



STATE OF MICHIGAN  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
LANSING



JENNIFER M. GRANHOLM  
GOVERNOR

December 7, 2005

MICHAEL P. FLANAGAN  
SUPERINTENDENT OF  
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

TO: Members of the State Board of Education

FROM: Michael P. Flanagan, Chairman 

**SUBJ: APPROVAL OF PROPOSED HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS**

At the November 2005 State Board of Education meeting you received a presentation of proposed high school graduation requirements and heard comments from Department staff members, Task Force members, and the public. During the ensuing month we have responded to over 400 comments that arrived via email, letter, and the website public comment link (Summary attached). Many of you have also shared with me the feedback you have received when attending meetings around the state.

My concerns in bringing the proposal to you include Michigan's current weak high school graduation requirements and the underperforming economy in Michigan. Current statutory requirements mandate only that high school graduates take one unit of Civics (Government), which is typically a semester course. Any remaining graduation requirements are the prerogative of local boards of education to determine. We have school districts in Michigan that have stringent requirements for graduation for all students, but we also have districts with lenient requirements. We must eliminate the disparity among districts so that each and every student in Michigan graduates with the skills necessary to succeed in the 21<sup>st</sup> century workplace and in postsecondary education.

I firmly believe that the adoption and implementation of the recommendations proposed at the November meeting, with a unique focus on 21<sup>st</sup> Century skills and online learning, will set Michigan on the road to reclaim its prominence as a world leader in education. To implement the recommendations, it will be necessary to evaluate current expenditures, realize efficiencies, leverage state and local resources, prioritize strategies, and make critical investments to bring about the desired student achievement outcomes.

Attached to this document you will see the Summary of Graduation Requirements for Students, the Michigan Merit Core Curriculum, the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Applied Learning Core, and the Summary of Email Comments as of December 6, 2005.

**It is recommended that the State Board of Education approve the attached high school graduation requirements and seek support from the Governor and the state Legislature to implement the requirements through legislation.**

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**Recommendations from the State Superintendent to the  
State Board of Education on  
Michigan High School Graduation Requirements  
December, 2005**

**Summary of Recommendations for Students**

***Student Graduation Requirements***

I recommend that Michigan establish the following high school graduation requirements:

- Participation in the Michigan Merit Examination or MI-Access in the spring of the junior year.
- Completion of a **Michigan Merit Curriculum** that includes a **Michigan Merit Core** and a **21<sup>st</sup> Century Applied Learning Core**.
- Completion of an online credit or noncredit course or learning experience.

***Implementation of the Michigan Merit Curriculum Requirements***

- Requirements beginning with the freshman class of 2006-07 (the graduating class of 2010). (If legislation to support this requirement has not been signed into law by March 1, 2006, the requirement will begin with the freshman class of 2007-08.)
- District requirement to file a phase-in plan if unable to implement immediately.
- Student modification allowed after three years in Michigan Merit Curriculum.



## 21<sup>st</sup> Century Applied Learning Core

**All remaining elective credits must include teaching and learning of 21<sup>st</sup> century skills, examples shown below.**

The following set of skill categories represent the 21<sup>st</sup> century skills that all students need to know and apply for successful living in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. These skills permeate the **Merit Academic Core** and are enhanced by courses in the elective areas. The course content standards must incorporate one or more of the following categories. Assessments in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Applied Learning Core often involve demonstration of satisfactory performance by applying the course content standards to real-world tasks and projects, and contexts.

*adapted from the Partnership for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills*

<http://www.21stcenturyskills.org/index.php>

<p><b>21<sup>st</sup> Century Skill: Global Literacy</b></p> <p>Understand and address global issues. Learn from and work with others from diverse cultures, religions, and lifestyles. Master non-English language skills as a tool for understanding other nations and cultures.</p>	<p><b>Course Examples</b></p> <p>Fine Arts Music and Performing Arts World Languages: including world languages Chinese, Japanese, Arabic, Swahili, Hindi, Sign language, in addition to Spanish, French, German, etc. Global Studies Multicultural Studies: including, African American Studies, Native American Studies, Latino Studies, Asian Studies World Religions Philosophy Anthropology Sociology/Psychology International Business MVHS Online Classes Advanced Placement Courses JROTC</p>
<p><b>21<sup>st</sup> Century Skill: Civic Literacy</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Participate effectively in government as an informed citizen</li> <li>▪ Exercise the rights and obligations of citizenship at local, state, national and global levels.</li> <li>▪ Understand the local and global implications of civic decisions.</li> <li>▪ Apply 21st century skills to make intelligent choices as a citizen.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Course Examples</b></p> <p>Student Government Leadership Law Service Learning Legislative Internship Business Ethics MVHS Online Classes Advanced Placement Courses</p>
<p><b>21<sup>st</sup> Century Skill: Financial, Economic, and Entrepreneurial Literacy</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Make appropriate personal economic choices.</li> <li>▪ Understand the role of the economy and the role of business in the economy.</li> <li>▪ Apply appropriate 21st century skills to function as a productive contributor within an organizational setting.</li> <li>▪ Integrate oneself within and adapting continually to our nation's evolving economic and business environment.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Course Examples</b></p> <p>Business Technology Entrepreneurship, Accounting, Marketing Global Economics Junior Achievement Applied Economics Internships Life Science –Personal Living Financial Management Business Management</p>

<p><b>21<sup>st</sup> Century Skill: Information and Communications Technology Literacy</b></p> <p>Using information and media literacy skills. Analyzing, accessing, managing, integrating, evaluating and creating information in a variety of forms and media.  Understanding the role of media in society. Understanding, managing and creating effective oral, written and multimedia communication in a variety of forms and contexts.  Demonstrating interpersonal and self-direction skills. Becoming more productive in accomplishing tasks and developing interest in improving own skills.</p>	<p><b>Course Examples</b></p> <p>Multimedia, Broadcasting, CISCO, Computer Science  Debate and Forensics  Oral Communication  Journalism—Publications  Creative Writing  Drama  Theater Arts  Film and Photography  Desktop Publishing  Advertising  Graphic Arts and Design  Fine Arts  Performing Arts—Dance, Orchestra, Marching Band, Music Technology  MVHS Online Classes</p>
<p><b>21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning Skills</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Thinking and Problem-Solving</b>—Critical thinking, systems thinking, exercising sound reasoning, making complex decisions, problem identification, formulation and solution.</li> <li>▪ <b>Interpersonal and Self-Directional</b>-Teamwork and leadership; adapting to varied roles and responsibilities; working productively with others; exercising empathy; respecting diverse perspectives.</li> <li>▪ <b>Information and Communication</b>- Creativity and intellectual curiosity, information and media skills, communications skills, self direction.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Course Examples</b></p> <p>Electronics, Aviation, Building and Construction Trades  Robotics  Internships  Work Based Learning Experiences  Probability and Statistics  Health Sciences  Personal Fitness and Wellness</p>
<p><b>Accelerated Learning</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Acknowledges that students learn at different rates</li> <li>▪ Can occur at any time in a student’s high school experience</li> <li>▪ Can assist students in moving beyond grade level, remaining at grade level, or moving to grade level.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Course Examples</b></p> <p>Advanced Placement Courses  Dual Enrollment Courses  Online courses  Literacy Labs  Math Labs  Gear Up  Upward Bound  Ramp Up Courses  Mentor Reading  2 + 2 + 2 Articulated Programs</p>
<p><b>Michigan Merit Curriculum Total</b></p>	<p><b>Total credits for graduation determined by district</b></p>

## Summary of Email Comments

### Email Summary\*--December 6, 2005

#### Supportive Emails

General Support	Total	75
Support with PE	Total	75
Support with Arts	Total	25
Support with Earth Science	Total	83
Support with Foreign Language	Total	18

**276 Total**

#### Non-Support

CTE/Technology/Industrial Arts concerns	Total	26
Requirements Too High /Drop-outs	Total	59
Math requirement	Total	29
Lack of Funding	Total	31
Local Control	Total	8
Other Suggestions Geography, IB	Total	4

**153 Total**

#### Supportive Emails

**General Support (14 parents, 19 teachers—5 retired, 8 community members—1 school board member, 7 administrators, 5 college/university professors)**

These emails were supportive of the recommendations. Some notable conditions: engage the business community; engage parents; pay attention to "special" student populations; include computer programming. **Special Note:** Three respondents felt that the age for compulsory attendance should be raised to 17 or 18 for the requirement proposal to be successful.

**Support with Physical Education/Health (75 responses—1 parent opposed)**

These emails were generally supportive. Some wanted more clarification of the division of Health and PE (.5 each?) The term "Team Sports" caused some confusion. The respondents strongly suggested that extra-curricular activities such as marching band and extracurricular sports should not be allowed to substitute for this requirement. Currently, the School Code (380.1502) allows for this exception.

**Support with Inclusion of the Arts (3 parents, 11 teachers, 10 community members, 1 college/university professor)**

The arts community was very supportive of inclusion of the arts. One respondent (an elementary teacher) worried that some students would rebel. Special Note: There are questions what courses would determine the satisfaction of the Fine Arts/Music requirement and who would make the determination, the department or the local school district. An Industrial Arts teacher asked if woodworking, CAD, drafting, graphic arts, photography, etc. could meet this requirement. Many of the current Arts Education standards and benchmarks, especially in the visual arts and theater strands, could be met with an Industrial Arts class.

**Support with the Inclusion of Earth Science (46 teachers, 4 parents, 31 community members—22 university students-5 professors MSU, CMU, GVSU, WCCC—2 MDEQ, 2 MDNR, 1 administrator)**

These emails strongly suggested the inclusion of Earth Science in the course examples. Some were concerned about the perceived sequence of the course. We did add the "Earth Science" course title to the matrix and developed an FAQ about our thinking in science. These actions seemed to stem the flow of emails. It is an assumption that with this change these respondents are now supportive.

**Support with the Inclusion of Foreign Language (12 teachers, 3 community member (school board member), 3 college professor)**

These emails gave support for the overall recommendations, but urged the inclusion of two years of foreign language as a graduation requirement. Reasons cited: increased globalization, college requirements, and world-class standards, global literacy, outsourcing and international business communication needs.

**Non-Support**

**CTE/Industrial Arts/Lack of Technology (19 teachers, 3 parents, 2 administrators)**

Respondents believe that these areas will suffer a decline in enrollment. There were questions about the ability of CTE to grant Merit Core credit under NCLB highly qualified teacher provision. Some wanted to know why a "technology" credit has not been proposed.

**Math Requirement is too Stringent (18 teachers, 4 parents 1, counselor, 3 community members including one school board member)**

Respondents believe Algebra II is too hard or not needed for all students. Math requirement will cause students to drop out. Students need more practical math like personal finance. The curriculum is overcrowded. Support needed for

low achievers. The respondents are generally supportive to the curriculum with this exception.

**Standards too High/Special Education Students/Drop-outs (49 teachers, 2 students, 2 counselors, 1 administrator, 2 parents, 3 community members, 3 unidentified)**

**Reasons:** Not all students are going to college; not all students are college material; not all students want to go to college; special education/at risk/mediocre students can't do this; one size does not fit all; students are not prepared for high school; classes will get watered down to comply with requirements; students can't read or write or compute.

**Funding (4 parents, 15 teacher, 5 administrators, 5 community members including 2 school board members)**

Many respondents said they supported the proposal in concept, but opposed it they believe there won't be funds to support it. Reasons cited: Need extra Math and Science teachers—elective teachers will be hurt; additional textbooks, teaching resources needed for expanded art, science, math; science laboratories needed for hands-on science; more support services needed. Four respondents claimed this proposal is an unfunded mandate.

**Local Control (8)**

Reasons cited: Students should have choice in their curriculum; the local school district is doing a good job; State is inflexible and unreasonable in the implementation of NCLB and should butt out of local matters.

**Participant Summary**

The majority of email senders (perhaps because of a link on the MEA newsletter) identify themselves as teachers. Many of these teachers also identify themselves as parents. Also several university professors, college students and state of Michigan employees weighed in on the Earth Science question. Most of the emails are from southeast Michigan, a few from the Bay City—Midland area, and some from Northern lower peninsula including Grand Haven, Central Lake, Traverse City, Alpena. Ann Arbor, Portage, South Haven, East Kentwood High Schools were also represented. Interestingly, we have received no emails from the large urban districts of Detroit, Lansing, Grand Rapids, and only 2 from Flint.

Pinning down support vs. non-support is a little tricky. Most non-supportive emails begin with "I think there is a need for some graduation requirements, but I have serious concerns about..." Dialogue is helpful in clearing up misconceptions and confusions and thereby gaining more supporters. Over the last two weeks staff members have engaged in dialogue with groups at the following locations: Kalamazoo RESA, Michigan Association for Supervision and

Curriculum Development, Ingham ISD, Michigan Association of Secondary School Principals, Michigan Association of School Boards, Calhoun ISD. There are many challenges ahead and continued communication will be vital to clear up misconceptions and reinforce the need for change in high school curriculum and graduation requirements.

**\* Numbers will not always add up. Some respondents did not identify themselves/wrote more than once, blank response.**