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Board adopts changes to state graduation requirements

PIERRE, S.D. – The South Dakota Board of Education Standards adopted proposed revisions to South Dakota’s high school graduation requirements at its meeting earlier today, with an amendment directing the South Dakota Department of Education to review the requirements again after Jan. 1, 2026.

The newly adopted graduation requirements aim to combine opportunities for rigor, student engagement and flexibility. The new requirements were developed to provide students with multiple opportunities to meet their postsecondary and career goals within a framework of general high school graduation requirements.

“Today’s students need to be prepared for what comes after graduation—to find that intersection of aptitude, interests and workforce opportunity,” said Gov. Dennis Daugaard, who was among those testifying at today’s meeting. “These new requirements are about providing vital flexibility so that each student can find his or her own right way to success and make informed choices about that next step.”

One of the major changes in the new requirements is the concept of endorsements, which signify students have taken coursework with a specific focus. Students can earn more than one endorsement, since they share some of the same course requirements. Students will not be required to earn endorsements. The endorsements are as follows:

- **Advanced:** indicates a student has pursued the coursework consistent with entrance requirements for postsecondary education at a university
- **Advanced Career:** indicates a student has career experience in a concentrated area, based on academic and/or workplace experience and a related credential
- **Advanced Honors:** indicates a student has pursued advanced rigorous, academic coursework consistent with the South Dakota Opportunity Scholarship course requirements

Pending approval by the Legislature’s Rules Review Committee at its Aug. 20 meeting, school districts may choose from the following options this fall:

- Fully implement the new graduation requirements immediately
- Continue following the previous state graduation requirements adopted in 2009
- Implement the new requirements for some students

By fall 2020, districts must make available to all students the endorsement options in the new graduation requirements.