

# Diploma Panel Report to the Quality Education Committee

## I. Introduction

In January 2007, the State Board of Education voted to strengthen high school graduation requirements for all students in the State of Oregon. These new requirements, which will be phased in over the next seven years, are designed to better prepare each student for success in college, work, and citizenship. Beginning in 2010, in order to earn a diploma, students will need to:

- Successfully complete increased credit requirements
- Demonstrate proficiency in essential skills
- Meet the personalized learning requirements

## Credit Requirements

The chart below indicates the statewide credit requirements between now and 2014 that serve as a **minimum** for graduation. Individual districts may have additional requirements.

### TIMELINE AND PHASE-IN FOR OREGON DIPLOMA REQUIREMENTS

The changes to the diploma will be phased in over the next seven years to allow students, families, teachers, schools and districts to adequately prepare to meet the new requirements. The chart below is marked in light grey to show when each change comes into effect.

Credits by Subject	Graduating Classes of 2007, 2008 & 2009	Graduating Classes of 2010 & 2011 (10 <sup>th</sup> & 9 <sup>th</sup> Graders in 2007 – 08)	Graduating Classes of 2012 & 2013 (8 <sup>th</sup> & 7 <sup>th</sup> Graders in 2007 – 08)	Graduating Class of 2014 (6 <sup>th</sup> Graders in 2007-08)
English/Language Arts	3	4	4	4
Mathematics	2	3	3	3 - all at Algebra I level and above
Science	2	2	3 – scientific inquiry (2 with lab experiences)	3
Social Sciences	3	3	3	3
Physical Education	1	1	1	1
Health	1	1	1	1
Second Language				
The Arts	1	1	3	3
Career and Technical Education (CTE)				
Electives	9	9	6	6
Total Credits	22	24	24	24



The diploma must be standards-based, and core standards will be developed in all content areas to help align instruction and to provide a consistent foundation for credits, courses, and career-related learning experiences across the state. Students seeking credit by proficiency rather than through coursework must also base their learning experiences and performance outcomes on these same core standards.

In addition to increasing credit requirements, the State Board is working with the Oregon Department of Education to identify key outcomes for high school graduates that include demonstrated mastery of essential skills. Each of these additional components is described below:

### **Proficiency in Essential Skills**

1. Read and comprehend a variety of texts
2. Write clearly and accurately
3. Listen actively and speak clearly and coherently
4. Apply mathematics in a variety of settings
5. Think critically and analytically
6. Use technologies to live, learn, and work
7. Demonstrate civic and community engagement
8. Demonstrate global literacy
9. Demonstrate personal management and teamwork skills

These essential skills are deemed critical for success in college, work, and life. They are process skills that cross all disciplines and are embedded in the content standards and curriculum of a variety of subject areas. As a result, mastery of these skills can be demonstrated in a variety of courses, subjects, and settings.

It should be noted that initial diploma implementation efforts by the Oregon Department of Education and the State Board have focused on the first four essential skills. Although they are important, it is critical that instruction and mastery not focus exclusively on what can easily be assessed via a multiple-choice test. The second set of essential skills (#5-9) must eventually be included in terms of expectations and accountability for graduation. The first four essential skills without the addition of the more complex skills that follow are too limited in scope. Neither do they support the goal of a comprehensive high school education for all students or reflect a level of attainment considered sufficient for a student graduating from high school in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

## Personalized Learning Requirements

In designing the Oregon Diploma, the State Board of Education is clearly committed to preparing each student for successful transitions to his or her next steps after high school. Personalized learning, learning beyond the classroom, and connections to the adult world are critical for preparing each student, whatever path he or she takes after graduation, for the vast challenges and opportunities of the 21st century.

The following requirements personalize the diploma for each student and help students plan for their post-high school education and career goals:

### •Education Plan and Profile

Students develop a plan and profile to guide their learning and document progress toward their personal, career, and post-high school goals.

### •Career-Related Learning Standards

Students demonstrate knowledge and skills in personal management, problem solving, communication, teamwork, employment foundations, and career development.

### •Career-Related Learning Experiences

Students participate in experiences that connect classroom learning with real-life experiences in the workplace, community, and/or school relevant to their education plan.

### •Extended Application

Students apply and extend their knowledge in new and complex situations related to the student's personal career interests and post-high school goals through critical thinking, problem solving, or inquiry in real-world contexts.

It should be noted that higher standards, and these new diploma requirements, necessitate changes at all levels of schooling, not just the high school. By incorporating each of these three components – credit requirements, essential skills, and a personalized learning plan – the new diploma is intended to serve as a capstone to a rigorous K-12 education. In order to ensure the success of all students, **all schools, not just high schools**, will need to exemplify the following guiding principles:

- ✓ Be flexible and student-centered; the student education plan and profile should guide student choices where developmentally appropriate at each level of schooling.
- ✓ Encourage students to meet academic standards as well as diploma requirements at their own pace, whether that is faster or slower than a nine-month school year or the traditional course length.
- ✓ Promote the viability of proficiency-based credit and alternative means of assessment to encourage multiple pathways to graduation that are equally rigorous and challenging.

✓ Ensure that students will get the resources needed to meet the new higher standards, whether that takes the form of after-school opportunities, tutoring, summer classes, online courses or additional time to meet standards. Additional funding to support these services must be allocated.

In order to implement such a vision, a great deal of development work has been undertaken.

A number of task forces were established during the 2007-08 school year under the direction of the Oregon Department of Education. These included a Diploma Implementation Advisory Task Force, Essential Skills Task Force, Standards and Assessment Task Force, Credit by Proficiency Task Force, and Cost and Capacity Task Force.

In March 2007 the State Board of Education issued a report entitled 2007 Oregon's New Diploma. The report clearly states (page 9) that "Determining the cost for implementing the standards will require a detailed analysis of the proposed requirements, and the systems currently in place by the schools, districts, and state, and measuring the gap. In any case, new revenue is essential to the success of the new diploma requirements." Cost analysis efforts are currently underway to determine the fiscal impact of the new requirements.

The Quality Education Commission created a number of panels to determine answers to key questions related to the implementation of the new diploma. During the 2007-08 school year panels were commissioned to investigate costs, best practices, and impact on the Quality Education Model associated with the new diploma requirements. This report is the product of the work of the panel asked to investigate the impact of new diploma requirements on the Quality Education Model and its prototype schools.

## **II. Quality Education Commission and Panel Charge**

In the Quality Education Model, the Quality Education Commission adopted the principle that not fewer than 90 percent of the students in Oregon should meet all state performance goals. By 2014, the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act raises that standard to 99 percent. Finally, with the new diploma requirements approved by the State Board of Education in January 2007, every student must acquire the necessary credits to graduate in addition to mastering essential skills. The bar has clearly been raised for Oregon schools. These expectations will require significant changes in Oregon schools, and, in many cases, additional funding in order for all students to meet these high standards.

The Quality Education Model, like all models, is a representation of reality intended to provide insights to guide decision making. The purpose of the QEM is to depict Oregon's school system with sufficient detail and accuracy that policy makers can better understand how Oregon's schools allocate their resources, how various policy proposals affect funding needs, and how the level of resources provided to schools is expected to affect student achievement. It was

anticipated that the new graduation requirements would have a significant impact on both the Quality Education Model and the level of state funding required for K-12.

As a result, a panel of practitioners was created by the Commission to answer the following questions:

- What adjustments to the Quality Education Model are necessary if the student performance objective is earning the Oregon Diploma?
- Are there PK-12 systemic factors that predict success in achieving the diploma?
- Are there K-12 practices that need to change in order for all students to achieve the Oregon Diploma?
- Should additional components be used in the QEM analysis of high school funding adequacy?
- What is the appropriate response to changing demographics in the student population?
- What are the best measures of student performance at the secondary level?
- What level of investment is needed for students to successfully achieve the Oregon Diploma?
- How should schools/teachers be held accountable for the new diploma standards?

### III. Methodology

The panel chair identified a combination of educators to serve on the panel who brought a combination of specific expertise to the task: 1) recent experience as administrators at each level of schooling; 2) district office perspective in terms of curriculum and policy initiatives; 3) a geographical balance across the state; 4) a mixture of large, medium, and small Oregon school districts; and 5) Oregon Department of Education (ODE) and State Board points of view. The following panel members should be recognized for their contributions to this effort:

<b>Panel Members</b>	<b>Organization</b>
Salam Noor	ODE
Teresa Greene	ODE
Ed Armstrong	Tillamook SD
Doug Potter	La Grande SD
Bob Stewart	Gladstone SD
Paula Radich	Newberg SD
Linda Jessell	Portland State University
Peter Tarzian	Falls City SD
Aelyn Summers	Gresham-Barlow SD
Kelly Carlisle	North Clackamas SD
Kirk Fowler	West Linn-Wilsonville SD
Colin Cameron	Confederation of Oregon School Administrators
Lou Bailey	Canby SD
Emilio Hernandez	University of Oregon/QEC
Duncan Wyse	State Board/QEC
Deborah Sommer, Chair	Canby School District/QEC

#### **Panel Resources**

Theresa Levy	ODE
Brian Reeder	ODE/QEC

It should also be noted that many of these panel members have also served in other school districts prior to their current assignments, resulting in an even wider range of districts represented on the panel. Members of the panel have also been teachers/administrators in districts such as Beaverton, Elmira, Eagle Point, McMinnville, Parkrose, Forest Grove, Nestucca Valley, and North Marion. As a result, each panel member brought a wide range of experiences and perspective to monthly meetings held from January to May 2008.

Discussions ranged from the philosophical to the practical changes that would need to be made in Oregon schools in order for all students to meet these new diploma requirements. Much of the panel's focus had to do with the impact of these new requirements on districts that vary widely in terms of size, geography, and resources. It was clear that additional resources would be required for diploma implementation for all schools but that districts would also need flexibility in terms of how additional resources would be expended.

In order to validate the recommendations emerging from these discussions, the panel determined that additional data were needed from both current research as well as the field to ensure accuracy of perception and to send a clear message to the Quality Education Commission and policy makers at the state level.

#### **IV. Data Collected**

##### **Key Research**

Based on the research, the panel believes that the following systemic factors have proven to be critical in academic improvement over time:

- A clear and persistent focus on specific outcomes.
- Clear, measurable and rigorous standards.
- Curricular models aligned to standards.
- Intensive staff development.
- Increased time on task for underperforming students.
- Instruction – driven by data.
- Sustained leadership and vision over time (board, superintendent, principals, teachers, etc.).
- Teacher quality and preparation.

In addition, evidence from a recent Portland Public Schools study entitled “Connected by 25” supports the research that the following factors strongly influence drop-out rates:

- Students disengage in summer and later in high school.
- Eighth-grade standards matter: Students who do not meet two or more standards (e.g., reading, math, science) are four times more likely to drop out of school.
- Ninth grade is pivotal: Ninth-grade core class failure + insufficient credits = five times less likely to graduate.
- Students who are over age, repeat grades, enter after tenth grade, transfer between high schools are six times less likely to graduate.
- Students who withdraw and then re-enter school are nine times less likely to graduate.
- Students who scored very low on eighth-grade benchmarks are less likely to graduate.

Given these data, and the requirements of the new diploma, it is critical that policy makers and practitioners understand that these requirements do not just impact Oregon high schools. Changes at all levels of schooling, plus early intervention for struggling students, are essential.

The Response to Intervention Model being implemented in many Oregon elementary schools was discussed as a model that has broader conceptual application than just elementary reading and math. Using a similar approach to examine our K-12 system and to identify students who are failing to meet or exceed state standards is recommended in each school district as parents,

students, and staff examine district readiness to meet these new diploma requirements. Using a tiered approach to identify core programs and the specific interventions for students at each level of schooling will require not only additional resources and ongoing staff development, but will also require resources deployed at elementary and middle school prior to a student reaching high school for those who do not possess the requisite skill set to be successful. Such a systems approach, however, is a necessary first step in order to determine where and when interventions and additional funding are most critical

## **Feedback Collected**

The panel also determined that it wanted to gather information from practitioners around the state regarding the anticipated impact of the new diploma requirements. An early effort was the development of a 17-question survey that was administered electronically to all 197 school district superintendents in the state. Questions were designed to assess current realities regarding student and system readiness to address these requirements (i.e., how many students currently start Algebra I as a freshman in your high school(s) in your district?) as well as superintendents' assessment of necessary next steps (i.e., what additional training is required for teachers?).

The survey was active for a two-month period closing on May 15, 2008. A total of 75 out of 197 school district superintendents responded to the survey. Survey results are presented both in terms of "raw data" – the detailed answers to questions – and graphically in the case of selected questions.

A presentation was also made to approximately 140 school and district leaders at the COSA-sponsored "Off the Record" meeting in Salem on April 25, 2008. Opportunity for both written feedback was provided as well as encouragement to complete the online survey for those districts not yet responding.

Finally, panel members were asked to present draft recommendations to administrators in their home districts/county for additional feedback on the impact of the new diploma requirements. A countywide meeting of elementary, middle, and high school administrators was held in Clackamas County, for example, in May 2008 to present draft recommendations and solicit feedback.

The panel understands that the data collected cannot address the unique needs of every school district in Oregon given the demographic variation in our state. Small and rural districts, for example, already have a difficult time attracting and retaining staff with multiple endorsements to meet the Highly Qualified requirements of NCLB. The additional math/science credit requirements for the new diploma will require additional FTE to implement in all middle/high schools if already reduced elective programs are to survive, but specific staffing needs will vary across the state. Some school districts will have facility needs given the increased requirements for laboratory science while others struggle more or less with technology infrastructure and need additional clerical support for recordkeeping. We differ in our current realities and our future needs. Given these caveats, the following recommendations reflect the data collected from these various sources.

## **V. Recommendations**

In order to accomplish the goals established by the State Board of Education to ensure higher standards for high school graduates in Oregon, the current K-12 system must be one characterized by increased flexibility, accountability, and rigor. Given both the research and the feedback collected, meeting these rigorous expectations will require changes in the current K-12 system as well as additional funding.

There are three areas of recommendations from the Quality Education Commission panel regarding the successful implementation of the new diploma. These include recommendations regarding the a) alignment of current policy/practice; b) communication; and 3) additional resources.

### **A. Recommendations Regarding Alignment of Current Policy/Practice**

Panel members felt, in particular, that there were a number of areas in which inconsistencies in the “message” and some current practices at the state level made it difficult to understand the intent or to fully implement these new requirements. While schools are being asked to make changes in policy and practice, there are others who influence the outcomes of K-12 education and set policy for Oregon schools that need to align their message and their practices with implementation. All stakeholders need to focus their efforts and align their work with these diploma requirements. Panel members, who are representing K-12 educators around the state, believe that

1. To advocate for proficiency-based credit while continuing to define credits in terms of seat time or hours of instruction sends a “mixed message.”
2. To stress content area standards but require “Algebra I” ties schools to a course work model.
3. To negatively label a student who fails to finish high school a “drop out” or “early leaver” sends the message that four years to graduate is the “norm.” The flexible system we envision if every student is to meet state standards recognizes that some students need less time to complete requirements and some more. This reality does not constitute a “failure” on the part of those who require additional time to meet standards and requires state reporting requirements to change accordingly.
4. The current state and federal reporting requirements must be better coordinated and reduced if the goal is accountability in terms of student outcomes. The reporting demands on schools are crippling them. Organizations and departments collect the same data in multiple reports but fail to coordinate their requests or the information collected.

5. State Board and legislative requirements need to align with the new diploma requirements and provide districts with clear and rigorous standards regarding accountability but allow for flexibility in approach.

Legislative requirements regarding further restrictions on a modified diploma, for example, seem incongruent with the concept of multiple pathways with comparable rigor to earning a diploma. Restricting options rather than increasing them is not consistent with new diploma principles.

Likewise, the legislative requirement to fund the PSAT for all sophomores appears well-intentioned, but another standardized test, not tied to Oregon standards, takes even more time away from instruction in a school system heavily burdened by existing testing requirements at the state/federal level.

A recent OAR on its way to the State Board for approval requiring a 200:1 licensed counselor/student ratio is antithetical to the school-to-career and post-high school focus being asked of high schools. Such policy mandates impact school funding and reduce a principal's flexibility to meet the requirements of a personalized learning plan/diploma. Even more critical, such a mandate does not address the need for a broader counseling role in schools in order to address varying student needs and demographics. More licensed counselors is not the priority, nor are licensed counselors the only staff who can assist with the guidance function necessary for students to achieve an Oregon Diploma.

All state policy makers and organizations must align their efforts with the "big picture" and reduce the fragmentation resulting from independent initiatives such as these.

6. School and district size are key factors when considering the resources required to implement the diploma and should be clearly addressed by the Quality Education Model. The varying demographics of 197 school districts require flexibility in our approach to accountability and use of resources. State organizations should be promoting best practices and creative approaches to ensuring student success, not just "audits" and "findings." The "compliance message" now coming from state organizations should be re-focused on providing clear and consistent standards that all must follow while still allowing districts to utilize resources and develop models to fit their needs.

7. Work samples are a valuable means for students to demonstrate proficiency. In fact, work samples are considered by many K-12 educators to be a better measure of student proficiency than standardized tests. They are not to be construed as a "back door" approach to getting an Oregon Diploma and should be viewed as a valuable assessment of student learning for all students by all stakeholders.

8. Alternative means of assessment as a way to demonstrate diploma requirements (i.e., AP scores, SAT, ACT) cannot simply substitute one high-stakes test for another. In addition, norm-referenced tests not aligned to Oregon state standards are at odds with state and district focus.

9. The state needs to discontinue the practice of requiring state assessment at grade 10 now that meeting or exceeding tenth-grade benchmarks is required for graduation two years later. Instead, Oregon Statewide Assessment (OSA) testing should occur in grade 11 in order to allow the senior year to focus on continued coursework/remediation for those who fail to qualify initially or for post-high school opportunities for those who do.

10. The reliance on multiple-choice tests to determine student knowledge and to qualify for a diploma is inconsistent with what we know about some students' performance on tests as a single measure of accountability. Work samples and other research-based means of performance assessment must be maintained as viable assessment options if the goal is to measure student learning.

## **B. Recommendations Regarding Communication**

There is a pressing need for clear and coordinated communication from the Oregon Department of Education and the State Board relative to these new requirements. We recognize that ODE is under-staffed and under-funded given the scope of its responsibilities. School districts need, however, a consistent message by August 2008 for incoming freshmen, their parents, and teachers regarding the requirements for the class of 2012. A common set of communication materials is needed as well.

Our panel believes that in order to implement new diploma requirements, school districts need the following information and resources:

1. The State Board should adopt a clear phase-in of graduation requirements and work in conjunction with other organizations to develop a K-12 school funding package that provides additional resources to accompany new diploma requirements where required for implementation (see attached chart entitled "Reciprocal Accountability").
2. The State Board must define the approved ways for students to earn credit towards graduation with a menu of approved options/criteria for districts to use to create multiple pathways for students (i.e., course enrollment, work samples, credit by proficiency, internships).
3. ODE/State Board must define how the essential skills will be assessed and a process by which assessment options will be approved. In addition to scores on OSA/OAKS, for example, districts need to know if norm-referenced tests such as the ACT/SAT, local assessments (work samples, classroom assessments, internships, extended applications, senior projects), or even AP scores can be considered.
4. The State Board must decide whether required assessments for high school continue to occur at grade 10 or if such assessments are reassigned to grade 11 or 12 in response to attainment of benchmark/other measure of proficiency will be required for graduation.
5. A communication plan from ODE and the State Board to all stakeholders is essential. A common message with common documents needs to be shared with school principals and staff to

combat any misunderstanding of these requirements. Although CIM/CAM no longer exist in statute, for example, the essential skills and the extended application requirements of the new diploma duplicate these earlier requirements. We need clear communication and common materials for distribution from ODE/State Board regarding:

- a. What is required of the freshmen entering high school in fall 2008 in order to graduate (i.e., 24 credits, essential skills, personalized plan and profile, extended application)?
  - b. What will be the acceptable pathways to assess the essential skills? Which ones will be assessed first, when, and how? Which essential skills are considered to be embedded and which must be assessed separately?
  - c. Who will assess global literacy, career-related learning, critical thinking, technology essential skills if these remain graduation requirements? If these are to be local assessments, what are the criteria/rubric we must use and our timeline?
  - d. What are the statewide criteria for proficiency-based credit within which districts can define courses/local expectations?
  - e. What are the expectations for English language learners and students on IEPs relative to the diploma requirements if modified diplomas are not an option? What options are viable to meet the academic and language needs of a 16-year-old non-English speaker who enters a high school in Oregon for the first time?
6. In addition, districts need a “tool kit” of forms/products. Sample documents could include 1) approved work sample rubrics; 2) proficiency credit standards/options with examples; 3) personal plan and profile requirements; and 4) state reporting forms regarding assessments used to certify proficiency and credits awarded. Due to student mobility and the need to ensure comparability of credits across the state, we recommend that such documents be developed centrally to maximize efficiency.
7. A high priority is the immediate realignment of state assessments with the higher standards in math. If we are to begin to hold students accountable to state tests scores in order to graduate from high school, freshmen in 2008 need to be informed of the standards to which they are being held accountable.
8. We need ESDs/school districts/consortia to organize regional staff development efforts that focus on math/science skills for teachers and appropriate interventions for students who are struggling to meet benchmark. Getting all students to Algebra I or higher by grade 9 needs to be a focus for all educational entities.
9. Higher education must initiate an active recruitment effort and a set of incentives to attract more math and science teachers to our middle and high schools. Oregon Teacher Standards and Practices Commission (TSPC) efforts to help school districts with the Highly Qualified Staff requirements, particularly in small, rural school districts, are also necessary if additional staff are to be found in these areas.

### C. Recommendations Regarding Additional Resources

A final set of recommendations focuses on a phased-in approach to the diploma requirements with a corresponding increase in targeted funding from the 2009 and 2011 legislature. The overarching message is that these requirements can be met, but not without additional time and money for state agencies and for school districts. By phasing in the requirements and targeting funding for implementation, panel members and the majority of superintendents responding to the e-survey felt that the majority of students could achieve these higher standards.

It should be noted, however, that 2008 freshmen will not have the benefit of additional funding/support to assure that they meet higher standards prior to their arrival at the high school. As a result, more funds may need to be “front-loaded” for the first phase of the diploma implementation than the second in order for those students to meet or exceed new requirements. It has also been suggested that the additional funding for the new diploma requirements be tied to the School Improvement Fund allocation beginning in 2009-11 biennium. Additional funding should also address the need for flexibility given the varied conditions in which all Oregon schools operate (i.e., size, geography, student demographics, enrollment growth/decline).

Finally, schools need to focus on student achievement and its assessment, and a statewide data system to facilitate this effort is critical. The statewide system of technology infrastructure currently being constructed via the KIDS Project must continue to be supported by legislative funding given the data requirements and work sample information storage required by the new diploma requirements. Funded by the 2005 legislature and scheduled for full implementation by fall of 2009, this data warehouse system is essential to our success. We need to function as a K-14 and K-20 system with easy transferability of data across organizations and state agencies to support the reality of student mobility and to streamline reporting requirements.

The following information and companion chart describe key resource needs and timelines for the 2009-11 and 2011-13 biennia relative to implementation of the new diploma requirements:

#### **2009-11**

- 1) **Statewide development of technology infrastructure to promote access to student data and efficient transfer of data across districts.** This work, known as the KIDS Project (**K-12 Integrated Data System**), is already underway at the Oregon Department of Education.
- 2) **ODE to work with the Teacher Standards and Practices Commission (TSPC) to expand the high objective uniform state standard of evaluation (HOUSSE) option for Highly Qualified Teacher (HQT) status, especially in rural districts.**
- 3) **Districts:**
  - **Additional teacher FTE in grades 6-12 for math/reading/science to avoid loss of electives.** (The panel assumes an increase in math FTE in the QEM prototype high school of 1.0 and increase of science of 0.5 FTE will be needed. Also

assumes an increase of 1.0 FTE in each prototype middle school for math/reading/science.)

- **Staff training in math/reading/science strategies for K-12.** (Panel estimates that the equivalent of two additional days of professional development for all teachers in elementary, middle, and high schools will be needed.)
- **Time to develop K-16 options and proficiency-based credit opportunities.**
- **Time to develop local assessments for essential skills.**
- **Time for teacher data teams to analyze student achievement data and identify interventions.** (The panel estimates that the equivalent of two additional days of teacher collaboration time for all teachers in elementary, middle, and high schools will be needed.)
- **Added staff in high school to assist students in developing and managing their education plan and profiles.**
- **Clerical FTE for documentation/recordkeeping.**
- **FTE and transportation services to support targeted interventions such as summer school, after-school/online options, additional year of high school, double dose of math/language arts.**
- **Incentive dollars to encourage teachers to get additional math training.**

### **2011-13**

- 1) **ODE creation of rubrics for assessing remaining essential skills.**
- 2) **Districts:**
  - **Continuation of activities put in place in 2009-11.**
  - **Technology Infrastructure.**
  - **Technology for student use to lower student/computer ratio.**
  - **FTE for math/science/reading coaches and site-based supports at middle and high schools.**
  - **Math/science training via ESD/district consortia.**

RECIPROCAL ACCOUNTABILITY: A CRITICAL CONTRACT TO ENSURE SUCCESS FOR ALL OREGON STUDENTS

Current Diploma Requirements	2008-2009 Planning	2009-2011 Budget	PHASE I 2012 Diploma Requirements	PHASE I 2011-2013 Budget	PHASE II 2014 Diploma Requirements
<p>CURRENT REQUIREMENTS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Career Related Learning Experiences (CRLES)</li> <li>▪ Personal Plan &amp; Profile</li> <li>▪ Credit by Proficiency (optional)</li> <li>▪ Extended Application</li> <li>▪ 22 Credits</li> </ul>	<p>FOCUS: CLARIFYING REQUIREMENTS &amp; COMMUNICATION</p> <p>Key Activities:</p> <p>1) ODE/State Board:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Assessment decisions re: essential skills, 10<sup>th</sup> or 11/12<sup>th</sup> grade testing, graduation alternatives (e.g., OSA, SAT, ACT, work samples, AP, PSAT scores)</li> <li>▪ Communication plan</li> <li>▪ Tool kit (key documents for parents, students, staff)</li> <li>▪ Exemplars (e.g., credit by proficiency rubric, portfolios)</li> <li>▪ Best Practices/Research (math, science)</li> </ul> <p>2) Districts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Internal communication plan (parents, students, staff)</li> <li>▪ Readiness assessment (e.g., number of students entering meeting/exceeding 8<sup>th</sup> grade benchmark)</li> <li>▪ Policy development (e.g., credit by proficiency)</li> <li>▪ Clear expectations for incoming freshmen</li> </ul>	<p>TO IMPLEMENT PHASE I DIPLOMA REQUIREMENTS, ADDITIONAL DOLLARS ARE REQUIRED FROM LEGISLATURE FOR:</p> <p>Key Activities:</p> <p>1) Continued statewide development of technology infrastructure to promote a) access to student data including work samples; and b) efficient transfer of data across districts.</p> <p>2) Districts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Additional FTE in grades 6-12 for math/reading/science to avoid loss of electives</li> <li>▪ Additional time for staff training in math/reading/science strategies K-12</li> <li>▪ Additional time to develop K-16 options and proficiency-based credit opportunities</li> <li>▪ Additional time for teacher data teams to analyze student achievement data, develop formative assessments, and identify interventions</li> <li>▪ FTE/transportation to extend learning time for students through targeted interventions (i.e., summer school, after-school/on-line options, additional year of HS, double-dose of math/language arts)</li> <li>▪ Incentive dollars to encourage teachers to get additional math training</li> </ul> <p>3) Other: Higher education recruitment of math/science teachers from other professions</p>	<p>ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 24 credits (+1 math &amp; +1 science)</li> <li>▪ 4 essential skills (reading, writing, math, speaking)</li> <li>▪ Continued focus on Extended Application</li> <li>▪ Continued focus on CRLES</li> <li>▪ Credit by proficiency in place</li> </ul>	<p>TO IMPLEMENT PHASE II DIPLOMA REQUIREMENTS, ADDITIONAL DOLLARS ARE REQUIRED FROM LEGISLATURE FOR:</p> <p>Key Activities:</p> <p>1) ODE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Rubrics for assessing remaining essential skills</li> </ul> <p>2) Districts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Expand technology infrastructure</li> <li>▪ Increase # of computers for student use to lower student/computer ratio</li> <li>▪ FTE for math/science/reading instructional coaches/site-based support at middle/high school</li> <li>▪ Additional time for K-12 math/science training via ESD/district consortia</li> <li>▪ Clerical FTE for documentation/recordkeeping</li> <li>▪ Additional time to develop local assessments for final group of essential skills</li> </ul>	<p>ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Remaining essential skills (technology literacy, global awareness, critical thinking, civic engagement)</li> <li>▪ Continued focus on Extended Application</li> <li>▪ Continued focus on CRLES</li> <li>▪ Math credits = Algebra I or higher</li> <li>▪ Science credits 2 of 3 credits = lab</li> </ul>

## Conclusion

If you ask educators how they would describe an ideal school system that guarantees all students' success, they will respond in similar ways. They would passionately describe schools that help students attain not only basic skills but that also help them explore their own unique talents and interests. They would advocate for schools rich in the arts, in second language programs, schools that offered a full range of programs designed to promote the intellectual, physical, and emotional growth of students through the efforts of skilled and caring adults working with small and flexible groups of children. They would advocate for a 24/7 approach to supporting students and their families and a schedule that was year round or at least longer than somewhere between 165-180 instructional days per year. The agrarian school calendar and grade level organization would go the way of the dinosaur in response to the realities of students' needs.

That is not the school system we have in Oregon and these new diploma requirements will not change that reality.

Our reality is less than ideal: we have one of the shortest school years in the nation, unstable school funding, a decade of budget cuts, and a history of making educational policy at the ballot box. We have never achieved full funding of the Quality Education Model, and Oregon like other states, is suffering under the inflexible and sometimes unreasonable requirements of No Child Left Behind. As a result, our agenda has narrowed to focus on math and reading and our inadequate funding supports limited services for the most at risk. It is important to recognize that the recommendations contained in this report – in terms of policy, practice, and funding – are presented in this context, not the one most educators would want for our young people.

But, as in the past, those caring and skilled adults will now respond to increased diploma requirements and do their best to deliver. To do their best, however, the message from this Quality Education Commission Panel is hopefully clear:

We need all stakeholders to focus on and align with this agenda.  
We need clear and consistent messages and tools from state policy makers.  
We need more resources.

That's not all we need, of course. More money and more coordination at the state level is not a magic bullet. When asked what the number-one obstacle to implementing the diploma would be if schools were given adequate resources, the majority of the 75 school district superintendents responding to our e-survey indicated that we needed a culture change in schools and in school districts. Not everyone believes that most students can, in fact, complete three credits in math at the Algebra I level or higher.

The second most frequent obstacle listed, again assuming that funding is adequate, was meeting the challenges of special populations. Given the drop-out rates among Hispanics, for example, or the resources already allocated to special education with such limited results, getting these students to benchmark will require research, the sharing of best practices, and the identification of defined program models that have proven to be successful.

But across our K-12 system, whether we are large or small, urban or rural, if we are serious about all students meeting these standards,

We must increase achievement at elementary and middle schools and intervene early for those students who struggle academically.

We must act like we believe that it is not an option to fail and change those practices in each and every school that attest to the contrary.

We must stop blaming external forces or organizations for the reality we are all trying to address: too many students graduate from high school without the requisite skills.

We must recognize those teachers who are having success with struggling students and share their data and their expertise with others.

We must all accept responsibility for higher math and reading skills, not just some of us, and we need increased professional development to support this shift.

The recommendations presented in this report are in response to the task our panel was asked to address by the Quality Education Commission. They reflect our collective experience in diverse schools and school districts and will ultimately result in changes to the prototype schools contained in the Quality Education Model.

We believe they are important recommendations because the Quality Education Model serves as a benchmark regarding the level of K-12 funding in Oregon and as a tool for the legislature to use as it determines fiscal appropriations. As such, we are hopeful that our recommendations will have a positive impact on educational policy, practice, and K-12 funding. We are also hopeful that our report sends a realistic but hopeful message to the legislature, the State Board, and the Oregon Department of Education about Oregon educators: we are working hard on behalf of Oregon's children, and if we coordinate and focus our individual and collective efforts, they will all succeed.

Respectfully submitted,

Deborah Sommer, Chair  
Superintendent of the Canby School District