

POSTSECONDARY AND WORKFORCE READINESS (PWR) HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA ENDORSEMENT CRITERIA

**Submitted by the Endorsed Diploma Task Force
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**Another P-20 partnership between the Colorado Department of Education and the
Colorado Department of Higher Education**

High school is a critical juncture in students' lives and in our educational system, and deserves special attention. High school is a place to grow and transition and should empower students with the planning, knowledge, and 21st century skills they need to successfully meet the demands of a postsecondary education or a career. However, data on Colorado's high school dropout and graduation rates, remedial education needs, and the small percentage of college-bound students, suggests the urgent need to better prepare students for college or career and increase students' access to postsecondary options.

One way to address these concerns is to create a high school diploma endorsement that indicates a student has taken the necessary steps not only to exit high school but also be admitted into institutions of higher education in Colorado without the need for remediation. This document identifies the criteria for such an endorsement, indicating the student has demonstrated he/she is Postsecondary and Workforce Ready (PWR).

Though not all students will be able to meet these expectations right away, the ultimate goal is to have every student who graduates from high school in Colorado receive a PWR endorsed diploma. The state is committed to supporting schools and districts with this effort to enhance a high school student's buy-in to assessments, classes, activities and planning, in order to provide students with a clear pathway to higher education opportunities in Colorado.

Introduction

Pursuant to C.R.S. 22-7-1009 and 22-7-1017, the next steps of implementing Colorado's Achievement Plan for Kids (CAP4K), calls for the State Board of Education and the Colorado Commission on Higher Education to jointly adopt high school diploma endorsement criteria indicating a student's level of Postsecondary and Workforce Readiness (PWR). A PWR endorsed diploma identifies student excellence over and above a standard high school diploma. It signifies a student has thoughtfully planned for post-high school life, and is academically prepared for credit-bearing 100-level postsecondary coursework without the need for remediation. A PWR endorsed diploma also means the student possesses the abilities and skills demanded in a rapidly changing, 21st century workplace or postsecondary education environment (*i.e.*, critical thinking and problem solving, information literacy, collaboration, self direction, and invention skills).

The PWR endorsed diploma criteria include four steps a student must satisfy:

- **STEP 1 – STUDENT IS COLLEGE READY IN MATH AND ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS**
- **STEP 2 – STUDENT COMPLETES ICAP**
- **STEP 3 – STUDENT DEMONSTRATES 21ST CENTURY SKILLS**
- **STEP 4 – STUDENT DEMONSTRATES MASTERY OF ACADEMIC CONTENT IN THREE CONTENT AREAS**

The Postsecondary and Workforce Readiness (PWR) high school diploma endorsement provides meaningful and realistic outcomes for students due to the alignment of high school coursework, gtPathways courses in higher education, and college admissions and placement. The endorsement also rewards high school graduates for excellence by guaranteeing that the student meets: "minimum academic qualifications for admission to, and to be eligible, subject to additional institutional review of other admission and placement qualifications, for placement into credit-bearing courses at all open, modified open, or moderately selective public institutions of higher education in Colorado"; as well as priority consideration for admission into Colorado's selective and highly selective institutions.

The endorsement helps create a clear pathway for students as well as streamline placement decisions at the institutions of higher education and should enhance high school students' buy-in to assessments, classes, activities and planning, and provide students with a clear pathway to higher education opportunities in Colorado.

Postsecondary and Workforce Readiness is not just academic preparation but also an indication of the level of skills students have developed that will help them succeed in a 21st century workforce and postsecondary environment. These skills are important not only in school but throughout life, enabling the student to learn and set goals independently and collaboratively. Students will have many opportunities to apply these skills, in and outside

of the classroom, to demonstrate their level of readiness for college or a career. The PWR definition describes nine learning and life skills that align with the five 21st century skills that are embedded in the new Colorado Academic Standards. To effectively communicate these skills to P12, higher education, and the community, the two sets have been consolidated by embedding the PWR skills in the five 21st century skills as follows:

1. **Information Literacy** (PWR *Find and Use Information & Information Technology*)
2. **Invention** (PWR *Creativity and Innovation*)
3. **Collaboration** (PWR *Collaboration and Communication*)
4. **Critical Thinking** (PWR *Critical Thinking and Problem Solving, & Global and Cultural Awareness*)
5. **Self Direction** (PWR *Personal Responsibility, Civic Responsibility, Work Ethic*)

In the academic criteria it is important to note that Reading, Writing, and Communicating and Mathematics are treated differently than the other content areas. These content areas require that a student successfully complete a rigorous high school coursework *and* demonstrate excellence, and a student must also enroll in and earn at least a B in the high school course requirement specifically in their 12th grade year. The other content areas require a student meet the course requirements at any given point during their education career. One reason the Task Force recommended this approach is because they would like to encourage students to continue to engage in higher level coursework during their senior year in order to enter into postsecondary coursework without the need for remediation.

The Task Force recognizes that some districts may not have the resources to offer the breadth and rigor of academic coursework outlined in the criteria for a PWR Diploma Endorsement. Therefore, the Endorsed Diploma Task Force recommends that the state support efforts to provide access to online learning opportunities that will allow all students to participate in college ready coursework. One way is for districts to take advantage of the fact that Colorado's community colleges offer 100% of their associate's degrees online. Another opportunity exists by the adoption of the Common Core State Standards, whereby Colorado may partner with other states to provide common online coursework at a lower cost to the state.

One foundational belief is that demonstrating Postsecondary and Workforce Readiness means our policies and systems must move beyond seat-time requirements and toward performance-based indicators in determining if a student is ready to enter into college coursework. A similar approach is being considered as the state updates its admissions policies, including the Higher Education Admission Requirements (HEAR). The criteria for the endorsed diploma will help clarify the questions we will face when adjusting the admissions and placement policies.

Implementing the endorsed diploma will not create new demands on secondary schools since districts are already implementing student ICAPs and tracking whether students have met the school's local graduation requirements. What *is* new is that the endorsed diploma places a greater emphasis on the student's ability to apply the 21st century skills and

formalizes the measurement of these skills. This is an exciting and challenging task and the state is committed to working with districts, higher education, business and parents and students to implement the PWR endorsed diploma in the best way possible.

Next Steps

In order to take effect, the enclosed criteria must be approved by the institutions of higher education governing boards. Upon approval, Commissioner Hammond from the Colorado Department of Education and Lieutenant Governor Garcia, the Executive Director of the Colorado Department of Higher Education, together will request an adoption by the State Board of Education and the Colorado Commission on Higher Education. This is scheduled to be completed during spring 2012.

The Task Force recommends the state partner with several districts for at least two years, beginning in 2012-13 school year. Statewide implementation will be built on research, outcomes and lessons learned from the pilot implementation, but will likely begin in the 2014-15 school year.

STEP 1 – ADMISSION AND NON-REMEDATION CRITERIA: STUDENT IS COLLEGE READY IN MATH AND ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

To *be considered* for a PWR endorsed diploma, a student must first:

- Satisfy the existing Higher Education Admissions Requirements (HEAR) (which are currently under review) or HEAR proxies,
- Meet an institutions Admissions Index; and
- Demonstrate they do not require remediation, by testing above existing approved cut scores in mathematics and literacy.

The following two steps indicate how a student can meet this requirement:

1) Satisfy current HEAR requirements (currently under review) or HEAR proxies, the Admissions Index and existing remedial education cut scores. In order to satisfy the existing HEAR, a student must successfully complete seventeen academic units/credits of coursework in English, Mathematics, Natural Science, Social Science and Foreign Language based on the distribution below. Students must receive a passing grade in each course to fulfill the requirement.

2) Demonstrate proficiency in math and literacy areas ensuring that they will not require remediation in higher education credit-bearing classes. The indicators may include any of the following:

- a) Approved ACT cut-scores (writing 18, reading 17 and math 19)
- b) Approved SAT cut-scores (writing 440, reading 430, and math 470)

- c) Placement assessments: including Accuplacer, COMPASS (not yet approved by CCHE)
- d) Successful completion of college level courses via Concurrent Enrollment
- e) Completion of necessary remedial courses
- f) Approved State Summative/National Consortia Assessment cut-scores*; or
- g) ACT/SAT writing test score*

** Please note, the state summative/national assessment scores, ACT writing test have not been adopted by the Colorado Commission on Higher Education and therefore not part of the state's existing state-wide remedial education policy but will be considered as we review and revise the policy.*

| Existing HEAR and Alternatives | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|-----------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------|------------------|
| | English | Mathematics | Social Science | Natural/Physical Science | Foreign Language | Electives |
| HEAR (Academic course units must total 17) | 4 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 1 | 2 |
| Remedial | ACT: Writing: 18 Reading: 17 SAT: Writing: 440 Reading: 430 Accuplacer: Sent Skills 95 Rdg Comp 80 | ACT: 19 SAT: 470 Accuplacer: Intermediate Algebra 85 | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A |
| Course Equivalent | ENG 090 = 4 years | MAT 090 = 3 years MAT 106 = 4 years | N/A | N/A | ACTFL = Novice-Mid | N/A |
| Course Completion Examples* | ENG 121 | MAT 120 | PSY 101 HIS 101 | BIO 111 | SPA 101 FRE 111 | Combination |

** ...preparation can be demonstrated by completing the Higher Education Admission Requirements (HEAR) in high school and/or by successfully completing (with a grade of C- or higher) a college-level course in each core area (English, mathematics, natural sciences, social sciences, and foreign language (2010 and later graduates) where the high school unit requirements have not been fulfilled. (Section 5.04.04 of Admissions Standards Policy)*

STEP 2 – PLANNING CRITERIA: STUDENT COMPLETES ICAP

Beyond the base requirements, in order to receive an endorsed diploma, students must have evidence that they have created and maintained an updated career and academic plan. This step is essential to establishing a goal, creating an intentional course plan for high school, exploring careers and putting the necessary steps in place to prepare for postsecondary success.

Students demonstrate they are on track to successfully complete their Individual Career and Academic Plan (ICAP) as established by SB09-256 and the State Board of Education Rules for Administering ICAPs, including:

- Career and College Interest Inventories
 - Career Plan and Goals
 - Work Experience
 - Academic Progress (including remediation and concurrent enrollment)
 - Intentional Course Plan
 - Extracurricular, Contextual and Service Learning
 - College Exploration and Applications
 - Progress in Financial Literacy and College Finances
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STEP 3 – DEMONSTRATION OF 21st CENTURY SKILLS CRITERIA

In addition to meeting the base requirements and satisfying the planning criteria, a student must demonstrate his/her aptitude in the five 21st century skill areas in order to receive a PWR endorsed diploma. The skills include:

1. **Information Literacy** (PWR *Find and Use Information & Information Technology*)
2. **Invention** (PWR *Creativity and Innovation*)
3. **Collaboration** (PWR *Collaboration and Communication*)
4. **Critical Thinking** (PWR *Critical Thinking and Problem Solving, & Global and Cultural Awareness*)
5. **Self Direction** (PWR *Personal Responsibility, Civic Responsibility, Work Ethic*)

A student must demonstrate proficiency (B or above) in academic coursework which contain the 21st century skills *and* participate in a number of extracurricular activities, as described below.

1. **High school academic achievement, as evidenced from any of the following indicators:**
 - a) Demonstrates mastery of skills through classroom coursework, based on district-certified valid and reliable measurements
 - b) Qualifying State summative assessment results
 - c) Honors, scholarships, achievements or awards aligned with student's Career and Academic Plan
 - d) Other indicators to be determined by the Colorado Workforce Development Council

- e) Other indicators as certified by districts

AND

- 2. **Student demonstrates skills and leadership by excelling in at least one of the following extra-curricular activities:**
 - a) Student participates in at least 3 school activities, evidenced by letter from supervisor/coach/advisor or other evidence of exemplary participation
 - b) Business or Employment: Completed internship or externship (minimum 3-months), evidenced by supervisor's letter of support
 - c) Volunteer Activities: Student completes a service-learning project related to academic and career goals (minimum 3-month service), evidenced by supervisor's letter of support

The task force recommends that the state provide a voluntary rubric, samples, and exemplars to districts in order to assist them with creating valid and reliable instruments/methods for accurately measuring these skills based on a student's body of evidence.

STEP 4 – ACADEMIC CRITERIA: STUDENT SELECTS THREE CONTENT AREAS TO DEMONSTRATE EXCELLENCE IN, BASED ON GOALS AND STRENGTHS

Beyond the minimum admissions requirements (base requirements outlined above), creating and maintaining a postsecondary plan, and successfully applying the 21st century skills, a student will be eligible for PWR endorsement if he/she demonstrates academic excellence by either high school course completion, other performance indicators, or college course completion in at least three of the seven following content areas. In 2016, based on ongoing evaluation and analysis of student outcomes in higher education, the Task Force recommends the number of required content areas be increased to four content areas. Finally, in order to satisfy this component, the courses a student enrolls in must align with the student's postsecondary goal, as articulated in the student's Individual Career and Academic Plan (ICAP).

1) READING, WRITING, AND COMMUNICATING

Student has successfully completed HEAR for this subject area.

- a) High School Courses: student receives a course grade of B or better in at least four years of Reading, Writing, and Communicating courses that address standards from all three areas: reading, intensive writing, and communicating (e.g., speech or debate classes) and may also include qualifying CTE course(s). At least one course must be taken during the student's 12th grade.

AND

- b) Other performance indicators, which could include one or more of the following:
 - i) Advanced (or equivalent) score on State Summative assessment in Writing if administered in the 11th grade

- ii) AP score of 4 or 5 in any of the following areas: AP English Language or English Literature
- iii) IB English test scores of 4, 5, 6, or 7
- iv) ACT English composite score of 25 or above
- v) SAT Critical Reading score of 597 or above
- vi) Advanced scores on future qualifying assessments
- vii) Other demonstrations of mastery or excellence – e.g. constitutional scholars program, winning a debate tournament, etc.

OR

- c) Postsecondary Credit-Bearing Coursework
 - i) student receives a course grade of B or better in course (3 credit hour course) in either: Introductory Writing Course or Intermediate Writing course, including, but not limited to the gtPathways courses as identified by GT-CO1, GT-CO2, or GT-CO3.

2) MATHEMATICS

Student has successfully completed HEAR for this subject area.

- a) High School Courses: student receives a course grade of B or better in at least one course beyond Algebra II/Integrated Math III, taken during the student’s 12th grade – including but not limited to Trigonometry, Calculus, Pre-Calculus, Probability and Statistics, or Discrete Math, or qualifying CTE course(s).

AND

- b) Other performance indicators, which could include one or more of the following:
 - i) Advanced (or equivalent) score on State Summative assessment in Mathematics if administered in the 11th grade
 - ii) AP score of 4 or 5 in any of the following areas: AP Calculus AB, Calculus BC, AP Physics, or Statistics
 - iii) IB Math test scores of 4, 5, 6, or 7
 - iv) ACT Mathematics score of 22 (ready for college algebra) or above
 - v) SAT Math score of 600 or above
 - v) Advanced scores on future qualifying assessments

OR

- c) Postsecondary Credit-Bearing Coursework
 - i) student receives a course grade of B or better in a postsecondary credit-bearing mathematics course (3 credit hour course) including, but not limited to the gtPathways courses as identified by GT-MA1.

3) SOCIAL AND BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES

Student has successfully completed HEAR for this subject area.

- a) High School Courses: student receives a course grade of B or better in at least four Social Science courses, which must include US and World history and one course in the social or behavioral sciences. May also include qualifying CTE course(s).

OR

- b) Other performance indicators, which could include one or more of the following:
- i) Advanced (or equivalent) score on State Summative assessment in Social Studies if administered in the 11th grade
 - ii) AP score of 4 or 5 in any of the following areas: AP Comp Government & Politics, U.S. Government & Politics, Human Geography, U.S. History, World History European History, Macroeconomics, Microeconomics, or Psychology
 - iii) IB Social Science test scores of 4, 5, 6, or 7
 - iv) Other nationally-recognized assessment scores
 - v) Advanced scores on future qualifying assessments

OR

- c) Postsecondary Credit-Bearing Coursework
- i) student receives a course grade of B or better in a postsecondary credit-bearing course (3 credit hour course) in either:
 - (1) History including, but not limited to the gtPathways courses as identified by GT-HI1.

OR

- (2) Social and Behavioral Sciences, including but not limited to the gtPathways courses as identified by GT-SS1, GT-SS2, or GT-SS3.)

4) NATURAL AND PHYSICAL SCIENCES

Student has successfully completed HEAR for this subject area.

- a) High School Courses: student receives a course grade of B or better in at least four science courses, (three of which must be lab-based) including at least biology, chemistry, and physics in high school. May also include qualifying CTE course(s).

OR

- b) Other performance indicators, which could include one or more of the following:
- i) Advanced (or equivalent) score on State Summative assessment in Science if administered in the 11th grade
 - ii) AP score of 4 or 5 in any of the following areas: AP Biology, Physics B, Physics C, Chemistry, Environmental Science, or Computer Science A
 - iii) IB Science test scores of 4, 5, 6, or 7
 - iv) ACT Science score of 24 or above
 - v) Advanced scores on future qualifying assessments

OR

- c) Postsecondary Credit-Bearing Coursework
- i) student receives a course grade of B or better in a postsecondary credit-bearing Natural and Physical Science course with required laboratory (3 credit hour course) including, but not limited to the gtPathways courses as identified by GT-SC1.

5) ARTS AND HUMANITIES

Student has successfully completed HEAR for this subject area.

- a) High School Courses: student receives a course grade of B or better in at least three years of coursework in a single area of focus from the arts of humanities (e.g. theater, music, fine arts, etc.), which may include qualifying CTE course(s).

OR

- b) Other performance indicators, which could include one or more of the following:

- i) AP score of 4 or 5 in any of the following areas: AP Art History, Music Theory, or Studio Art
- ii) IB course test scores of 4, 5, 6, or 7
- iii) Advanced scores on future qualifying assessments
- iv) Nationally recognized adjudication criteria and artifacts to certify a student's body of evidence.
- v) Rubrics and artifacts that show evidence of mastery or above mastery of the evidence outcomes in the high school standards.
- vi) Other external events or performances
- vii) Portfolio of achievements (mastery includes "outside" experience), coaching, state choir/band, reflections, qualifying certifications

OR

- c) Postsecondary Credit-Bearing Coursework
 - i) student receives a course grade of B or better in course (3 credit hour course) in any credit-bearing course including Arts and Humanities, including GT-AH1, GT-AH2, or GT-AH3.

6) WORLD LANGUAGES

Student has successfully completed HEAR for this subject area.

- a) High School Courses: student receives a course grade of B or better in at least 3 sequential units in a single world language area (with increasing rigor).

OR

- b) Other performance indicators, which could include one or more of the following:
 - i) Successful passage of qualifying AP world courses delivered in the foreign language, Latin, Spanish Language, Spanish Literature test scores of 4 or 5
 - ii) IB test scores in language specific courses of 4, 5, 6, or 7
 - iii) Student considered at least "Intermediate-Mid" level on national language assessments
 - iv) CLEP cut scores
 - v) Advanced scores on future qualifying assessments

OR

- c) Postsecondary Credit-Bearing Coursework
 - i) student receives a course grade of B or better in a postsecondary credit-bearing foreign language coursework (3 credit hour course) including, but not limited to the gtPathway courses as identified by GT-AH (must be Intermediate/200 level or above).

7) CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION

- a) High School Courses: student receives a course grade of B or better in at least three years (or equivalent) of coursework in Career and Technical education, two of which must be from a single area of focus.

OR

- b) Other performance indicators, which could include one or more of the following:
 - i) Advanced score (or equivalent) on state end-of-program summative assessments
 - ii) AP score of 4 or 5 in relevant AP coursework (e.g. Environmental Science, Economics, others to be determined)

- iii) IB test scores of 4, 5, 6, or 7 – Career Diploma Focus area
- iv) CTE certifications
- v) Career Ready Colorado Certificate - Advanced scores on future qualifying assessments
- vi) Nationally recognized adjudication criteria and artifacts to certify a student's body of evidence
- vii) Rubrics and artifacts that show evidence of mastery or above mastery of the evidence outcomes in the high school standards.
- viii) Other external events or performance events.
- ix) Portfolio of achievements (mastery includes "outside" experience), competitions, industry experiences, reflections, qualifying certifications

OR

- c) Postsecondary Credit-Bearing Coursework
 - i) student receives a course grade of B or better in a transferable postsecondary CTE course credit.
-