



Trends in High School Graduation Requirements Among States with High Postsecondary Success

Overview of this Presentation

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Research Questions

- **What are the high school diploma requirements among states with high postsecondary success?**
- **What are the trends among states that have recently changed their high school diploma requirements?**

Data Sources

- We reached out to researchers at the **Education Commission of the States (ECS)** for assistance.
- ECS collaborated with the **National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS)** to provide additional data on postsecondary outcomes in response to our request.

Defining Successful Postsecondary Outcomes

- We focused on 10 states that had:
 - The highest percentage of high school graduates attending a postsecondary institution in their home state (2- and 4- year, public and private)
 - Postsecondary graduation rates higher than 50%

Metrics and Diploma Options for States with Successful Postsecondary Outcomes

State	Percent of High School Graduates Attending an In-State Postsecondary Institution	Overall Graduation Rates of Postsecondary Institutions	Number of Diploma Options
California	87.40%	50.30%	2
Florida	86.70%	51.10%	1
Massachusetts	82.10%	52.40%	1
<i>Virginia</i>	81.40%	57.80%	2
Minnesota	81.00%	52.10%	1
Pennsylvania	75.40%	56.20%	1
Rhode Island	74.90%	51.40%	1
South Dakota	68.80%	51.10%	1
Washington	66.30%	59.30%	1
Wisconsin	62.20%	59.20%	2

NOTE: Diploma count does not include alternate diplomas for students with disabilities.

Diploma Requirements for States with Successful Postsecondary Outcomes

State	Eng	Math	Sci	Soc.St.	PE/Hlth	Arts	For.Lang	Elective	Other	Total
California	3	2	2	3	2	1	1	--	1	13
Florida	4	4	3	3	0-1	1	--	3-8	1	18-24
Massachusetts	4	1-4	3	3	required	1	2	5		22
Minnesota	4	3	3	3.5	--	1	--	7	--	21.5
Pennsylvania	Credit requirements for high school graduation are determined by local boards of ed.									
Rhode Island	4	4	3	3	--	--	--	6		20
South Dakota	4	3	3	3.5	0.5	1	--	--	--	22
Washington	4	3	2	3	2	1	--	4	1	20
Wisconsin	4	3	3	3	2	--	--	--	--	15

NOTE: Credit totals represent the minimum credits needed to earn a high school diploma. "Other" courses refer to visual and performing arts, fine arts, speech, debate, and/or occupational education.

Themes from the State Review

- Pennsylvania and Massachusetts do not have minimum statewide course requirements for high school graduation (Massachusetts promotes a suggested curriculum).
- At 13 and 15 Carnegie units, California and Wisconsin have the lowest state-set minimum graduation requirements in the nation. Districts in these states typically set graduation requirements above the minimum requirements.
- The remaining states are generally in the middle to upper end of the distribution nationally in the total number of credits required and the rigor of those credits, in terms of rigor of math and science units required.

Themes from the State Review

- The way in which students earn credits also varies:
 - In **California** districts do not have any flexibility and must use time-based credits.
 - In **Florida, Pennsylvania, South Dakota, Washington, and Wisconsin**, districts define credits and may issue competency-based, proficiency-based or time-based credits.
 - In **Minnesota**, students can substitute certain core coursework for credit (i.e. computer science for credit in math or arts) or earn credit through innovative technology classes.
 - Students in **Rhode Island** can earn credit through seat time or another measure (proficiency or competency), but must complete courses rather than accumulate credits. Districts have flexibility in defining courses (e.g., a traditional two semester class, a two-week summer Expanded Learning Opportunity).
 - **Massachusetts** allows independent study, structured contextual learning (i.e., work- or service-based learning), a competency-based program of study, credit recovery, and online coursework.

Source: Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. 50 State Scan of Course Credit Policies.

http://cdn.carnegiefoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/CUP_Policy_MayUpdate1.pdf

Postsecondary Outcomes Among States Changing Diploma Options

- More states recently moved from multiple high school diploma options to a single diploma (Georgia, Kentucky, North Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, and West Virginia) than from a single diploma to multiple diplomas (Louisiana and Mississippi).
- No studies have been conducted examining the effectiveness of policy changes that involve moving from one diploma to multiple – or multiple diplomas to one.
- Such studies require many years of implementation before a data can be analyzed to fully understand policy impacts.

Summary

- Graduation requirements vary widely among states.
- There is no correlation between state-set high school graduation requirements and completion rates at postsecondary institutions matriculating large percentages of in-state students.
- No studies have been conducted examining the long-term impact of policy changes.