



JEOC BRIEF

October 2, 2018

Superintendent's Graduation Advisory Committee

This committee is a hybrid combination of the Superintendent's Working Group on Graduation Requirements and the Strategic Plan Working Group on High School Success. The Superintendent of Public Instruction called members together to form the Graduation Advisory Committee to develop a plan for future graduation requirements.

The first meeting of the reconvened group was on June 20, 2018. Discussion centered on the list of attributes of a high school graduate derived from ODE's Strategic Plan. The superintendent also presented a table showing the alignment of the graduation pathways to the attributes of a graduate. Members of the committee questioned whether all attributes were equally important and whether the attributes were correctly matched to the requirements. There was general agreement that almost any well-designed activity could meet most or all attributes, but members were cognizant of the possibility that variations in rigor and design would be present.

This led to a discussion about which pathways were used by districts. ODE staff reported that this year EMIS would collect information about pathway usage. However, members seemed to want information at the option level within a pathway. Members discussed how the alternative pathways to graduation were used. Anecdotally, the responses were as follows:

The district devised capstone project was used, so long as the district/school had some mechanism to support that.

The three-point industry recognized credential seemed to be used mostly for students already on career-technical pathways. Members indicated that there are few recognized credentials that meet the three-point threshold and that are accessible with only a year or semester of coursework. Members reported using the work/service option but wanted clarity/guidelines to help regulate and standardize the experience for students. Some reported using pay-stubs to verify work time.

A member suggested that, if the consensus was that the bar was too low on some of the options, ODE could require some options to access the others. For example, a student would have to meet either the attendance or GPA requirement as a prerequisite to the capstone pathway. Following the discussion, ODE Staff pointed out that there are guidance documents on their website for all the options under the alternative pathways, including the capstone project.¹ The committee was broken into small groups for an activity.

The second meeting of the group was on July 18, 2018. The meeting began with a synopsis of past meetings and a look at a draft document as a starting point for the recommendations developed by the group. The first section of the draft discussed the core design principles/themes being used to guide the development process. There was some discussion about collapsing the qualities of a high school graduate or reorganizing them to better reflect the thinking that went into the recommendations.

¹ <http://education.ohio.gov/getattachment/Topics/Ohio-s-Graduation-Requirements/Earning-an-Ohio-High-School-Diploma-for-the-Class/HB49GradRequirementsFAQs.pdf.aspx>

There was discussion about possible policy tensions around the timing for identifying the pathway for graduation and a desire by the committee to leave this as open as possible. ODE staff then provided a summary of the small group activities from the past meeting when committee members matched up unique student profiles to potential graduation pathways. To conclude, ODE staff provided committee members with information about the Ohio Means Jobs Readiness Seal.

The third meeting of the group was on August 15, 2018. The meeting began by recapping work done in previous meetings. Superintendent DeMaria led the committee through updates to the current draft of recommendations. The committee discussed possible variations of Graduation Pathways.

The first possible pathway discussed was centered around two key components: 1) Culminating Student Experiences, and 2) Demonstration of Knowledge and Skills. Members said they wanted students to have alternative ways to demonstrate job readiness, but agreed that there must be some standardization. Members agreed that each student should have at least a basic level of Literacy and Mathematical skills. Under the proposed pathway, a student would be able to use personal experience (military training, internships, community service, college credit plus courses or a project portfolio) with the addition of passing all required state assessments to earn a High School Diploma. Several committee members expressed concern that this would take too much time to implement, while others said that their schools already have similar programs and the transition would require minimal effort.

The second pathway discussed centered on the completion of a senior or junior year Capstone Project. One of the main concerns expressed by members was that without a standardized rubric there is a possibility of wide variation when interpreting Capstone Projects from school to school, which raised questions about fairness. Several committee members said that they couldn't support the Capstone Project without a standardized rubric, while others were concerned that creating a standardized rubric could reduce the depth/quality of Capstone Projects at schools that already have one.

The committee discussed whether or not they should develop an additional pathways specific for Career Tech students, but no decision was reached.

The fourth meeting of the group was on September 5, 2018. The meeting began with discussion about the transition plan for students in the classes of 2019 and 2020. DeMaria suggested that there might be room to change the two pathways permitted for the class of 2018, but the committee wanted more data. ODE is collecting data from a small sample of schools on the options used within the 2018 pathways. The group shared anecdotes on the options' usage. Members reported that attendance and GPA were not often accessible to the students who needed alternatives.

The committee turned to the revised recommendations document and DeMaria pointed out that he had added ACCUPLACER among others as alternative tests for meeting the graduation requirements for Math and ELA. There was discussion about fine-tuning on each of the five areas with requirements (ELA, Math, Technology, Well-Rounded and Leadership). There was discussion about whether students would still perform well on state tests if state tests are not required for graduation.

The final meeting of the group was on September 19, 2018. The meeting began with DeMaria asking for members to share the plan widely with other stakeholders for feedback. The committee discussed the transition plan, and which students will fall under transition versus the new plan. There was wide agreement that the plan should begin with a class of freshmen, but DeMaria agreed it could be done for sophomores (beginning with the class of 2022). DeMaria spoke about the supports ODE would provide to help districts with the training of district personnel and the implementation of new programs like a culminating experience. DeMaria asked if SEL and Leadership should have different requirements, as raised by the SBOE the previous day, but the committee was reluctant to assess SEL as a graduation requirement. ODE Staff suggested including the Seal of Biliteracy as a pathway to graduation in the Well-Rounded category. There was also discussion about getting the "right" credentials on the list for meeting graduation requirements. Some CTEs say they have regionally accepted credentials that have not been approved by ODE.

DeMaria will revise the documents based on conversation and send to members for final review. The committee's recommendations will be presented to the Achievement and Graduation Requirements Committee at the October State Board of Education Meeting.