a work education program for high school students so they understand the importance of education. Allow students to graduate in three years so they can go from full time high student directly to college and meet college admission requirements if that is what they want to do. Students who exceed the requirements should have some options for senior year, but others need a basic program without options.

QUESTIONS

None specifically stated.

Question 3

The committee is considering an option for students who, along with their parents or guardians and school officials determine should meet some alternative requirements. What are your ideas about who might be included and how this option might work?

WHO MIGHT BE INCLUDED IN THIS OPTION?

Students who do not meet the state standards, and special education students who can not meet the new requirements, should be given the option of an alternative program.

HOW THIS OPTION MIGHT WORK?

Parents and guardians should be included in the decision to choose an alternative program.

STRENGTHS

None specifically stated.

CONCERNS

The term “opt-out” is very negative and should not be used. White collar jobs are increasingly being exported to other countries, therefore, we should not be focusing only on a college track for students. We need to be more supportive of students seeking trade and vocational education.

SUGGESTIONS

We have to respect and value students choosing a trade rather than college. This can be accomplished by increasing career pathways and vocational programs and a life skills course that teaches students how to balance a checkbook and create a household budget. Students should have optional, more hands on courses that are applicable to their interests. Provide more support at the high school level to help students find colleges and complete the application process. Offer an academic program geared toward college bound students and one for those who do not plan to attend college. Insure that graduation requirements reflect the variety of knowledge and skills that students are learning in school and will need after high school – use indicators of the knowledge and skills necessary for learning and successful work and living after high school.

QUESTIONS

None specifically stated.

**Updating Delaware High School Graduation Requirements
Summary Data
Urban League of Wilmington – March 21, 2006**

Question 1

Please give us your opinion regarding the proposed increase in rigor and credit requirements for Delaware high school students beginning with the freshman entering in 2007.

STRENGTHS

It is important the state be specific about the substance of the credits. We need to maximize the number of students participating in a more rigorous curriculum at the same time we are assisting those in need of support; such as Performance Level I and II students.

CONCERNS

The proposal is not the systemic change that is needed in the state. We need to address the achievement gap. There are a significant number of students who currently do not meet the standards. Increasing the rigor and credit requirements should coincide with helping those students meet the requirements and graduate. We need to ensure that all kids succeed. The schools/districts need to have support for those students in place.

SUGGESTIONS

Requiring more high school credits is meaningless without good curriculum in place, better trained teachers, deeper personalization and guidance, very powerful career pathways that are aligned to Delaware Futures Program, better guidance counseling services to assist students with a map for their four years of high school and a well developed advisory curriculum that takes students beyond high school. The state should require students to take four credits in foreign language and offer Spanish, Asian, Mandarin, French and Latin courses. Our goal should be to have our children become bilingual. Science and Social Science should be mandatory four credits each and offer Introduction to Organic Chemistry in high schools because it is required for several science degrees in colleges. We should have an arts requirement for students to graduate and additional health credits. Service learning, citizenship and students giving back to the community are important and students should be given an opportunity to do this for credit. Life skills are important and should be integrated into the curriculum, perhaps in a Civics or Economic course. Give students opportunities to explore areas of interests and career options through electives or career pathways in addition to the academic requirements. Offer more electives that are an expansion of core courses in order for students to take additional credits that tie into English, Math, Science, etc., rather than electives that deal only with careers. We should increase the number of credits beyond the 22 being proposed. We need to teach reading to high school students, and offer it for credit, to those not reading on grade level. Do not penalize students for skills they are lacking. The state needs to address the curriculum rigor of elementary and middle schools so that students can meet the rigor of high school. Actively make students and parents aware of the availability of courses outside of the normal school setting, such as, online, community colleges, summer course offerings, etc.

QUESTIONS

None specifically stated.

Question 2

Currently, it is possible for high school seniors to take one or two classes in order to graduate. Research indicated these students are not prepared for the work place or higher education. The committee intends to require a more rigorous senior year for the freshman entering in 2007. Please give us your opinions.

STRENGTHS

None specifically stated.

CONCERNS

This is a reflection of inadequate academic counseling. With a better advisory curriculum in place, students would not be leaving during their senior year because they will have a program in place that they are committed to and are constructively engaged.

SUGGESTIONS

Schools need an advisory curriculum that is a minimum of bi-weekly meetings with a faculty advisor in small groups over a period of two or more years. The faculty advisor needs to be trained in the advisory curriculum. The courses in the senior year career pathway should be a dual credit that is aligned with higher education or technical degree/certification programs. The senior year should require more rigor and credit.

QUESTIONS

None specifically stated.

Question 3

The committee is considering an option for students who, along with their parents or guardians and school officials determine should meet some alternative requirements. What are your ideas about who might be included and how this option might work?

WHO MIGHT BE INCLUDED IN THIS OPTION?

None specifically stated.

HOW THIS OPTION MIGHT WORK?

Nothing specifically stated.

STRENGTHS

None specifically stated.

CONCERNS

The group is opposed to an optional program for students. An optional program will let the districts off the hook and release them from accountability. It undermines the mandate to raise rigor and standards for all students. Do not use the term "opt-out". Parents are not able to make an informed decision about their student because the only information they have is what the school gives them.

SUGGESTIONS

We need to explore alternatives for students (not opt-out) to get to the minimum number of credits to graduate.

QUESTIONS

None specifically stated.

**Updating Delaware High School Graduation Requirements
Summary Data
Curriculum Cadre – March 22, 2006**

Question 1

Please give us your opinion regarding the proposed increase in rigor and credit requirements for Delaware high school students beginning with the freshman entering in 2007.

STRENGTHS

A few people applauded the effort to increase rigor.

CONCERNS

The proposed requirements are outdated. The Delaware science standards are written for four years and the new requirements do not take this into consideration or include earth science or astronomy (standard four and five). The Delaware Science Coalition's curriculum is of higher rigor than traditional biology, chemistry, and physics and has been cited nationally as a model that other states should follow. We need to give our current curriculum a chance to succeed. The committee did not look at the National Science Education standards and other science agencies that have completed research in high school requirements. The proposed requirements send a mixed message to high school teachers to offer integrated courses but the requirements suggests discrete courses. This does not appear to be advancing curriculum for all kids. Also, the emphasis on credit focuses more on seat time rather than competency; world languages are not included and are required for admission to the University of Delaware; and the new requirements reflect a disconnect of what our students will be prepared to do at a post secondary level.

SUGGESTIONS

If this research, which indicates that adding credits has not statistically significantly increased student achievement is valid, then the state needs to look for other ways to increase the challenges we ask of students. In order to increase rigor, award "credits" by course and grade earned and achievement on state test. Recommended curriculum should not state courses but should meet standards. Give credence to the standards, the GLEs and instructional practices. Align science and social studies requirements with state standards. Conduct some studies to see how our students are doing with standards based education and do a financial analysis of the proposed requirements. Include a world language requirement.

Science should be four credits. Delaware standards are written for four years. The word "integrated" needs to be added explicitly to the science curriculum proposal and the term "lab" should be "laboratory exercises that are integrated into the content". Our physics, chemistry, etc. courses are integrated not discrete. All courses with a lab should be integrated. Offer Chemistry before Biology and perhaps Physics in ninth grade. Based on the Physics First Movement their research supports a physical science course offered as the first science course in ninth grade. Foundational physics and chemistry concepts need to be learned prior to biology as biology is now learned on a chemical level, requiring knowledge of chemistry and energy.

The ELA requirements should be emphasizing reading rather than literature. ELA should say "reading" not "literature".

QUESTIONS

Has the committee considered foreign language and the fine arts in the high school requirements?

Has the committee looked at the research as it relates to the drop out rate and the increased number of credits in respect to that?

Shouldn't we be preparing our students to be able to get into any state institution?

Is the 1.5 physical education and health credit enough to meet the wellness criteria?

Should ELA be oral communication which is presentation and communication?

What does “presentation” mean in ELA?

What about Social Studies, Earth Science and Astronomy?

Will the unit count system be changed in order to meet the expectations of additional math requirements and others?

Is there a plan with this that we have qualified math teachers to hire even if we have the cash to hire them?

The math requirement language says a student should take 1 credit in senior year in math or test out. Can this be a requirement not an option?

What is the financial impact of more math teachers, labs and opt-out and how will these changes be funded?

Question 2

Currently, it is possible for high school seniors to take one or two classes in order to graduate. Research indicated these students are not prepared for the work place or higher education. The committee intends to require a more rigorous senior year for the freshman entering in 2007. Please give us your opinions.

STRENGTHS

None specifically stated.

CONCERNS

Not sure increasing graduation requirements will result in an increase of student achievement. The committee has been concentrating on increasing seat time and the quantity of courses rather than the quality or rigor. Legislating rigor and increasing the math credit, alone, won't keep the student in school their senior year. Where is the expectation for mastery and competency? The number of students opting out will be significant. Also, a student in a block schedule school may not have math instruction for two years in order to save a credit to take in the senior year.

SUGGESTIONS

In order to have a stronger program for seniors, hire more guidance personnel, make ELA a requirement and add a senior project. Skills and essential understanding speak to rigor and math is the only place that skills are mentioned. The senior year issue should be dealt with as a separate issue. Appoint a committee to study it and look at the high schools that have the same standards being proposed to find the success and failure they have had with these requirements.

Several suggestions were made about the language of the proposed requirements. We stated as “curricula should” or “curricula must” will have to say “shall” as stated in the standards. Curricula must include reading, writing, oral communication, listening and viewing. Reasoning and logic are not in the Delaware ELA standards or GLEs. “Literature” only refers to a standard. Four-term should be “reading”. “Presentation and communication skills” should be “oral communication, listening and viewing” to match standards / GLEs. The requirements should be written as “must include” not “should emphasize”.

QUESTIONS

What steps are being taken to insure that what is taught in the classroom is really rigorous and is not just a name change on a schedule to meet the requirements?

Since the plan does not meet all of the science standards did the committee look at the senior year in regard to the rest of standards that have not been met by this plan?

Is there a discussion about a senior project?

Can you legislate rigor?

Question 3

The committee is considering an option for students who, along with their parents or guardians and school officials determine should meet some alternative requirements. What are your ideas about who might be included and how this option might work?

WHO MIGHT BE INCLUDED IN THIS OPTION?

Include students who have completed ninth grade and have failed three courses.

HOW THIS OPTION MIGHT WORK?

Parents, teachers, guidance counselors and school administrators should have input into this decision.

STRENGTHS

Differentiating to meet the needs of students who need an optional program is great.

CONCERNS

Require students to meet the requirements if they want a diploma. An optional program might become a loophole for students to get around the proposed rigor and seriously retard high school reform by not allowing us to hold high expectations and standards for all kids. The fact that this has come from the Achieve report has colored the proposed requirements.

An optional program will impact seniors who want to take early admission to college and would not have had to put in a senior year otherwise. Also, many students want to take easier courses in their senior year to keep their GPA high.

For any program that we want our students to achieve, we need to have the resources such as, time, money and teachers. The initiative is about motivation but the very students for whom this is directed have exhibited they are not responsive to external control. The focus of the state board should be directed at how to insure that educators implement that which research indicates increases students intrinsic motivation to learn.

SUGGESTIONS

The recommended graduation requirements should state that students have to meet the standards not a specific course. There still needs to be rigor, consistency and a detailed plan for all stakeholders, and enforced properly, without lowering standards. Delaware should take a look at Florida's program. Also, since research suggests students should have each core course each year in high school we should consider making science and social studies four credits each. Please give some consideration for delaying this decision and looking for some way to bridge high school rigor and the curriculum work that is already underway.

QUESTIONS

Is this canceling out rigor?

**Updating Delaware High School Graduation Requirements
Summary Data
Delaware State Education Association – March 22, 2006**

Question 1

Please give us your opinion regarding the proposed increase in rigor and credit requirements for Delaware high school students beginning with the freshman entering in 2007.

STRENGTHS

Overall the group agreed that four years of math is good and that many students in academic programs are already taking at least four credits in math.

CONCERNS

The group had many concerns about the committee's proposal for increased graduation requirements especially in the areas of math and science. Math concerns included that fact that high schools allow students to use calculators, but they will not be able to use them in higher education settings. Also, block scheduling will allow students to take the equivalent of three years of math in 1.5 years and therefore students would not need to take a math during junior or senior years. They stated an additional math credit after Algebra II should not be required. Concerns regarding science focused on the need for teacher certification in physics and the overall need for additional funding to supply the resources needed to teach lab courses. This group expressed concern for special needs and English as a Second Language (ESL) students meeting the increased rigor. They also believe the focus of the DSTP test is taken away with the additional math requirements.

The group also remarked that the changes in curriculum will have an impact on the four-year graduation cell in the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) act. Moreover, the committee needs to consider what middle schools must do in preparing students for high school. The committee should also realize that the requirements are excluding trade education options and art curriculums for students. Finally the proposal has the potential to cause labor strife and problematic contract negotiations for staff.

SUGGESTIONS

The group made many suggestions as to how they envision the high school requirement model. They stated that increased rigor does not necessarily need to come from the number of credits taken or level of subject areas; rather, it must come from the quality of what students are achieving and learning in the classroom. Students should have the opportunity to obtain credit through other courses that may provide more experiential learning such as drafting class as a math course. Alternative settings are a great option and should be a part of state standards.

In addition the group expounded upon the middle school experience in that students should be given the opportunity to take high school courses at the middle school level. However, this will require more work in tracking programs and hiring teachers. Also special education students, slow learners, and ESL students must not be overlooked. Consistency in all programs is very important from kindergarten through twelfth grade. Educators instead of business leaders need to be included in this process.

It was suggested that the committee look at America's Lab report published by National Academy of Sciences.

QUESTIONS

The group raised a variety of questions pertaining to the committee's proposal.

As far as math concerns go, the group raised questions regarding how to work with students who fail math classes, and the number of students graduating from the University of Delaware who will be available to teach math. Additional math questions included the possibility of halting this proposal until the committee

gathers more data on numbers of students currently needing four years or more to complete three math credits. Furthermore questions arose regarding funding for additional staff to teach math courses. Class sizes should not be sacrificed because this would hurt the improvements made in DSTP math scores. The implementation of full day kindergarten also could trump funding at the high school level.

With science the group questioned why there is not talk about increasing science credits in technology.

Other general questions included the areas of building renovations, funding and timelines that are all critical to increased class time and having more students in school at the same time. They also questioned how the proposal falls in line with the PE Task Force that has been proposed to the General Assembly that would require 150 minutes every week for K-12 students of physical education. Will students have time for all of this? Last there needs to be data collection on areas of foreign languages, arts, music, and advanced sciences which all promote more well-rounded students.

Question 2

Currently, it is possible for high school seniors to take one or two classes in order to graduate. Research indicated these students are not prepared for the work place or higher education. The committee intends to require a more rigorous senior year for the freshman entering in 2007. Please give us your opinions.

STRENGTHS

Some members of the group believed that students should take a full course load during the senior year. To do so schools must ensure course availability.

CONCERNS

The group raised many concerns about the senior year which include the following: co-op students should be allowed to earn credits if they work during the school day; and students should be allowed to take college courses or advanced placement either at their school or another. Some individuals felt that if students spread their courses out too much over the four years they may not be adequately prepared for the SAT. In addition others were concerned that a blanket requirement for a rigorous senior year limits opportunities for students who may need to work. If students complete all requirements there is not a reason they should be forced to remain in school all day. Furthermore disruptive students should be allowed to leave.

SUGGESTIONS

The group suggested that scheduling in schools should be analyzed to determine how much “dead time” there is during the school day. By finding periods of time in which students are not making good use of their time, schools can better place staff members where they are most needed. Schools should use the vocational schools as a model for better use of funding; this ensures that the referendum does not become a constant topic each time money is needed.

QUESTIONS

None specifically stated.

Question 3

The committee is considering an option for students who, along with their parents or guardians and school officials determine should meet some alternative requirements. What are your ideas about who might be included and how this option might work?

WHO MIGHT BE INCLUDED IN THIS OPTION?

None specifically stated.

HOW THIS OPTION MIGHT WORK?

None specifically stated.

STRENGTHS

The group found that an opt-out program is needed in order to meet the needs of an entire student population.

CONCERNS

The group expressed various concerns with an opt-out program. First it provides students the opportunity not to meet minimum standards. Some individuals felt that an opt-out was a poor idea because of its resemblance to the tired diploma system. In addition it takes away from the proposal of increased course rigor because an opt-out does not increase anything. If opt-out becomes a reality it needs to be a decision left to a committee with consistent guidelines throughout the state. Last the group also found a disconnect between Delaware requirements and how Achieve perceives them. Standards need to be better interpreted.

SUGGESTIONS

The group suggested that students having an Individualized Education Plan must be better recognized in their completion of high school.

QUESTIONS

The group questioned whether the existence of an opt-out option will make room for too many students choosing that path. If so, will the school district be held accountable?

**Updating Delaware High School Graduation Requirements
Summary Data
Delaware Advisory Council for Career/Vocational Education - March 30, 2006**

Question 1

Please give us your opinion regarding the proposed increase in rigor and credit requirements for Delaware high school students beginning with the freshman entering in 2007.

STRENGTHS

This group expressed support for the increase in rigor and suggested limiting a student's choice of electives. It was also suggested that all students need to become proficient in verbal and written communication and math skills. Also mentioned was the need to address all variables that impact a student's ability to be successful and to inform freshmen entering high school in 2007 of not only the new requirements but where they are in relationship to the requirements.

CONCERNS

This group expressed concern that increased rigor does not always mean increased success. There are many other areas that need to be considered along with increased rigor, such as financial, administrative, and teacher support; resources; and the overall environment of the school. In order to be successful students need to be given alternatives to certain requirements.

SUGGESTIONS

It was suggested that students will do better in school if they are able to clearly understand how the courses they take today will be beneficial to their future goals. Students will succeed if they are motivated. Therefore, there needs to be an increase in mentors and younger teachers. The group agreed that students should not be given a choice in courses and that electives need to decrease.

QUESTIONS

None specifically stated.

Question 2

Currently, it is possible for high school seniors to take one or two classes in order to graduate. Research indicated these students are not prepared for the work place or higher education. The committee intends to require a more rigorous senior year for the freshman entering in 2007. Please give us your opinions.

STRENGTHS

The group expressed support for a more rigorous senior year because it is needed for college and work place preparation. They believe that parents must be proactive in sharing the importance of senior year to the student.

CONCERNS

There was concern that students have too many choices in creating their curriculum course load.

SUGGESTIONS

The group suggested that guidance counselors and career counselors are needed to help better prepare seniors for post-graduation life. In addition, it was suggested that local businesses help to provide internships/apprenticeships and mentoring programs as student opportunities for life experiences.

QUESTIONS

None specifically stated.

Question 3

The committee is considering an option for students who, along with their parents or guardians and school officials determine should meet some alternative requirements. What are your ideas about who might be included and how this option might work?

WHO MIGHT BE INCLUDED IN THIS OPTION?

It was suggested that special education students might be exempt from certain courses.

HOW THIS OPTION MIGHT WORK?

None specifically stated.

STRENGTHS

None specifically stated.

CONCERNS

Several members of this group voiced the opinion that an opt-out program should not be offered because it destroys the intent of the proposal and may be a step backwards into tracking and a three-tiered diploma.

SUGGESTIONS

The group suggested that students who may chose to drop-out of high school need to have other options and programs to help them succeed. Also, vocational and career programs should not be discounted. The group also suggested the need for Career Pathways to be implemented and supported at all high schools. They did not want to see the additional high school requirements interfere with a student's ability to complete a pathways sequence. Furthermore, the group expressed its support of ACTE's position in the report: "Reinventing the American High School for the 21st Century."

QUESTIONS

None specifically stated.

**Updating Delaware High School Graduation Requirements
Summary Data
Science Curriculum Group – March 30, 2006**

Question 1

Please give us your opinion regarding the proposed increase in rigor and credit requirements for Delaware high school students beginning with the freshman entering in 2007.

STRENGTHS

None specifically stated.

CONCERNS

The science teachers were not in favor of the proposed science requirements. They expressed a variety of concerns. First, most found a disconnect between the committee's proposal and the recent realignment of state standards and statewide recommended curriculum. The Achieve report was written for the old Delaware mindset which the state has already moved past. In addition the wording for science requirements is old language meaning that it separates the sciences by discipline and excludes integration. The group was concerned that Earth Science was not included and finds that the new requirements hurt the general student who needs a well rounded science program. Lastly, the teachers stressed that science labs are costly requiring additional space and teachers.

SUGGESTIONS

The Science teachers suggested the inclusion of Earth Science, more science course coordination beginning in elementary and middle school, and a serious analysis of how a fourth math credit will fit into block scheduling.

QUESTIONS

None specifically stated.

Question 2

Currently, it is possible for high school seniors to take one or two classes in order to graduate. Research indicated these students are not prepared for the work place or higher education. The committee intends to require a more rigorous senior year for the freshman entering in 2007. Please give us your opinions.

STRENGTHS

None specifically stated.

CONCERNS

The science teachers were concerned about the meaning of rigor. There needs to be a universal understanding of what it is and what is expected. They agreed that increased course load does not always mean increased rigor. In addition they are concerned that the math courses will be split into 2 classes for 4 credits which could be a problem if students are unable to complete them in this method.

SUGGESTIONS

This group suggested that the state conduct a study to determine which companies hire full-time high school graduates and expectations those companies have of high school graduates. More businesses need to take the time to request transcripts and check whether a future employee has graduated high school. The group finds the number of students who go through high school and do not take courses senior year to be disconcerting. A complete study needs to be done on this problem.

QUESTIONS

The group questioned: If middle school students today can earn high school credits, will these credits continue to count under the new requirements?

Question 3

The committee is considering an option for students who, along with their parents or guardians and school officials determine should meet some alternative requirements. What are your ideas about who might be included and how this option might work?

WHO MIGHT BE INCLUDED IN THIS OPTION?

None specifically stated.

HOW THIS OPTION MIGHT WORK?

None specifically stated.

STRENGTHS

None specifically stated.

CONCERNS

The science teachers found the opt-out program to be a complex issue and were concerned that it could lead back to tracking. They expressed the need for a greater focus in meeting student's needs.

SUGGESTIONS

The group suggested that opt-out should not be an excuse for those with different needs, but that alternative options should be in place to help students meet the requirements. A possible fifth year of high school was suggested along with four years of science that incorporates integration and progression throughout the length of high school.

QUESTIONS

The group questioned the following topics:

How will an increase in rigor increase attendance?

What will this do to drop-out rates for the students who cannot reach the new requirements?

How do you legally incorporate an opt-out under No Child Left Behind?

**Updating Delaware High School Graduation Requirements
Summary Data
Christina School District Title I Parent Advisory Committee – April 5, 2006**

Question 1

Please give us your opinion regarding the proposed increase in rigor and credit requirements for Delaware high school students beginning with the freshman entering in 2007.

STRENGTHS

The group is in favor of a more rigorous curriculum.

CONCERNS

The Christina School District Title I Parent Advisory Committee fears that the school systems are not providing students the necessary financial tools to keep up with a global society. In addition the state testing system places too much pressure on students and parents.

SUGGESTIONS

The group suggested the following items to engage students in a more global outlook: at an early age teach banking, investing, entrepreneurialism, Wall Street, economics and finances; and use newspapers in the classroom. As far as state testing goes, teachers should take the test so that they know how to teach the test. If a new curriculum is implemented it should be tied to the state test. Lastly, the group believes that the grade point average required of students participating in athletics and extra curricular activities should be increased.

QUESTIONS

None specifically stated.

Question 2

Currently, it is possible for high school seniors to take one or two classes in order to graduate. Research indicated these students are not prepared for the work place or higher education. The committee intends to require a more rigorous senior year for the freshman entering in 2007. Please give us your opinions.

STRENGTHS

The group was in favor of requiring students to take four years of all core courses.

CONCERNS

None specifically stated.

SUGGESTIONS

The group had many suggestions pertaining to what a student's senior year and other years throughout high school should emulate. They first stated that students should develop a course plan in eighth grade to help guide them throughout their four years of high school. This plan should include goals, plans, and expectations and be signed by both student and parent. In addition students need to be rewarded for things other than just good grades; attendance, volunteerism, peer mentoring, and most improvement; these are other ways to help motivate students. The group did not feel that students should be allowed to drop out of school at the age of 16, thereby missing the latter years of high school. They strongly felt that this law needs to be changed because at this age students are still considered minors.

The group also made suggestions to enhance the high school experience and keep students more focused. They believe that a school dress code with uniforms should be a part of every school because when students dress smart they feel better about themselves and improve performance in school. Health and gym courses should be requirements that the committee recommends and along with this schools need to make lunches more nutritious and eliminate soda machines.

A student's absence should not be an adequate excuse for not doing homework. A homework hotline that is either online or via the telephone would be a helpful addition to solving this problem. An educational television channel, much like the one in Baltimore, would also be a good way to bring education into the home. More information needs to be distributed to keep parents better informed of students' performance. Moreover, students should also have the opportunity to engage in more academic contests and be provided with a free college education if they attend an in-state university.

QUESTIONS

None specifically stated

Question 3

The committee is considering an option for students who, along with their parents or guardians and school officials determine should meet some alternative requirements. What are your ideas about who might be included and how this option might work?

WHO MIGHT BE INCLUDED IN THIS OPTION?

The group was divided on this question. One person stated that students who are most likely to drop out of high school need to be offered alternative courses of study.

HOW THIS OPTION MIGHT WORK?

The group did not provide ideas for how the option might work, but some felt that since not all students are capable of passing twelfth grade or being college material, an optional program should be offered.

STRENGTHS

None specifically stated.

CONCERNS

Other members of the group were concerned that if students are given an optional program they are being given an easy way out of rigorous coursework. They believe that the increased requirements should be met by all students and that an alternative program should not be an option.

SUGGESTIONS

The group suggested that parents, guidance counselors, and teachers play a larger role in helping to choose the best program for the student.

QUESTIONS

None specifically stated.

**Updating Delaware High School Graduation Requirements
Summary Data
Delta Epsilon Chi Association – April 10, 2006**

Question 1

Please give us your opinion regarding the proposed increase in rigor and credit requirements for Delaware high school students beginning with the freshman entering in 2007.

STRENGTHS

Students agreed with the proposal to increase rigor in the areas of math, science and English in order to meet the demands of a harder college curriculum. One student offered that he expends little effort in meeting the current high school requirements.

CONCERNS

Students were concerned with the increases for math and science. They fear that increases will force students to take classes they do not want and eliminate room for certain electives. They do not think that the math requirement has much substance and will not adequately prepare students for college. In addition students find four years of English to have little purpose largely due to the small amount of writing in the courses. They were further concerned that increased requirements will eliminate flexibility with votech class scheduling.

SUGGESTIONS

Students had a variety of suggestions for how they envision the high school requirements. The following courses they find to be important to include as additional requirements: technology classes, calculus and statistics, three or four years of a foreign language, communication classes (oral or business communication) in place of an English credit, gym credits for participation in sports, and reduction in gym credits making half the year physical education and the other half health. The group agreed with three credits in science classes, but wanted to make the classes harder and more challenging for some students.

Many courses should also begin in middle school to better prepare students for high school. The following should be included: more English courses, foreign languages, computer classes that include more than just keyboarding,

Students were divided over the decision to have driver's education in the classroom and whether or not student aide credits should be limited to one or two classes. Overall the group suggested consistency in core course requirements across all school districts.

QUESTIONS

None specifically stated.

Question 2

Currently, it is possible for high school seniors to take one or two classes in order to graduate. Research indicated these students are not prepared for the work place or higher education. The committee intends to require a more rigorous senior year for the freshman entering in 2007. Please give us your opinions.

STRENGTHS

None specifically stated.

CONCERNS

One student was concerned that an easier senior year option would be taken away and another student supported maintaining the co-op program but expressed the opinion that the cop-ops should be linked to activities that are job related.

SUGGESTIONS

Students suggested that seniors should make their own decisions regarding more rigorous courses or participation in a co-op. Should students choose a co-op they should be required to write an essay about the experience. The students felt that college bound students should have more requirements during the senior year to better prepare them. The senior year should also be used as an opportunity to take college courses, and using study hall as the time to work on college applications and scholarship forms. In addition guidance counselors need to play a greater role in making realistic suggestions for the future of seniors.

QUESTIONS

None specifically stated.

Question 3

The committee is considering an option for students who, along with their parents or guardians and school officials determine should meet some alternative requirements. What are your ideas about who might be included and how this option might work?

WHO MIGHT BE INCLUDED IN THIS OPTION?

The categories of students to be considered for an alternative program were listed as disabled, handicapped, students having difficulty with lower level math functions and students who were just trying to get through high school.

HOW THIS OPTION MIGHT WORK?

Students suggested extending the school year to include a fifth year and having special education teachers provide assistance to students in need of extra help.

STRENGTHS

It was widely agreed that an alternative program should be made available, but that opt-out decision should be made by a committee who takes into consideration special circumstances and consider the opt-out only after all other options have been reviewed.

CONCERNS

This group expressed the concern that expecting less could predispose students into doing less and the alternative should not be for lazy students. Furthermore they believed that special education students should not be set up to fail. Concern was expressed regarding the addition of increased requirements on teachers who are already overwhelmed. And finally, not all students will need calculus to meet college entrance requirements.

SUGGESTIONS

Students made suggestions for the math requirements, advanced placement credits, and opt-out. For math, students found that the subject needs to be taught to students at younger ages so that they are ready when they reach high school. They also stated that someone who has difficulties in math should not be penalized from going to college. Such struggling students should be offered lower level math courses while still reaching the needed graduation requirements. Some students also suggested that all students take a calculus or statistics course.

In regards to advanced placement courses, all school districts need to offer similar courses and if one does not offer a course, students should be able to take it at an alternative site such as Delaware Technical or Delaware State College.

Students who are learning disabled should still have to take the same amount of credits. If they are having trouble achieving in a class there needs to be more staff and teachers to help these students. The opt-out program could be used as a “recovery” option but not as a program that one stays in all through high school.

QUESTIONS

Students questioned whether students who participate in alternative programs get the same diploma and if the increased requirements include credit for community service hours.

**Updating Delaware High School Graduation Requirements
Summary Data
Delaware Association of School Administrators – April 12, 2006**

Question 1

Please give us your opinion regarding the proposed increase in rigor and credit requirements for Delaware high school beginning with the freshman entering in 2007.

STRENGTHS

This group was in favor of increasing rigor.

CONCERNS

The two issues of most concern to DASA members were that simply adding math credit requirements would not increase rigor. Also, for students who earn all their high school math requirements in junior high, adding a fourth requirement in the senior year may be a restriction or penalty for these students.

SUGGESTIONS

This group's suggestions involved the Delaware Department of Education (DDOE), changing school culture and the student. The suggestions for DDOE to consider were three-pronged; first, proposed changes to courses and credits should be rigorous enough to be effective, second, all eighth grade classes should complete the same math courses across all districts and third, DDOE should overhaul how it calculates the graduation rate. Next it was suggested that schools should change the mindset of students and parents to move them beyond the minimalist attitude of taking the least amount of courses to graduate. And finally, it was suggested that eighth grade students should sign a contract that outlines the expectation of high school requirements as well as sign a contract in their junior year that commits them to their senior year courses and credits. Students should also complete a competency test before entering high school and take a computer class that ensures they have the required technology skills and abilities to be successful in high school. A half credit could be offered for this course. It was further suggested that seniors should have choices for taking additional core courses that are in keeping with their individual goals instead of being forced to take a fourth math course they may not need. It was also stated that high school credit should be given for courses taken during middle school. Moreover, it was suggested that the driver's education course should be moved to the junior or senior year and the current on-going review of the physical education and health requirements should continue so these courses can be made more meaningful for students.

QUESTIONS

This group wanted to know if students don't complete the math requirements will they graduate high school?

Question 2

Currently, it is possible for high school seniors to take one or two classes in order to graduate. Research indicated these students are not prepared for the work place or higher education. The committee intends to require a more rigorous senior year for the freshman entering in 2007. Please give us your opinions.

STRENGTHS

This group stated the goal of creating a meaningful senior year is the right direction for the state.

CONCERNS

The concerns stated under question 2 are similar to the concerns expressed under question 1; requiring students to take one more math credit in the senior year seems punitive therefore, other options should be made available. Viewing rigor in terms of course credits only is going in the wrong direction.

SUGGESTIONS

This group suggested that a minimum number of credits should be required for the senior year, e.g., if schools require 8 classes per day, seniors should be required to take 5 classes. An additional suggestion was to require seniors to complete an “exhibition project” that would include in-depth research, a APA paper and an oral presentation. It was also suggested that school culture needed to be changed; schools need to be seen as a means to the end, not the end. They should also be more positive and foster student’s creativity by offering them the opportunity for students to select a “minor” course in their specific area of interest. A change in culture would create a desire to learn and provide them with success and motivate them for future endeavors.

QUESTIONS

None specifically stated.

Question 3

The committee is considering an option for students who, along with their parents or guardians and school officials determine should meet some alternative requirements. What are your ideas about who might be included and how this option might work?

WHO MIGHT BE INCLUDED IN THIS OPTION?

Special education students especially those with learning disabilities, physical disabilities and brain injuries would be the students to be considered for an alternative program.

HOW THIS OPTION MIGHT WORK?

It was stated that the option should be processed through the IEP meeting.

STRENGTHS

None specifically stated.

CONCERNS

Concern was voiced that the alternative program should not be a short cut to avoid a rigorous curriculum.

SUGGESTIONS

None specifically stated.

QUESTIONS

None specifically stated.

APPENDIX G:
Strengths by All Focus Groups

Strengths by All Focus Groups

Question 1

Please give us your opinion regarding the proposed increase in rigor and credit requirements for Delaware high school students beginning with the freshman entering in 2007.

Guidance Counselors

- Increasing rigor is a good idea.
- All major subjects should require four credits.

Math Teachers

- Math in the senior year is a good idea.

Delaware State Board Association

- Support for increasing rigor.
- Glad plan keeps 22 credits.
- In favor of increase in rigor.

Parent Advisory Group

- Support increased rigor which yields better paying jobs and brings in more employers.
- Increased rigor in all years not just senior year.
- Need challenges in high school years to meet life challenges.
- Make credit requirements rigorous.
- How math teachers teach can make a difference.

Governor's Advisory Council for Exceptional Children and Governor's Council for Persons with Disabilities

- Support the increase of rigor, with support for those who need it.

Urban League of Wilmington

- We need to maximize the number of students participating in a more rigorous curriculum at the same time we are assisting those in need of support; such as, performance level I and II students.
- Being specific about the substance of the credits is important and we should do this.

Curriculum Cadre

- Love the increased rigor.
- Bravo to increasing math to four credits.
- I applaud your efforts to increase rigor.

Delaware State Education Association

- Students in academic programs already take at least four credits in math.
- There should be four years of math, however, there should be an option that counts toward credit, such as a consumer math course.
- Four years of math is good. There has to be common sense application of the four year math requirement to take into consideration various populations of students (for example special education, slow learners, ELS, college bound, work place/trades-bound, and military bound).

Delaware Advisory Council for Career/Vocational Education

- Support the new requirements.
- There should be rigorous academic requirements for all students. Students who can not meet the requirements can attend a private school. Public schools should be for the elite and serious student, like it used to be.

- The new requirement is on target because it addresses what has been lacking in high school students especially those who participate in co-ops and highly technical businesses. These students need to be proficient in verbal and written communication and math.
- Initial reaction is yes, we need more rigor. However, we need to address what we need to do to support this. There are so many variables that impact a student's success that need to be addressed in order for students to be successful.
- I like the new requirements but it is my hope that we make students entering high school in 2007 aware of these requirements and that we let them know where they are in relation to the new requirements.

Science Curriculum Group

- None specifically stated.

Christina School District Title I Parent Advisory Committee

- We are in favor of a more rigorous curriculum.

Delta Epsilon Chi Association

- Increased math and science requirements are important because college classes are much harder. Even advanced placement classes were not as hard in high school as they are in college.
- Agree with four years of math and science.
- Agree with raising the requirements because I currently meet the requirements without much effort.
- Agree with increase to fill the schedule.
- Agree with increase in math.
- Need more English because it's important.

Delaware Association of School Administration

- Four credits in math is a good recommendation.

Question 2

Currently, it is possible for high school seniors to take one or two classes in order to graduate. Research indicated these students are not prepared for the work place or higher education. The committee intends to require a more rigorous senior year for the freshman entering in 2007. Please give us your opinions.

Guidance Counselors

- Increase all major subject areas to four year requirement.

Math Teachers

- None specifically stated.

Delaware State Board Association

- Students should be in school for their senior year.

Parent Advisory Group

- Seniors should stay in school.

Governor's Advisory Council for Exceptional Children and Governor's Council for Persons with Disabilities

- None specifically stated.

Urban League of Wilmington

- None specifically stated.

Curriculum Cadre

- None specifically stated.

Delaware State Education Association

- College prep students should be taking a full load during their senior year. Schools must have the courses available for the students to take their senior year.

Delaware Advisory Council for Career/Vocational Education

- Colleges will require a rigorous senior year and counselors and parents need to make students aware of the importance of their senior year. They need to be more focused and prepared to immediately enter college or the work place.
- Support the intent of this question.

Science Curriculum Group

- None specifically stated.

Christina School District Title I Parent Advisory Committee

- Require that all core courses be spread out throughout the four years of high school.

Delta Epsilon Chi Association

- None specifically stated.

Delaware Association of School Administration

- The goal of creating a meaningful senior year is the right direction for the state.

Question 3

The committee is considering an option for students who, along with their parents or guardians and school officials determine should meet some alternative requirements. What are your ideas about who might be included and how this option might work?

Guidance Counselors

- None specifically stated.

Math Teachers

- None specifically stated.

Delaware School Board Association

- None specifically stated.

Parent Advisory Group

- None specifically stated.

Governor's Advisory Council for Exceptional Children and Governor's Council for Persons with Disabilities

- None specifically stated.

Urban League of Wilmington

- None specifically stated.

Curriculum Cadre

- Differentiating to meet the needs of students who need the option is great.

Delaware State Education Association

- Since we are not meeting the needs of all student populations we need an opt-out program.

Delaware Advisory Council for Career/Vocational Education

- None specifically stated.

Science Curriculum Group

- None specifically stated.

Christina School District Title I Parent Advisory Committee

- None specifically stated.

Delta Epsilon Chi Association

- An alternative option should be offered if a committee approves the alternative or there is a special circumstance and only after all options have been considered.
- Students should have an option to do an alternative program.
- Committee should approve option by looking at the circumstances.
- Should be a committee decision.

Delaware Association of School Administration

- None specifically stated.

APPENDIX H:
Concerns by All Focus Groups

Concerns by All Focus Groups

Question 1

Please give us your opinion regarding the proposed increase in rigor and credit requirements for Delaware high school students beginning with the freshman entering in 2007.

Guidance Counselors

- Concern that students will figure out how to “work the system” to minimize the amount of work required in order to graduate.
- Four year requirement - including Algebra II will be difficult for many students and may hurt many students.
- Hiring the number of math teachers needed to meet new requirement will be a challenge.
- Attempt to increase rigor may also inadvertently make room to “dumb down” math option — must create statewide math standard.
- The current English courses taught do not prepare students for college level English—the state needs to increase the rigor.

Math Teachers

- Elementary and middle school students will not be aligned with the new standards – they need to keep pace with high school requirements.
- July is way too soon to move this forward.
- Concerned we are diminishing the quality and grade level standards we already meet.
- Districts will revert back to a two year Algebra 1 class in order to get four years of math.
- Performance Level I students entering high schools are behind in math requirements and don’t actually get a high school math requirement until tenth grade, therefore, they will never have the opportunity to take four years of math.
- Many students won’t be able to meet the increased requirement and will end up dropping out.
- If our graduation rate goes down then NCLB will put the school on “academic review” or “watch”.
- Concerned that we will have the same number of students and won’t get additional teachers because the number of teachers is based on unit count not on the number of courses all students must take to meet graduation requirements.
- If classes are made larger, teaching effectiveness will decrease.
- Students attending Groves are not taught the same math that is offered in high school.
- Alternative courses such as summer school, correspondence courses and online credits don’t meet the rigor and must be addressed if the requirement is increased.
- Concerned that votech and co-op programs have not been considered in this and won’t align their courses with increased requirements. These students will not have the time in their schedule in their senior year to take additional credits.
- We will need more funding, more certified math teachers, more books and more classroom space.
- Concerned about students who have to double up on math classes. Integrated programs build on one another. Easier to double up in a traditional program than in a non-traditional program. Non-traditional curriculum students are at a disadvantage.
- University of Delaware currently “recommends” – not “requires” four math credits. Concerned we are moving ahead of the university and might be hurting students.
- Our administrators are looking for ways to add more rigor into the middle schools through Algebra and Geometry, and losing the credits in middle school would defeat this approach.
- Most new initiatives need time and money to accomplish. With schools having the legislated mandate to align the math curriculum in each district to the GLEs (grade level expectations) by June 2007, there will be little “free time” for schools to work on the professional development to create new classes and to focus on improved teaching strategies.
- We definitely want our students to continue to graduate in four years. For students who struggle in mathematics, we will need to find ways to help them achieve at higher levels. These ways may be outside of the normal school day.

- Justifying the need for additional math courses in high school will be much easier when higher education changes their entrance requirements.

Delaware State Board Association

- Committee has not done much to increase rigor. The committee wasted a lot of time.
- Twenty-two credits is too low to graduate.
- Concerned with middle school reform, right now there is a disconnect.
- Concerned about funding.
- Keeping more students in school will require more teachers.
- Do not want to see AP left behind. Must ensure these students can still take AP courses.
- The increase in rigor must provide meaningful courses and not be designed as “filler” courses.
- Concern over the term “rigor”. Local boards should have the responsibility of making sure the curriculum has rigor.
- The more credits we require of students, the more students we will lose.
- Math teachers are expensive.
- This is not more rigorous for districts already requiring more than 22 credits.
- There is a disconnect between high school foreign language requirements and what colleges require for admittance.

Parent Advisory Council

- Guidance counselors to make sure computer classes are scheduled.
- Need resources in lower grades to prepare them for increased rigor throughout their schooling.
- Professional training for administrators / teachers / guidance counselors to increase rigor (and parents).
- There are too many tests.
- Math in high school does not prepare students for college.
- Well-defined and appropriate testing materials based on experiences are needed to show what has been learned.
- Parents need to be aware and involved with the curriculum.
- Parents need training to understand curriculum changes.
- More frequent progress reports should be given to parents and not wait for report card or mid-terms.

Governor’s Advisory Council for Exceptional Children and Governor’s Council for Persons with Disabilities

- There are not enough qualified math teachers in the state.
- Our school districts do not offer enough school choice options.
- The curriculum for elementary and middle school students needs to be investigated to see how it prepares students for high school and where and why we are losing students.
- Concerned about the feeding pattern of students getting to high school who are not prepared to meet the new requirements. We need to strengthen the elementary and middle school curriculums at the same time we are working on the high school.
- Need to provide more support for all students in need of it, not just the special education students. There are students who need the extra support now, at all levels of education, and will need it more with the new requirements.
- Also believe that it might cause more students to drop out.
- Concerned that the drop out rate will increase if we increase graduation requirements.
- Concerned students with disabilities might drop out at a higher rate than they currently do if we increase high school graduation requirements.
- Suggest that the embedded credits in vocational programs count as science credit.
- These new requirements are not dealing with the real problems we have with students and education.

Urban League of Wilmington

- This is not the systemic change we need.
- Requiring more high school credits is meaningless without good curriculum in place, better trained teachers, deeper personalization and guidance, very powerful career pathways that are aligned to Delaware Futures Program, better guidance counseling services to assist students with a map for their four years of high school and a well developed advisory curriculum that takes students beyond high school.

Curriculum Cadre

- The Delaware science standards are written for four years and the new requirements do not include earth science and astronomy (standard four and five).
- This sends a mixed message to high school teachers that we want them to offer integrated courses but the requirements suggest discrete courses.
- The science requirements reflect what the Committee of 10 made in 1895 and they are even in the same order (alphabetical). There has been a lot of thought into developing and piloting a science program that is meaningful to all kids. This does not appear to be advancing curriculum for all kids. Progress is slow, but we are making progress in our science curriculum.
- The emphasis on credit focuses more on seat time rather than competency.
- The new requirements reflect a disconnect of what our students will be prepared to do at a post secondary level.
- What about world languages? Students are required to take 3 years for University of Delaware!
- Science standards are written for 4 years. The proposed 3 credits does not take this into consideration. The Delaware Science Coalition's curriculum is of higher rigor than traditional biology, chemistry, and physics. Suggesting these three courses will decrease the rigor at high school and go back to a traditional program that has been documented as a failure. The National Science Education standards, BSCS, AAAS and other science agencies have completed research in high school requirements. This seems to have not been taken into consideration. Foundational physics (Physics First Movement) and chemistry concepts need to be learned prior to biology as biology is now learned on a chemical level, requiring knowledge of chemistry and energy. Delaware science at high school has not been given the chance to succeed as the program has grown from K-8 to K-12. The model is cited nationally as one other states should follow.

Delaware State Education Association

- The University of Delaware does not allow students to use a calculator when they take the math placement test, yet in high school they are allowed to use the calculator. The students should be evaluated on math courses taught in the twenty-first century rather than the 1950's. Del-Tech also does not allow calculators.
- Students participating in block scheduling will take the equivalent of three years of math in 1.5 years, therefore, they would not have math in their junior or senior year.
- We should not require another credit in math if it has to be higher than Algebra II.
- Increasing the math credit will increase the drop out rate. ESL and special education students will not be able to complete another math credit.
- There needs to be an emphasis of alternative settings and how they meet any state standards.
- We are only looking at students going to college and that is not the majority of our students.
- The increase in rigor does not have to come from the number of credits or through higher level math. The rigor comes from the quality of what students are getting in the classroom and counting that rather than just adding another credit.
- Biggest concern is that all of the data we have been presented with is anecdotal rather than quantitative.
- This will impact not only the drop out rate but the four year graduation cell in NCLB.
- We can increase rigor without changing the content areas by giving math credit for work students are doing in other courses. For example, drafting classes require math skills and they could receive credit for this class. Would like to see the fourth math credit coming from classes or training in experiential settings.

- The infrastructure has to be able to support any extra math. The drop out rate will increase if a fourth year of math is added.
- The committee is not addressing the real problem which is a lack of trade education options for our students.
- Most of the requirements came from the committee listening to the University of Delaware. The University of Delaware has the right to require four year of math credits and students with only three math credits are not admitted there. Agree that students going to a four-year college should have four math credits.
- There is a need for consistency from K-12 regarding any program. Need to address the concerns and programs needed for the ESL students and their parents right now rather than focusing our attention on this initiative. This is another demand on educators and nothing is ever good enough. The committee should be responding to what educators are saying rather than the business leaders.
- Students' success in science is largely associated with their success in math.
- The teachers teaching physics will need to be certified in the particular science they teach and sometime they vary from year to year depending on the scheduling.
- We do not have the facilities to have all sciences taught with a lab and we do not have the time. Labs require lab preparation and without a lab assistant or additional time in a teacher's schedule the lab will not happen. We need more teachers, more supplies and equipment and more labs and it all requires more money. The majority of teachers design, prepare and clean up the labs on their own time. This ideal scenario the committee is proposing is making it impossible to be a dedicated professional with a private life.
- Concerned about the rigor requirements because students can leave middle school without passing all of their subjects. Students are already coming into high school unprepared to meet the rigorous math and science of high school.
- Our school's schedule has so much extra time built into it for more than graduation requirements. Students are choosing alternative sources rather than passing the rigorous courses.
- The math sequence is not realistic for many of our students. A different sequence from what is being proposed is needed.
- Do not support four credits in math due to the lack of staffing and taking away from the focus of DSTP test scores.
- These proposals will cause labor strife and problematic contract negotiations regarding the work load provisions of collective bargaining agreements.
- We need to prepare students for college or teach them a trade or skill, not all of our students are going to college.
- If we try to move the technology credit to the middle schools we'll need to add teachers there, we'll need to track the credit and make sure that all students get the technology course.
- Middle schools will need more staff, money and computers.
- The committee should look at America's Lab report published by National Academy of Sciences.
- It will be a travesty if any of these additional requirements are put in at the expense of the arts.
- If students are required to take more than Algebra II level courses and only scored a 1 on the 8th grade DSTP, being placed in a remedial math class for zero credit in ninth grade would be impossible for them to achieve four math credits in a traditional setting. Thus they would need to be sent to Groves or less rigorous facilities to find that credit.

Delaware Advisory Council for Career/Vocational Education

- Making the curriculum more rigorous does not mean that students will be more successful. We need to address the school environment, individual learning styles of students, teaching methods, facilities, resources, supplies, etc.
- If high school administrations are to be successful in meeting these new requirements they need to receive additional help such as people to fill positions, and financial support.
- Too many districts look at the requirements as optional rather than mandated.
- We are preparing students for college not a vocational career or a skilled trade. We don't give students alternatives to participate in these programs and we should. Algebra is required to pass skills trades test.

Science Curriculum Group

- Currently, inquiry activities are used in science courses and not taught separately as a lab. Students need the construct continually.
- Research done by physics teachers says that high school and college students do not learn through lecture/lab but through folding activities into learning.
- We've just had realignment of the science standards and creating grade level expectations during the past year and by June 2007 are required to have the state recommended curriculum. There is a disconnect between what we have done with the realignment and what is being proposed.
- Need to hear a commitment that this proposal is within the ongoing work of state standards and statewide recommended curriculum.
- For all students who are graduating this seems to be moving away from an integrated curriculum.
- The wording for the science requirements is old language and leaves open the opportunity to revert to instruction based on the separation of sciences by discipline.
- Earth Science is not included and should be.
- For a general student not going into the sciences it will take away from a well rounded science program. It will hurt the current reform effort.
- Standards need to be communicated better.
- Need the state board's support and endorsement of an integrated approach. Reform is taking time but it is working. The chart is so broad it glosses over the reform effort that is going on. The Achieve Report is cast in the old mind set and Delaware is beyond that now.
- Science lab will cost additional money. Labs will require additional space and teachers.

Christina School District Title I Parent Advisory Committee

- The current system has not kept up with the changing times, e.g., students do not get enough financial information in order to communicate with people globally.
- There is too much pressure placed on students and parents re: the state testing.

Delta Epsilon Chi Association

- Increasing the science requirement will force students into a class they don't want to take just to meet the bar.
- Math should not be increased because it will take away from electives especially at schools like Polytech.
- Integrated math is not preparing students for college. This math is taught in small chunks and doesn't have enough substance.
- Four years of English is just something you have to go through and it doesn't have a purpose. There is little writing required.
- Senior year English is useless.
- Increase should be flexible with votech class scheduling.

Delaware Association of School Administration

- Adding credits without the rigor will not strengthen the curriculum.
- We have not increased the rigor by adding a fourth year of math.
- Students who earn high school Algebra I credit in 8th grade could earn three credits in math by junior year. Requiring a student to take one more credit in math in their senior year will be a restriction or penalty for some students.

Question 2

Currently, it is possible for high school seniors to take one or two classes in order to graduate. Research indicated these students are not prepared for the work place or higher education. The committee intends to require a more rigorous senior year for the freshman entering in 2007. Please give us your opinions.

Guidance Counselors

- Middle school courses do not prepare students for high school courses.

Math Teachers

- If we set a number of credits students need to complete, and they complete them prior to senior year, you are just forcing them to be in the building taking credits they really don't need to graduate. It doesn't make sense to force them to be there just to be there.

Delaware State Board Association

- Seniors completing their 22 high school credits should be permitted to attend college courses during their senior year.
- It is going to be tough to keep kids in school who meet their 22 credit requirements and want to work during their senior year.
- Students should have choices about how they spend their senior year once they have met their 22 credit requirements.
- When schools only require two credits in a senior year, the student wants to take the minimum and puts pressure on parents to be able to do this.
- Students completing 22 credits early are not a problem.

Parent Advisory Council

- Some students need to make money for "senior expenses" (year book, class trip, etc.) to help their parents.
- Seniors don't know about scholarships, they need to learn how to write letters, etc. and use resources such as Outward Bound, FAME and TRIO to point them in the right direction, especially for students not going to college.
- Need business math and other basics for living.
- Class trips have gotten out of hand.
- Students who work in senior year need to do it for the right reason (not based on the need for money and school expenses).
- Let students take college credit in senior year or work or learn a trade.
- Seniors stay in school and get credits needed for college.

**Governor's Advisory Council for Exceptional Children and
Governor's Council for Persons with Disabilities**

- I do not believe that keeping kids in school during their senior year will better prepare them for college. Whatever is not working now won't be addressed by only increasing rigor.
- Keeping students in school all day for their senior year will not help students. It is about what they have learned and how well prepared they are prior to the senior year that matters most. The problem is more complex than just adding a few more classes to the senior year.

Urban League of Wilmington

- This is a reflection of inadequate academic counseling. With better advisory curriculum in place, students would not be leaving during their senior year because they would have a program in place that they are committed to and are constructively engaged.

Curriculum Cadre

- An increase in the math credit, alone, won't keep the student in school their senior year. It will take something in addition to address that senior year.

- The committee has been concentrating on increasing quantity of courses and not the rigor or quality.
- You can not legislate rigor.
- An unintended consequence of this is that in order to take math in the senior year in a block schedule school a student may not have math instruction for two years in order to save a credit to take in the senior year.
- Think that students should have a meaningful senior year. The senior year should count for something. Not sure increasing graduation requirements will result in increased student achievement. I believe the number of students opting out will be significant.
- My concern is that this appears to also be going back to a “seat time” mentality. Not sure that will result in rigor. Where is the expectation for mastery/competency? Simply sitting in four English classes earning a “D” (passing grade) does not mean a student is more ready for the workplace or college. Look at other means for increasing rigor.

Delaware State Education Association

- Students working co-op should be allowed to go out to work and earn credits for the work.
- If the students spread out the courses they may not have everything they need to be successful on the SATs.
- Students should not be allowed to go to college to take a course that is offered in their home high school. Students will do this because those courses are easier. If the high school offers the AP test than students should take it at the high school, if it is not, then they should be allowed to take it at the college.
- A blanket requirement for a rigorous senior year is a mistake. There are students who need to work to earn money for tuition and students who are disruptive should be allowed to leave.
- If the students have met the requirements we should not try to keep them in school.

Delaware Advisory Council for Career/Vocational Education

- Students need direction and currently have too many choices to make regarding their curriculum.

Science Curriculum Group

- Increased course load does not mean increased rigor. That is a big fallacy.
- Need to have more discussion around rigor – what it is and what is expected.
- Fear classes will be split into 2 class for 4 credits, e.g., Algebra IA and Algebra IB. However, if this student can reach the requirement via this method, there shouldn’t be a problem for this student.

Christina School District Title I Parent Advisory Committee

- None specifically stated.

Delta Epsilon Chi Association

- Its okay to participate in a co-op program but it must be job related.
- Like easy day option.

Delaware Association of School Administration

- Requiring seniors to take one more credit in math in their senior year seems punitive. Students should be given options.
- We are going in the wrong direction when we look at course credits only.

Question 3

The committee is considering an option for students who, along with their parents or guardians and school officials determine should meet some alternative requirements. What are your ideas about who might be included and how this option might work?

Guidance Counselors

- Not everyone needs a four year college degree—flexibility of choices needed.
- Do not use the term “opt-out” – sends the wrong message and students will think they can use this option instead of meeting requirements.

Math Teachers

- Don’t believe there are any high school math teachers on the Graduation Requirements Committee.
- Concerned it doesn’t matter what we say.
- Concerned it is aligned with years rather than content and standards.
- Why are we considering “opt-out” programs? Opt-out programs seem to be a way of lowering the expectations for students and would be next to impossible to implement fairly and equitably for all students.
- Will an opt-out program send more students than ever into vocational programs? When reading the “opt out” descriptions from other states, it seems that the students who are given an option are those that go into the career and technical (vocational) programs. Currently students in the vocational programs in IRSD have a very low rate of meeting the standards on the DSTP. Do we want to give the message that it is acceptable for approximately 42% of the school population to not meet the standards in tenth grade mathematics?

Delaware School Board Association

- We need to find ways to engage low performing students and not put them in an opt-out program.
- These requirements look like college prep courses so we need an alternative for students who will not be able to meet the requirements.
- Students who want to receive trade classes during high school are not able to take those classes in Delaware.
- Votech schools are not available to all students interested in attending.
- The State Board needs to define opt-out.
- All students need to meet a high level of rigor, regardless of whether they are going to college.
- Need a definition of opt-out.
- Votech use to be for students who couldn’t succeed in regular high schools. Now, votechs pick the cream of the crop to attend their schools.
- We do not want our students to feel like failures if they are not going on to college.
- High schools do not have enough money to fund trades and other career pathway options.
- Every student needs to be competent in the basics such as reading and writing.
- Some votechs select special education students, not only the high achievers.
- Votechs traditionally got students with discipline problems, so they moved to a comprehensive program so they could be more selective in the students they accept.

Parent Advisory Council

- How will Hispanic or students with other languages meet the increased rigor?

Governor’s Advisory Council for Exceptional Children and Governor’s Council for Persons with Disabilities

- Do not use the term “opt out”.

- We are too focused only on a college track for students and need to be more supportive of those seeking a trade or vocational education. Students need more options for those courses in high school.
- White collar jobs have an increasing potential to be exported.

Urban League of Wilmington

- The group is opposed to an optional program for students because there is no benefit for students. An optional program is letting the districts off the hook and releasing them from accountability. It undermines the mandate to raise rigor and standards for all students. Parents are not able to make an informed decision about their student because the only information they have is what the school gives them.

Curriculum Cadre

- How we approach this will determine whether or not this becomes a loophole for students to get around the proposed rigor.
- It can seriously retard high school reform by not allowing us to hold high expectations and standards for all kids.
- Many students want to take easier courses in their senior year to keep their GPA high.
- High school graduation requirements should answer what is a good expectation for all kids. We should not offer an opt-out program. We have a plan with standards that has been underway for 15 years and has not yet come to fruition in high schools and we need to give it time to do so.
- The fact that this has come from the Achieve report has colored the proposed requirements.
- The initiative is about motivation but the very students for whom this is directed have exhibited they are not responsive to external control. The focus of the state board should be directed at how to insure that educators implement that which research indicates increases students intrinsic motivation to learn.
- This will impact seniors who want to take early admission to college and would not have had to put in a senior year otherwise.
- Financially and personnel wise the four credits in four years won't be achieved in some districts because of the lack of teachers and money.
- For any program that we want our students to achieve, we need to have the resources – time, money and teachers – to achieve it.
- Indiana's program looks promising? Scary!

Delaware State Education Association

- Anytime you hold people accountable and offer an opt-out you are giving students an opportunity to not meet minimum standards. Disagree with an opt-out option. It is too similar to the tiered diploma.
- An opt-out program makes the rigorous proposal a façade because we are not increasing anything.
- If there is an opt-out option we can not leave it up to parents to make the decision. There should be a committee to make that decision with consistent guidelines throughout the state.
- There needs to be a serious look at how our standards have been interpreted in our graduation requirement document. Apparently there is a disconnect between our requirements and how it is perceived by Achieve.

Delaware Advisory Council for Career/Vocational Education

- The students looking for the easy way out or not doing well will want the optional program, but they are students who need it the most. An opt-out program destroys everything being proposed.
- An opt-out program is going backwards and goes back to tracking and the three- tiered diploma. It should not be offered. We do not want to stigmatize students and allow them to choose an opt-out.
- No opt-out program.
- We should not offer an opt-out program.

Science Curriculum Group

- Do not go back to tracking.
- This is a very complex question depending on circumstances. We need to meet student's needs.

Christina School District Title I Parent Advisory Committee

- All students should be able to meet these requirements and should not be given the option of an alternative program.
- If you give students an optional program you are giving them the easy way out.

Delta Epsilon Chi Association

- This is predestine to allowing students to do less.
- Not for lazy students.
- Special education students should not be set up to fail.
- Not all college bound students need calculus.
- All increases should be done keeping teachers in mind. Teachers should not be overwhelmed with all the requirements they must meet. They should be given options on what to teach.

Delaware Association of School Administration

- The alternative program should not be a short cut to avoid a rigorous curriculum.

APPENDIX I:
Suggestions by All Focus Groups

Suggestions by All Focus Groups

Question 1

Please give us your opinion regarding the proposed increase in rigor and credit requirements for Delaware high school students beginning with the freshman entering in 2007.

Guidance Counselors

- Math and science go hand in hand, require advance math to meet increased science requirement – skills and knowledge don't line up.
- Require increased credits for senior year for all courses.
- World geography should be required all four years and should include social studies.
- Ask to clarify what course/credit requirements (especially math) are needed for entrance into their programs.
- Specific courses need to be defined to create pathways in different areas.
- Pathways should be spelled out so students know what is required and in what order the courses should be taken.
- Create "interest" pathways.
- Pathways need to be re-written to be "career" pathways not "academic" pathways.
- Need to be flexible when increasing the number of credits so districts can choose how they design the course options.
- The state should require at least two consecutive years (maybe three years) of a foreign language and offer it as a career pathway.
- Increase math to offer Algebra I-A and Algebra I-B for students who are struggling to meet requirement. Each algebra class would be a one year offering and would be equal to one credit. Having Algebra offered over a two year period for a total of two credits.
- Let districts decide on two additional math requirements after Algebra II/Geometry to meet requirement.

Math Teachers

- Math courses should be geared toward college or work place for seniors.
- Eighth grade academy might need to be a sixth grade academy (or earlier) because accountability is needed at an earlier grade level.
- Requirements should be written around a set of standards rather than around a number of credits.
- Increase rigor in three current math courses.
- We need proof that increasing the credit will impact student achievement.

Delaware State Board Association

- Need to get back to the basics, teaching the subject matter rather than the integrated approach.
- English needs to include literature.
- English needs to include spoken English.
- Many health problems begin in a person's early years. Health prevention and survival skills are also important and need to be addressed.
- Would like to see innovative ways to address life issues.
- Foreign language does not have to be a definite course requirement for all students, it should be offered as an elective.
- European students are expected to speak a minimum of two languages. If we want our students to be competitive, then we need to give them the rigorous requirements in language that other countries have.

Parent Advisory Council

- Students should be identified by their learning style and needs.
- Credit recovery programs such as the Twilight Program should be used.
- Address that technology needs to be competitive.

- Need more corporate mentors for students to help them understand why it's important to stay in school and go to college.
- Need computer classes to continue in high school for certification in Microsoft Office Products.
- Provide computer equipment / support for Twilight Program.
- Mentors need to show students how reading / writing and math are needed in a job.
- Students need to know their elected officials.
- Students need to know Delaware history.
- Need volunteer "credits" to encourage students to give back to the community.
- Computer classes should begin at the elementary level and progress through school.
- All students should work a part time job for a few weeks to get a feel for the work world.
- More defined measurable objectives and goals for educating staff.
- Give test to know the level of knowledge (their foundation).
- Teach the basics.
- For those schools who do not have good tests scores, look at schools who teach well and see what they do differently.
- Expectation and accountability should be defined for staff and students and put in writing especially in situations where students are failing.
- Provide parental training (not a handbook) in 8th grade so parents can understand proposed classes for high school.

**Governor's Advisory Council for Exceptional Children and
Governor's Council for Persons with Disabilities**

- We should increase the salaries of math and science/physics teachers and speech therapists, rather than administrative salaries.
- Our nineteen school districts should be consolidated in order to be more cost effective and productive.
- Districts should offer magnet schools or customized schools that specialize in various programs, such as, science, math, business, agriculture, etc. and teach general subjects as well.
- Would like to see more high schools offering machine shops.
- Would like to be assured that "all" truly means all students, including those with disabilities. They should get the support they need in order to meet the new requirements and a variety of assessment practices should be utilized in order to allow them to demonstrate their abilities.
- We need to make extra time available to students lagging behind in order to help them catch up, especially those in middle school and those who will be impacted by the new requirements.
- The state should dictate one curriculum that all districts must follow rather than allowing districts to create their own.
- Department of Education needs to verify what districts / schools are actually doing rather than just rely on what they say they are doing.
- Social workers, with masters' degrees, should be in the schools for students with problems that are not being addressed elsewhere and are struggling in school.
- Teachers need to be trained in how to train / manage the students in their classroom.

Urban League of Wilmington

- Science should be four credits.
- Social Science should be four credits.
- Require our students to take four credits in foreign language. Offer Spanish, Asian, Mandarin, French and Latin as foreign language courses. Our goal should be to have our children become bi-lingual.
- Would like to see Introduction to Organic Chemistry offered in high schools because it is required for several science degrees in colleges.
- Service learning and students giving back to the community is important and students should be given an opportunity to do this for credit.
- Life skills are important and should be integrated into the curriculum as long as it is not trivialized. Perhaps integrating it into civics and economics is a possibility.

- Students need to learn to be citizens of the community and participate in elections, home ownership and other areas.
- Need to provide opportunities for students to explore areas of interests and career options through electives or career pathways in addition to the academic requirements.
- Offer more electives that are an expansion of core courses in order for students to take additional credits that tie into English, Math, Science, etc., rather than electives that deal only with careers. We should not tie students into career electives.
- We should have an arts requirement for students to graduate.
- Have a life skills requirement and offer a set of electives for life skills that students may choose from.
- We should increase the number of credits beyond the 22 being proposed. Would like the state to increase the number of credits in health, art, and foreign language. The state and districts need to be aligned re: the number of credits required to graduate from high school.
- We need to teach reading to high school students, and offer it for credit, to those not reading on grade level. Do not penalize students for skills they are lacking.
- The state needs to address the curriculum rigor of elementary and middle schools so that students can meet the rigor of high school.
- We need to address the achievement gap we have in the state. There is a significant number of students who currently do not meet the standards. Increasing the rigor and credit requirements should coincide with helping those students meet the requirements and graduate.
- We need to ensure that all kids succeed. The schools/districts need to have support for those students in place.
- Actively make students and parents aware of the availability of courses outside of the normal school setting, such as, online, community colleges, summer course offerings, etc.

Curriculum Cadre

- If this research, which indicates that adding credits has not statistically significantly increased student achievement is valid, then the state needs to look for other ways to increase the challenges we ask of students.
- There needs to be a financial analysis done of the requirements.
- The requirements seem to support integrated science curriculums (as long as the term “or the equivalent” remains) that we currently have but the term “lab” should be “laboratory exercises that are integrated into the content”.
- Listing the courses in alphabetical order suggests that is the order in which they should be taught. Given what we know today, we need to have Chemistry before Biology. Biology is no longer organismic but it is on a chemical level.
- We do not want students to have to take Physics in ninth grade because they may not be at the math readiness level.
- There is a lot of research out there re: Physics First Movement that gives the benefits of having a conceptual physical science course first in ninth grade. The committee should look at this research.
- The word “integrated” needs to be added explicitly to the science curriculum proposal.
- Give credence to the standards, the GLEs and instructional practices.
- Should do some studies in Delaware to see how our students are doing with standards based education.
- The new requirements should explicitly state and emphasize reading at a secondary level rather than the word “literature” because the standards talk about reading instruction.
- Our universities have long accepted integrated or coordinated science courses.
- We are looking at seat time versus achievement. My idea is to award “credits” by course and grade earned and achievement on state test. This would increase rigor. Making students sit through more courses doesn’t necessarily increase rigor. Sitting in a high school course earning a “C” or lower does not prepare our students. They are just getting by. Being expected to perform to earn a grade to receive more credits to graduate may prove to be more motivating to students. Students not earning the higher grades could take more courses to get their credits. This builds

- more time into the system for students who need more time to achieve. (thus meeting the needs of all students).
- All students should be challenged in their coursework. Alignment with state standards seems to be realignment in science and social studies. Align science and social studies requirements with state standards. Our physics, chemistry, etc. courses are integrated not discrete.
 - Include a world language requirement.
 - The ELA requirements should be emphasizing reading rather than literature.
 - World Languages required for most colleges—it needs to be a graduation requirement (2 or more years). Also we need to keep our students educated in a “global” society.
 - ELA should say “reading” not “literature”.
 - Recommended curriculum should not state courses but should meet standards.
 - Science should be four credits; this is decreasing the rigor. Delaware standards are written for four years. Where is Earth Science, Astronomy, etc.? All courses with a lab should be integrated.

Delaware State Education Association

- Middle school students who take high school Algebra I/Geometry should be receiving a high school credit.

Delaware Advisory Council for Career/Vocational Education

- There is a broader issue of what the current environment in schools is and how to accomplish more rigor without addressing the following issues: need for younger teachers who can motivate students better, the large number of teachers going into retirement and losing too many students to other options, such as, private and charter schools.
- Students need to see meaning in what is offered in school. They have to understand why they need certain courses and how it relates to their individual career goals.
- Students need to have mentors. They need to taste success.
- Do not give students a choice.
- Offer fewer electives.

Science Curriculum Group

- Earth Science should be included in the science curriculum.
- Consideration should be given to backing up some of the high school science courses to the middle school level and getting more coordination beginning at Pre-Kindergarten level.
- Need to do a serious analysis of students participating in block scheduling. Getting a fourth math credit in the senior year will be challenging in block scheduling.
- Leave off the specific language that names science courses and go back to “3 credits in science”.
- Hope someone does a financial analysis of this proposal. A fourth math credit is stretching our resources and maybe other items will require additional resources.

Christina School District Title I Parent Advisory Committee

- Beginning in elementary school, our students need to learn about banking, investing, Wall Street, economics and finances in general.
- Schools need to share newspapers with students and help them to be aware of issues around the world.
- Schools need to teach more about establishing a business and entrepreneurship because all students do not plan to attend college.
- Teachers need to be trained to teach students so that they will pass the DSTP. The teachers are a main reason students are not passing these tests. Teachers should be required to take the DSTP.
- Any new curriculum should be tied to the state tests administered to the students.
- Increase the GPA students must meet to participate in athletics and extracurricular activities.

Delta Epsilon Chi Association

- Technology classes should be required in high school.
- Keep three credits in science classes just make the content harder and more challenging because many classes are repetitive.
- Math should include calculus and statistics because it is required in college.
- Levels of calculus should be offered for those who can't do the harder math.
- Not everyone is on the same level between school districts. Core course requirements should be the same throughout the state.
- Three or four years of a language should equal an English requirement.
- Offer a language in sixth grade or earlier.
- Put more English classes in middle school.
- Computer classes should be taught in middle school and should include a variety of computer classes (Unix, etc). Middle school should require more than computer basics. Keyboarding classes are a waste of time because you can develop those skills while learning the other programs.
- Reduce gym credits to 1 credit, e.g., half year of physical education and half year of a health class. This would allow students to take another elective or a computer science course.
- Give a gym credit for sports.
- Driver's education should be taken out and learned at an alternative time and through an alternative program or after school.
- Having driver's education during school is helpful for some students.
- Language should be required.
- Require a "communication" class such as "oral communication or business communication" and use it as an English credit choice.
- "Student aide" activities should be limited to one or two classes during high school, not every year.
- "Student aides" should not be taken away because they are important for some students who won't be going to college.

Delaware Association of School Administrators

- Create a policy that permits students to opt out of taking math in their senior year if they request to do that and their school record and educational goal supports this or allow them to replace the 4th math requirement with another core course that meets their individual goal.
- Some students can reach calculus, pre- calculus or statistics by the time they are seniors and should be permitted to take other courses of their choice. Students who have already met their math requirements prior to their senior year should not be penalized by the requirement of one more math.
- Make sure that the courses/credits do include the rigor that is needed.
- Need to change the mind set of students and parents to move them beyond the minimalist attitude re: students taking the least amount of courses in order to meet the minimum requirements just to graduate.
- By their junior year, students and parents should be required to sign a contract to commit them to following through with their senior year courses and schedule.
- Require 8th graders to sign a contract that outlines high school expectations and requirements of the student.
- Require a computer class upon entering high school that ensures all students have the skills and abilities they need in this area to successfully complete the technology requirements of their curriculum. Offer a half credit for this course.
- Require students to take a competency test before entering high school.
- Make a statewide requirement that all eighth graders are completing the same math course.
- We should award high school credit for high school courses taken during middle school.
- Move driver's education to the junior or senior year.
- Continue reviewing the physical education and health requirements so we can offer more meaningful courses in these areas.
- Need to review and possibly overhaul how the state calculates the graduation rate.

Question 2

Currently, it is possible for high school seniors to take one or two classes in order to graduate. Research indicated these students are not prepared for the work place or higher education. The committee intends to require a more rigorous senior year for the freshman entering in 2007. Please give us your opinions.

Guidance Counselors

- All seniors should be required to take five classes they must pass to graduate.
- If a “senior project” is implemented, it will require staff development.
- Senior project should tie into Individualized Learning Plan (ILP).
- “Seminar” classes can be developed for credit.
- Students should be permitted to participate in half day college class options.
- Have college credits computed to meet both high school and college requirements.
- Students in co-op and vocational programs should still be able to receive credit for this work.
- Currently, if students have a job they can leave school early—increase requirements so they can’t leave.
- Create standards other than DSTP for middle school students to reduce opportunity of failure.
- Middle school students need more requirements, currently they only have to “attend”, not “pass” their courses.

Math Teachers

- There should be some way that students have to stay in school and take at least a half day of classes.
- There is a benefit to students in co-op receiving credit and they should be permitted to continue.

Delaware State Board Association

- For college bound students, Latin is a great course to have available in high school.
- Any course that would assist in a student’s career path should be available as an option for those students as an elective.
- Look at college bound AP students who will be expected to attend larger class size. We could prepare them now but putting them into classes with 60-70 students and thereby free up teachers to work with students who are not AP and need additional help in smaller classes.
- Whether seniors are in school for a full day or not and how many credits they take should be under local control.
- A senior project is a good idea to keep kids focused in their senior year.
- Teach life skills courses to those students not going on to college (credit card use, balancing checkbook and personal finance).
- Add a life skills course for all students.
- Do a survey of students who only take 22 credits to see who they are.
- Link extra curricular activities, including sports to the senior year credit requirements.
- Local boards should make the decision about credits and how they want to deal with seniors.

Parent Advisory Council

- Parents need help to change their perception of college so they can encourage students to go to college.
- Parents, students, staff, administrators, guidance counselors, etc. need to increase their awareness of SEED programs and financial forms.
- Educate parents on financial issues such as savings bond, etc. to be used in college or business.
- More cooperation and entrepreneurial courses.

Governor’s Advisory Council for Exceptional Children and Governor’s Council for Persons with Disabilities

- Students should have the option of whether they want a rigorous senior year with AP classes or not. Students should have the option of working rather than staying in school for the whole day.

- Seniors should be able to choose how they spend their senior year, work/job vs. school and more classes. Students should not be pushed into staying in school just to keep them there. We should include a work education program for high school students so they understand the importance of education.
- Students should have the option of spending part of their day working, taking college level classes if that is what they want, or leave if they want to leave. They should have all three options.
- Let students graduate in three years so they can go from full time high student directly to college and meet college admission requirements.
- Students who exceed the requirements should have some options for senior year, but others need a basic program without options.

Urban League of Wilmington

- An example of advisory curriculum is a minimum of bi-weekly meetings with a faculty advisor in small groups over a period of two or more years. The faculty advisor needs to be trained in the advisory curriculum.
- The courses in the senior year career pathway should be a dual credit that is aligned with higher education or technical degree/certification programs.
- The senior year should require more rigor and credit.

Curriculum Cadre

- We need more resources to have stronger program for seniors. We need more guidance personnel to assist our students. Guidance personnel are already stretched to far.
- The senior year issue should be dealt with as a separate issue. Perhaps a committee should study it as a separate issue.
- Re: math, it is the only place that skills are mentioned. Skills and essential understanding speak to rigor.
- The committee can look at the high schools that have the same standards being proposed to find the success and failure they have had with these requirements.
- Why is the wording different in some places it says “curricula should” or “curricula must”. In the regulations it will have to say “shall”. Curricula must include reading, writing, oral communication, listening and viewing. Reasoning and logic are not in the DE ELA standards / GLEs. “Literature” only refers to standard. Four-term should be “reading”. “Presentation and communication skills” should be oral communication, listening and viewing to match standards / GLEs. The requirements should be written as “must include” not “should emphasize”.
- The rigor needs to continue to prepare our students for life after high school. Also, colleges told us they look for the rigor continued in the students’ senior year. It is time to step up not down. ELA should also be required in the students’ senior year.
- Is there a discussion about a senior project? Can you legislate rigor? Appoint a sub-committee.

Delaware State Education Association

- Look at the scheduling in individual schools to determine how much dead time there is rather than mandating the courses taken specifically in their senior year.
- The school gets the unit for the senior if the senior takes two classes and leaves that frees up staff for other things. We need to have our schools properly funded the way vocational schools are funded so that we don’t have to keep going back to referendum when we need money.

Delaware Advisory Council for Career/Vocational Education

- Guidance counselors should be more focused and involved with seniors to help them prepare for what they will do once they graduate.
- We need additional guidance counselors and services to support students.
- Resources are needed to fund “career counselors” and related services in every high school in order to accomplish this goal.
- Businesses should adopt a school to mentor students and give them things they might not have otherwise. Their employees become a part of the school by mentoring and giving their time. It doesn’t have to only be financial.

- We need to put something else in place to get students ready for college or industry, such as internships/apprenticeship or a mentoring program in high school.
- Students should be more focused and have fewer distractions.

Science Curriculum Group

- The business community is seriously dropping the ball in checking on whether students graduate high school. They should be checking with the high school and requesting a copy of student's transcript.
- Do a study to see which companies hire full-time high school graduates and what their expectations are of the students. Would like to know what these students will do and the expectations of their skills.
- A complete study should be done about the scope of the senior year in the context of high school and high school reform. It is a complex problem that needs more than a simple solution, such as adding credits. The number of students who begin as freshman and don't make it to their senior year is a serious problem. It is compounded by the DSTP promotion requirements.

Christina School District Title I Parent Advisory Committee

- In eighth grade, all students should have a strategic plan that outlines each high school year courses, goals, expectations, etc. and evaluations should be completed so students and parents know when they have met the requirements.
- Students should not be allowed to drop out of school at the age of 16 because they are minors. We need to change the law.
- In situations where students are dropping out to financially support their families, the state needs to be providing help to these students and their families.
- We need to reward students for accomplishments other than grades, e.g., perfect attendance, community activism and volunteer work, "most improved" and mentoring their peers.
- Require all high school students to wear uniforms so they know how to dress, feel good about themselves and come to school prepared to work. Skirts should go to the knee and pants should come up the waist and be worn with a belt. The teachers should also have a dress code they are required to follow.
- Students need more health and gym requirements.
- Nutrition should be a primary focus of schools and provide students with healthy meals in the cafeteria. Remove soda machines from schools.
- Create a homework hotline so parents can find out what their students need to do each night.
- Students' absent from school should not be excused from homework assignments and should be required to make up all missed work.
- Students should be given two sets of books, one that stays home and one that stays in the school. Students will be less apt to lose the books and less wear and tear on the book.
- Every student should be able to bring textbooks home because they need them to do work and to study.
- Delaware should have an informational television channel that shows how to solve math problems (Baltimore has this in place).
- Need to do a better job in disseminating information to parents re: extra help, resources, money for improving students' academic performance.
- Create more academic contests for students.
- We should provide all students who graduate high school with a free college education.

Delta Epsilon Chi Association

- Leave the choice of more rigor or participating in a co-op up to the senior.
- Use time to take college courses.
- Require an essay be written about co-op experience.
- College bound students should have more requirements because they'll have more work to do in college.

- Students should have more support from guidance counselors who have realistic suggestions for their future.
- Guidance counselors should offer help to students with college scholarship forms, etc. Study hall time could also be used for this activity and take the place of an elective.

Delaware Association of School Administrators

- There should be a minimum number of credits required in the senior year.
- Seniors should be required to take a majority of credits in their senior year, e.g., for schools requiring 8 classes per day the senior would be required to take 5 classes.
- All students, including special education students, should be required to create an “exhibition project” in order to graduate. This is a project that includes in-depth research, an APA paper and an oral presentation. Their exhibition project should be based on the student’s area of interest and approved by a faculty group.
- Offer positive ways to help students succeed. Offer minors (two courses of the student’s choice above and beyond the state requirements) for students in their area of interest.
- Students may do their minor in English, Art, whatever they choose.
- Need to think of high school as a means to an end, not the end. We need to be creative in how we get our students ready for life after high school.
- Culture in schools need to improve to fosters a student’s creativity and desire to learn as to provide them with success and motivate them for future endeavors.

Question 3

The committee is considering an option for students who, along with their parents or guardians and school officials determine should meet some alternative requirements. What are your ideas about who might be included and how this option might work?

Guidance Counselors

- Optional programs will need rules and guidelines.
- Message should be communicated that “other option” is not meaningless or is of less value.
- Opt-out students still need to meet graduation requirements.
- Students participating in a different/individualized program should not be penalized or given a lesser diploma.

Math Teachers

- Allow these opt-out students to participate in college programs for high school or college credit.
- An opt-out program doesn’t have to include a formal Algebra II but it can have the same standards and credit.
- An alternate course list should be in place to help students meet the standards and graduate.

Delaware State Board Association

- We need to have trade school classes available to students.
- Rigorous courses should be for those going on to college.
- Students who want to go to trade school and participate in an apprentice program should have that option available to them.
- The opt-out should be an alternative program.
- Opt-out should not include trade schools.
- Rigor and the number of credits are two different things. We need increased rigor in all courses for all students.
- I’d like the courses to be called “relevant” more than “rigorous”.
- Need to get back to the real mission of vo-tech schools.
- We need someone to look at Europe’s education system because we are constantly compared to them. Let’s take a look at it and see if we can use it.
- Look at a career pathway for those students who do not want college prep curriculum and put rigor in all of those areas.

Parent Advisory Council

- Change alternative programs to meet the 33% of population who can't read.
- Every 9th grader should take the PSAT.
- Change requirements of alternative programs and current alternative programs.
- Parents need written information on all alternative programs.

Governor's Advisory Council for Exceptional Children and Governor's Council for Persons with Disabilities

- Need to increase program options for students not going on to college, such as more vocational programs.
- Need to have respect and value for students choosing a trade rather than college.
- Need more support at the high school level to help students find colleges and complete the application process.
- A life skills course that teaches real skills, such as balancing a checkbook or creating a household budget, should be offered to students in high school.
- Offer an academic program geared toward college bound students and one for those who do not plan to attend college.
- Increase career pathway programs in order to increase options to meet the needs for all students.
- Students should be given more options for which math course they take based on their interests and abilities. A separate track that permits this might be more successful.
- Students should have optional, more hands on courses that are applicable to their interests.
- Insure that graduation requirements reflect the variety of knowledge and skills that students are learning in school and will need after high school – use indicators of the knowledge and skills necessary for learning and successful work and living after high school.

Urban League of Wilmington

- Do not use the term "opt-out".
- Explore alternatives for students (not opt out) to get to the minimum number of credits to graduate.

Curriculum Cadre

- Do not offer an optional program, require students to meet the requirements if they want a diploma.
- Please give some consideration for delaying this decision and looking for some way to bridge high school rigor and the curriculum work that is already underway.
- Any consideration for science and social studies to have four credits in four years?
- Research suggests students should have each core course each year in high school – they experience the content in each year.
- The recommended graduation requirements should state that students have to meet the standards not a specific course.
- There still needs to be rigor, consistency and a detailed plan for all stakeholders, and enforced properly, without lowering standards.
- Look at Florida's program!

Delaware State Education Association

- Have to consider a student's IEP and recognize their completion of high school.

Delaware Advisory Council for Career/Vocational Education

- Can not support an opt-out for students who do not want to do the work. If it is academic or work related, it might be acceptable to opt-out. We have proven that all students can learn if we give them the time and resources they need.

- When students choose to drop out, they have other options such as Groves or other programs. Drop-outs don't look good for the state. However the drop-out students may enter another program and go on to get their diploma and be successful. It is a bad choice to drop-out but it is the student's choice. We just need to be there when they decide to come back and continue their education.
- Vocational and career program need to be of high quality because a large number of students need these programs.
- Career pathways are required as three courses in sequence and are not always implemented and enforced at the high school level. This needs to be addressed. Career pathways should be supported and documented by schools. Any additional graduation requirements should not negatively impact the ability of the school to schedule pathway classes or the student's ability to complete them.
- The council endorses ACTE's position as published in the report: "Reinventing the American High School for the 21st Century."

Science Curriculum Group

- There are different needs between students who are graduating so there should be a different way of dealing with students. If all students are to be included in "reform", then opt-out should not let students or teachers off the hook.
- Need to find alternative ways to reach students who will not meet the requirements. Must add additional options for these students.
- Possibly add 5th year to high school.
- Why not 4 years of science i.e., engineering course, earth science, integrated science, etc. The science coalition has a proposal for a 9-12 science progression.

Christina School District Title I Parent Advisory Committee

- Parents should know what their students are capable of and be able to participate in the decision of choosing an optional program for their child.
- Choosing an optional program should be a decision made by the parents, guidance counselors and teachers together in the best interest of the student.

Delta Epsilon Chi Association

- Math needs to be targeted to students who need help long before they reach high school or even middle school.
- Just because someone is bad in math, they still should have the opportunity to go to college.
- Learning disabled students should still take the same amount of credits.
- Lower level math should be offered to help students who are struggling.
- In high school there should be enough people to help lower functioning students get the help they need to get them through graduation.
- A five year option may be helpful, but may allow some students to take the easy out.
- Average students should take full math, but alternative math classes should be offered to other students so they can graduate with more than a "certificate of attendance."
- An opt-out program could be used as a "recovery" option not for as a program to stay in all through high school.
- Students must take calculus OR statistics.
- School districts should be similar in their offering of AP classes. All districts should also offer the same core credits courses. If AP classes are not offered, students won't have the option to take these courses.
- If a school doesn't offer AP classes, have options to take these courses at an alternative site like DelTech or Delaware State College.

Delaware Association of School Administrators

- None specifically stated.

APPENDIX J:
Questions by All Focus Groups

Questions by All Focus Groups

Question 1

Please give us your opinion regarding the proposed increase in rigor and credit requirements for Delaware high school students beginning with the freshman entering in 2007.

Guidance Counselors

- How will increase affect students who participate in two or more sports?
- State invested money in science requirements to meet state standards and DSTP (physical science is missing) - will proposed rigor alter this practice?
- Currently, math taken in 8th grade will not meet math requirement of high school - should it be considered?
- If Algebra is taken in middle school, should four years of math still be required in high school?

Math Teachers

- Why require a math credit the senior year when all courses are not required in the senior year?
- Are the benchmark states' information based on performance or the written requirements? Is math rigor really being increased for all students in any of the other models?
- Will there be additional funding when this is approved?
- Have you contacted Delaware State University, University of Delaware, Salisbury State University, etc. to find out how many "highly qualified" math teachers will graduate and how many of the graduates plan to stay in Delaware?
- We have rigorous standards now and fear that the standard is being set aside in order to just have a higher number of credits. Who does this satisfy?
- We need to track how students are doing in college and if they took a fourth year math in high school what did they take?
- Can we find out what remedial courses our students need to take at the University of Delaware, or other colleges, so we can go back and look at what we need to teach?
- Can we find a way to increase the rigor for the non-traditional math students, such as, no back tracking?
- What course will be accepted as the fourth rigorous math class? What is the quality of that class?
- Will the Algebra I middle school credit count toward a high school credit?
- Have school districts collected enough data to understand how many students take four years of math to earn three credits? What is the number of students who will be impacted by this change and may not be able to meet the requirements?
- Has the right data been collected to address the concerns being raised by this group?
- Where is the data that will help us determine what districts are currently doing and how students are progressing in mathematics? For a decision as difficult to implement as this one will be, anecdotal data is not sufficient. What math courses are currently required for graduation in the districts? How many students are unable to graduate in four years because of math credits? How many students are doubling up in their senior year to get the second and third math credit that they currently need to graduate? How successful are they in getting those credits? What is the current trend in drop-out rates? What does the success rate in math class look like for all NCLB sub-groups?
- Where will the highly qualified teachers come from to teach math to all of these additional students? How will we pay for additional teachers? Will extra units be given to schools?
- Would the graduation requirement be four years (or four credits) of math with nothing lower than Algebra I? (We would not want to see districts using consumer math, business math, pre-Algebra or Algebra I part I and II as the math courses to get these four credits.) Could we achieve the same impact on students by requiring them to have three credits that are from Algebra I, Geometry, and Algebra II only?
- How will we find the time and money to provide for the professional development needed to meet this new requirement? Teaching all students four years of mathematics (Algebra I, Geometry, and

Algebra II, and an additional course beyond these subjects) requires a focus on differentiated instruction.

- When will teachers have the time to plan, develop, and implement new math courses?
- Will the credit for Algebra I that is earned in middle school be removed as an option?
- Will there be additional funding for the necessary support services (tutoring, extra time, night schools, summer schools, etc.)?
- Will Delaware colleges and universities change their entrance requirements to expect four years of math from the students?
- What impact does this change have on the students entering eighth grade in the fall of 2006 (the Class of 2011)? They may be finding out this summer that the Algebra course they are registered for will not count for high school credit. Last minute rescheduling of students will be difficult if they decide to wait until high school to take the course. Will this cause more students to go to private schools or other programs (such as Academic Challenge) that give credits at the eighth grade level for algebra?
- Are we envisioning increased rigor in mathematics for only the top students in the schools?

Delaware State Board Association

- Some students take three math credits in their sophomore year (block scheduling) so they are prepared for the state testing. How will these students fit into the new requirements?
- Wouldn't it be more rigorous just to require one math credit per year?
- Is the work in the integrated science curriculum going to stay or be tossed aside?
- These requirements look like college prep requirements. What are we going to do with special education students?
- What about dropouts?
- Why can't we increase the number of physical education requirements and allow students participating in varsity sports to earn credit for those sports?

Parent Advisory Council

- None specifically stated.

Governor's Advisory Council for Exceptional Children and Governor's Council for Persons with Disabilities

- If kids are not succeeding now, how will increasing rigor make them more successful?
- Would like to know how many, if any, of the students responding to the survey stating "they would have taken more rigorous classes" were special needs students?

Urban League of Wilmington

- None specifically stated.

Curriculum Cadre

- Will the unit count system be changed in order to meet the expectations of additional math requirements and others?
- Has the committee considered foreign language and the fine arts in the high school requirements?
- Has the committee looked at the research as it relates to the drop out rate and the increased number of credits in respect to that? We need to be concerned about all students.
- Is there a plan with this that we have qualified math teachers to hire even if we have the cash to hire them?
- Shouldn't we be preparing our students to be able to get into any state institution?
- Is the 1.5 physical education and health credit enough to meet the wellness criteria?
- Should ELA be oral communication which is presentation and communication?
- The Math requirement language says a student should take 1 credit in senior year in Math or test out. Can this be a requirement not an option?
- "Social Science" what about "Social Studies"?
- What does "presentation" mean in ELA?

- Math teachers, labs, opt-out; how will these changes be funded? What is the financial impact?

Delaware State Education Association

- How will we deal with the students who fail math classes?
- Until the committee collects data of how many students currently need four years or more to complete three math credits, can this proposal be halted?
- How many student teachers will be coming out of UD this year to teach math?
- If we are to increase and require a fourth credit in math, where will the funding come from for additional staffing so as not to sacrifice the decrease in class sizes which would impact the improvements we have already seen in DSTP math scores?
- If we are going to require more students to be in class at the same time, how has this proposal been looked at in comparison to building renovations, funding and timelines?
- With the implementation of full day kindergarten on the horizon, is there money available for a fourth math credit?
- How does this fall in line with the PE Task Force that has been proposed to the General Assembly that would require 150 minutes every week for K-12 students of physical education, where do students have time for all of this?
- Has the data been collected on how this will impact the enrollment of foreign language classes, arts, music, advanced sciences which help create the well-rounded students that we try to send to our communities?
- Why aren't we talking about increasing science credits in a world we call science and technology?

Delaware Advisory Council for Career/Vocational Education

- None specifically stated.

Science Curriculum Group

- None specifically stated.

Christina School District Title I Parent Advisory Committee

- None specifically stated.

Delta Epsilon Chi Association

- None specifically stated.

Delaware Association of School Administration

- If students don't complete the math requirements will they graduate high school?

Question 2

Currently, it is possible for high school seniors to take one or two classes in order to graduate. Research indicated these students are not prepared for the work place or higher education. The committee intends to require a more rigorous senior year for the freshman entering in 2007. Please give us your opinions.

Guidance Counselors

- How will the proposed increases impact middle school students who cannot meet current requirements?
- How will increases affect middle school students?

Math Teachers

- None specifically stated.

Delaware State Board Association

- None specifically expressed.

Parent Advisory Council

- None specifically stated.

Governor’s Advisory Council for Exceptional Children and Governor’s Council for Persons with Disabilities

- None specifically stated.

Urban League of Wilmington

- None specifically stated.

Curriculum Cadre

- What steps are being taken to insure that what is taught in the classroom is really rigorous and is not just a name change on a schedule to meet the requirements?
- Since the plan does not meet all of the science standards did the committee look at the senior year in regard to the rest of standards that have not been met by this plan?

Delaware State Education Association

- None specifically stated.

Delaware Advisory Council for Career/Vocational Education

- None specifically stated.

Science Curriculum Group

- Right now, middle school students can earn high school credits; will these credits continue to count?

Christina School District Title I Parent Advisory Committee

- None specifically stated.

Delta Epsilon Chi Association

- None specifically stated.

Delaware Association of School Administration

- None specifically stated.

Question 3

The committee is considering an option for students who, along with their parents or guardians and school officials determine should meet some alternative requirements. What are your ideas about who might be included and how this option might work?

Guidance Counselors

- Will students in opt-out program receive the same diploma as other students or a different diploma?

Math Teachers

- Isn’t opting-out the same as tracking and what we have been moving away from?
- When will students be allowed to opt-out?
- How many of the students in the benchmark states opt-out?
- Who will make these decisions and how will they be made?
- Has this decision already been reached?

Delaware School Board Association

- None specifically stated.

Parent Advisory Council

- None specifically stated.

**Governor’s Advisory Council for Exceptional Children and
Governor’s Council for Persons with Disabilities**

- None specifically stated.

Urban League of Wilmington

- Need to increase program options for students not going on to college, such as more vocational programs.
- Need to have respect and value for students choosing a trade rather than college.
- Need more support at the high school level to help students find colleges and complete the application process.
- A life skills course that teaches real skills, such as balancing a checkbook or creating a household budget, should be offered to students in high school.
- Offer an academic program geared toward college bound students and one for those who do not plan to attend college.
- Increase career pathway programs in order to increase options to meet the needs for all students.
- Students should be given more options for which math course they take based on their interests and abilities. A separate track that permits this might be more successful.
- Students should have optional, more hands on courses that are applicable to their interests.
- Insure that graduation requirements reflect the variety of knowledge and skills that students are learning in school and will need after high school – use indicators of the knowledge and skills necessary for learning and successful work and living after high school.

Curriculum Cadre

- Is this canceling out rigor?

Delaware State Education Association

- If an opt-out option exists, when will sanctions be leveled against a school/district for having an excessive number of students choosing the opt-out?

Delaware Advisory Council for Career/Vocational Education

- None specifically stated.

Science Curriculum Group

- How will increased rigor increase attendance?
- What will this do to drop-out rates for the students who cannot reach these requirements?
- How do you legally do this under NCLB?

Christina School District Title I Parent Advisory Committee

- None specifically stated.

Delta Epsilon Chi Association

- Will students in an alternative program get the same diploma?
- Do these increase requirements include credit for community service hours?

Delaware Association of School Administration

- None specifically stated.

**APPENDIX K:
“Who” and “How” from Question 3
Responses by All Focus Groups**

“Who” and “How” from Question Three Responses by All Focus Groups

Question 3

The committee is considering an option for students who, along with their parents or guardians and school officials determine should meet some alternative requirements. What are your ideas about who might be included and how this option might work?

Guidance Counselors

Who

- Special education students.
- Non-IEP students who will have difficulty passing increased requirements.
- Students who are 9th grade “repeaters”.
- Identify students at the end of 10th grade year who can not do sequence of pathways.
- ILP should identify these kids early in the 10th grade year or by age 16.
- Middle school kids who already can’t meet math requirements.

How

- Have support classes available for IEP students—they should have opt-out option with the approval of their IEP team.
- Offer credits through alternative programs offered outside of school, e.g., twilight program and Groves.
- “Vocational” opt-out option for skill development i.e., tech schools – these options are limited.
- Create “special interest” plan/pathway and devise senior project options.
- Create “senior opportunities” structured around student’s area of interest.

Math Teachers

Who

- Special education students and students who don’t push themselves would be the students in the opt-out program. Special education has to be addressed because most won’t be able to complete Algebra II.
- Opt-out should be for special education and for the very high achiever who meets the standards early.
- Students facing socio-economic issues need to be considered.

How

- The IEP team should make this decision.

Delaware School Board Association

Who

- Special education students should not be held to the proposed requirements.
- The opt-out should not be for the general population who do not want to do the work.
- The opt-out should be limited to students with a physical disability.
- We should let the votech schools opt-out of the new requirements and allow them to train for a trade/occupation.

How

- We need to adjust to accommodate special education students and be realistic in our expectations.
- The opt-out program should be night school or GED, unless they are special education students.

Parent Advisory Council

Who

- Kids who are failing core courses after freshman year.
- Children who have been in services such as Title I (not only special education) or who are caught in the middle, like the high count of students who don't pass the DSTP but don't qualify for extra services. Need alternatives that can assist them to get a diploma for their skills.

How

- Increase the level of alternative programs.
- Extend Title I services beyond 8th grade.
- Special education (IEP) students should have increased services to help meet standards.
- Have extra help available to all students who want to increase score on SATs.
- Group students by learning styles in alternative programs.

Governor's Advisory Council for Exceptional Children and Governor's Council for Persons with Disabilities

Who

- Special education students who can not meet the new requirements should be offered another option.
- Students who do not meet the standards should be allowed to be on a different track.

How

- Parents and guardians should be included in the decision.

Urban League of Wilmington

Who

- None specifically stated.

How

- Nothing specifically stated.

Curriculum Cadre

Who

- Include students who have completed grade 9—failed 3 courses.

How

- Parents definitely should have input as well as guidance counselors and teachers.
- Include teachers and guidance counselors along with peers and administration in the decision.

Delaware State Education Association

Who

- None specifically stated.

How

- None specifically stated.

Delaware Advisory Council for Career/Vocational Education

Who

- Special education students might need to be exempt from certain courses.

How

- None specifically stated.

Science Curriculum Group

Who

- None specifically stated.

How

- None specifically stated.

Christina School District Title I Parent Advisory Committee

Who

- Offer alternative programs for students who might be likely to drop out.

How

- Students should be given an optional program because not all students will be able to graduate twelfth grade and/or be college material.

Delta Epsilon Chi Association

Who

- Alternative options should be available for learning disabled or handicapped students.
- An alternative should be for the students who are just trying to get through high school to graduate.
- Students who cannot do lower level math functions and especially the students who will never be able to take calculus.

How

- Consider extending high school to five years.
- Special education teachers are there to help students.

Delaware Association of School Administration

Who

- Some special education students will have more difficulty with the proposed requirements (those with learning and physical disabilities or brain injuries) and we need to have optional programs for those students.

How

- The IEP process determines student's curriculum and should continue to do so along with the state requirements.

TABLE 1:
Major Themes – Strengths and Concerns

Major Themes - Strengths and Concerns

Question 1

Please give us your opinion regarding the proposed increase in rigor and credit requirements for Delaware high school students beginning with the freshman entering in 2007.

Common Themes From All Groups	Additional Themes From S/C	Additional Themes From E
<p>Strengths:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Agree with increased rigor -Include all core courses in increased rigor -Add language requirements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Increase rigor in verbal and written communications 	
<p>Concerns:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Elementary school and middle school students will not be prepared for increased rigor -Proposal will increase drop out rate -How to hire and retain qualified teachers -Increased rigor does not mean increased success -Availability of funding for all resources necessary -Offering extra help and support to students having difficulty -Votech and co-op students have not been considered in this proposal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Parent education on changes -Too many tests -Need for systems change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Quality of math curriculum -Emphasis on credit not competency -Impact on block scheduling -Not enough quantitative data -NCLB -Impact on labor and collective bargaining agreements -Addressing needs of college bound and non-college bound students -Limiting teaching techniques -Negatively impact current reform efforts

Question 2

Currently, it is possible for high school seniors to take one or two classes in order to graduate. Research indicated these students are not prepared for the work place or higher education. The committee intends to require a more rigorous senior year for the freshman entering in 2007. Please give us your opinions.

Common Themes From All Groups	Additional Themes From S/C	Additional Themes From E
Strengths: -Increase all core courses to 4 years	-Seniors stay in school	-College prep students should have a rigorous senior year
Concerns: -Increased work load does not increase rigor -Seniors should have options -Allow to take college courses	-Need better academic counseling	-Need discussion on “rigor” -If requirements met, don’t force to stay in school -Effects of block scheduling

Question 3

The committee is considering an option for students who, along with their parents or guardians and school officials determine should meet some alternative requirements. What are your ideas about who might be included and how this option might work?

Common Themes From All Groups	Additional Themes From S/C	Additional Themes From E
<p>Who:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Special education students -Students who can't meet math requirements -Failing 9th grade students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Students most likely to drop out -Students not meeting DSTP Standards -Title I students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Non-IEP students having difficulty passing standards -9th grade repeaters -10th graders who are not successful in pathways or having continual difficulties by age 16 -High achievers -Students facing socio-economic issues
<p>How:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -IEP team -Increase alternative programs 	<p>How:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Extend Title I services beyond 8th grade -Add 5th year to high school -Increase number of special education teachers and services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Increase vocational alternatives -Create "senior opportunities"
<p>Strengths:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Decision made by committee 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Alternative programs needed to meet all student needs
<p>Concerns:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Not enough vocational options -Opposed to opt-out program -Return to tracking -Predisposes students to do less -Decrease student's intrinsic motivation to learn 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Special education students should not be set up to fail -Teachers already overwhelmed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Opt-out program increases nothing -Opt-out program should have consistent guidelines statewide -Flexible choices needed -Opt-out would be difficult to implement fairly and equitably for all students -Students will find loophole to by pass rigor to keep higher GPA -Will retard high school reform -Lack money and resources

TABLE 2:
Major Themes - Suggestions

Major Themes - Suggestions

Question 1

Please give us your opinion regarding the proposed increase in rigor and credit requirements for Delaware high school students beginning with the freshman entering in 2007.

Common Themes From All Groups	Additional Themes From S/C	Additional Themes From E
<p>Suggestions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Create statewide standards -Increase rigor in elementary and middle school -Complete same courses across districts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Offer physical education credit for sports -Tie increase to state test -Teach from a global perspective -Decrease amount of electives -Increase mentors -Teach students to be bilingual -Provide service learning credits -Expand core course selection to include life skills -Consolidate school districts -Increase salaries of teachers -Provide more choice options -Return to teaching the basics -Motivate students to see value in education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Include earth science into curriculum -Include science in earlier grades -Complete a financial analysis of proposal -Create alternative to taking the fourth math requirement -Juniors and their parents should sign a contract for senior year -Review and overhaul how state calculates graduation rate -Middle school students receive high school credit for math -Requirements need to support integrated science curriculum -Offer a conceptual physical science course in ninth grade -Grading concerns -ELA should say Reading not Literature -Need proof that increasing credit will impact student achievement -Need to align math and science requirements -Align requirements with college entrance requirements -Create strong and additional pathways -Let district decide how to increase math requirement

Question 2

Currently, it is possible for high school seniors to take one or two classes in order to graduate. Research indicated these students are not prepared for the work place or higher education. The committee intends to require a more rigorous senior year for the freshman entering in 2007. Please give us your opinions.

Common Themes From All Groups	Additional Themes From S/C	Additional Themes From E
<p>Suggestions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Culture in schools need to improve to foster student’s creativity, success and motivation -Increase requirements for college bound students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Encourage students to attend college -More knowledgeable guidance counselors for alternative programs -Allow students to graduate in three years -Students who exceed requirements should have more options -More training for teachers on advisory curriculum -Create an education plan starting in eighth grade -Students should be allowed to drop out -Let seniors make own decisions about senior year options 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Look at individual schools rather than ordering mandate -Schools need to be funded similar to that of vocational schools are -All senior should must pass five classes to pass -Institute a “senior project” that ties into ILP -Increase requirements so students can’t leave for employment -Create standards other the DSTP -More resources needed -Committee should study senior year as a separate issue -Rigor needs to prepare students for life after high school -There is a benefit to maintaining co-op credit program -Offer minors to students

Question 3

The committee is considering an option for students who, along with their parents or guardians and school officials determine should meet some alternative requirements. What are your ideas about who might be included and how this option might work?

Common Themes From All Groups	Additional Themes From S/C	Additional Themes From E
<p>Suggestions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Learning disabled need to take same amount of credit courses -Implement career pathways -Non-college bound students should have additional options 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Teach math at a younger age -All districts offer advance placement classes -Alternative program should be a temporary option, not a way through high school -More school resources needed in deciding best course for students -Make options for potential drop-outs -Explore alternatives for students -Offer life skills courses -More reading courses -Offer PSAT in ninth grade 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Opt-out program needs rules and guidelines that are enforced equally -Opt-out should not have less value -Do not give lesser diploma -Opt-out students should be offered college courses -Alternative course list should be made available -Opt-out should not include trade school programs -Need rigor for all students -Do not offer opt-out program -Core course requirements should all be for 4 years -Student's IEP should drive how they complete high school -Opt-out should not let students or teachers off the hook -Add 5th year to high school

TABLE 3:
Major Themes - Questions

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Question 1

Please give us your opinion regarding the proposed increase in rigor and credit requirements for Delaware high school students beginning with the freshman entering in 2007.

Common Themes From All Groups	Additional Themes From S/C	Additional Themes From E
<p>Questions- Impact on: -Sports credit participation -All ready strained resources -Hiring additional teachers -Where will the money come from -Special needs students -Votech students</p>	<p>-On students who are already exceeding requirements -Students who fail math</p>	<p>-Existing standards -Obtaining credits in middle school -Non-college bound students -Current students -NCLB requirements -Time to develop additional courses -Student scheduling for 2007 school year -Dropouts -Unit count -Offering of Fine Arts -Expanding ELA options -Social Studies -Class size -Full day kindergarten -PE Task Force proposal -Creating a well-rounded student</p>
<p>Additional Data Requested in Areas of:</p>		<p>-Other available models -Past graduates in Delaware -Type of remediation needed -What the 4th year math requirement will be -How districts are currently doing and how students are currently progressing -Current dropout rate -Professional development needs -Testing out options -How many students need increase rigor</p>
<p>Implementation: -Will students have time to fit more into their schedules</p>		

Question 2

Currently, it is possible for high school seniors to take one or two classes in order to graduate. Research indicated these students are not prepared for the work place or higher education. The committee intends to require a more rigorous senior year for the freshman entering in 2007. Please give us your opinions.

Common Themes From All Groups	Additional Themes From S/C	Additional Themes From E
Questions- Impact on:		-Middle school students -Current science standards -Earning high school credits in middle school
Additional Data Requested in Areas of:		
Implementation:		-Ensure quality of teaching is rigorous

Question 3

The committee is considering an option for students who, along with their parents or guardians and school officials determine should meet some alternative requirements. What are your ideas about who might be included and how this option might work?

Common Themes From All Groups	Additional Themes From S/C	Additional Themes From E
Questions - Impact on:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Type of diploma offered -Opportunity to participate in community services for credit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -The practice of “tracking” -Increasing rigor -Student attendance
Additional Data Requested in Areas of:		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Number of students involved in opt-out program in benchmark states -Meeting NCLB standards
Implementation:		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Who will be decision makers -Number of students permitted in opt-out program -Will there be sanctions against too many students in program