

2018 Graduation Requirements: What do I do now?

In summer 2018 the Board of Education Standards approved changes to South Dakota's high school graduation requirements for accredited schools. After approval by the Legislature's Rules Review Committee Aug. 20, 2018, the changes are effective fall 2018 and apply to all students in grades 9-12; implementation will not be staggered.

As a school district, what should we do now?

Talk with your leadership team and school counselor(s) about how to approach the new requirements. Because the changes are intended to provide flexibility, you may choose from the following three options:

- 1) Make no changes to your district's graduation requirements this school year; continue utilizing the graduation requirements adopted in 2009.
- 2) Offer some students who may benefit from newly adopted changes the opportunity to graduate based on new requirements while other students continue to follow the graduation requirements adopted in 2009.
- 3) Proceed with full implementation of the newly adopted graduation requirements and offer all endorsements to all students this year.

In deciding your approach to implementation, consider the needs of your district by asking the following questions:

- Does our school board need to approve our district's graduation requirements?
- Do we want our students to take courses beyond the state-mandated minimum? What is our local approval process for establishing such additional requirements?
- Do we want to develop any new course offerings or offer students additional online options through existing venues like the SD Virtual School? How will we assess student demand for these potential additions, and how will we secure the resources to offer them?
- What kind of workload do our school counselors carry? What support do they need from the South Dakota Department of Education?
- How can we, as a district and community, meet students' needs in deciding their best path to graduation?

As a parent, what should I do now?

Talk with your student about plans they may already have for life after graduation. Discuss courses they have already taken or plan to take to help them achieve their goals. Discuss any potential gaps between their course plans and their post-graduation goals. Review with your child the personal learning plan they have completed (either through SDMyLife or another platform).

Think about how best to help your child ensure that the path they are on in high school will help them achieve their goals for a career and/or further education after high school graduation.

As a student, what should I do now?

Explore options for life after graduation. If you have not decided on your path after graduation, seek opportunities to help you make those decisions (consider work-based learning experiences, dual credit courses, career and technical education courses or other course offerings that help you explore). All South Dakota students in grades 6-12 have free access to a career and college exploration program, called SDMyLife. You can access SDMyLife at www.sdmylife.com.

Pursue rigor. Your plans may change between your freshman and senior year (in fact, this is likely). Pursue challenging courses that allow you to explore and that provide rigor, so you can be ready for anything you ultimately decide to pursue after high school graduation.