

## **Proposed High School Graduation Requirements (2018)**

### **BACKGROUND**

Recognizing that success looks different for each student, South Dakota is committed to providing multiple pathways for students to achieve and demonstrate readiness for life after high school. This graduation requirements proposal combines opportunities for rigor, student engagement and flexibility in order to build a foundation for future success.

#### WHY CHANGE NOW?

South Dakota's current graduation requirements date back nearly a decade. The pace of change within our state has been quick; there has also been time to reflect on whether the requirements continue to meet the needs of our youth, our employers, and our communities.

This proposal was developed in concert with stakeholders across the state to provide flexibility for students to meet their postsecondary and career aspirations within a framework of general high school graduation requirements. The flexibility is aimed at better supporting schools to meet students' diverse interests and goals. Along with that, the proposal allows more occasions for students to explore postsecondary opportunities and work-based learning experiences *while they are still secondary students*.

Flexibility is not equivalent to lowering standards. The base graduation requirements in this proposal strip away some of the previous course dictates. In doing so, the state is challenging each district and community to provide distinct paths that encourage both student engagement and academic rigor. Districts may add requirements to the base they deem necessary to prepare students for the world beyond K-12, and what one community deems necessary may look different from the needs of others.

Through this proposal, the state defines the minimum. From there, districts work with students to pursue coursework of interest designed to meet the student's individual academic and career goals.

#### ENDORSEMENTS

In addition to the base high school graduation requirements, the state has outlined three endorsements that students *may* earn as a signal of specialization beyond the base graduation requirements: Advanced, Advanced Career, and Advanced Honors. These stackable endorsements allow students to demonstrate to audiences – such as the state's Board of Regents institutions, an employer, or others – that they have specific preparation to embark on a chosen pathway. Students may earn none or all three; additionally, districts may add endorsements beyond the three specified in the proposal, so long as the base graduation requirements are met.

By offering students opportunities to pursue meaningful coursework and career-related experiences, this proposal seeks to more fully engage all students as they progress through high school on the road to future success.