



REIMAGINING HIGH SCHOOL

Reimagining Readiness

Final Report of the

Statewide Graduation Council

June 2026

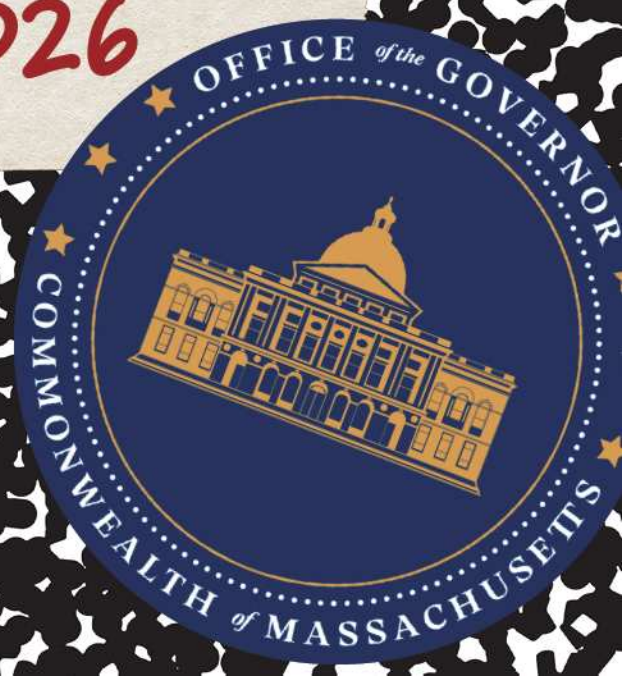


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EXECUTIVE LETTER FROM THE CO-CHAIRS

Dear Governor Healey and Legislative Colleagues:

We are honored to submit our Final Report that outlines nation-leading expectations for every Massachusetts public school district, which would prepare all students for success after high school graduation. No other state has implemented such a comprehensive approach to setting such high standards in education. As outlined across these recommendations, we want every parent and guardian in Massachusetts to feel confident that when they send their children to a public school, they are getting the best education that prepares them for their next steps and beyond—whether they choose higher education, a trade, skills-based employment or the military.

Following the release of our Vision of a Massachusetts Graduate and Statewide Graduation Framework, we worked with urgency to finalize these details with input from the K-12 Statewide Graduation Council and through meaningful engagement with students, families, educators, employers, community partners, advocates, and experts. This work was grounded in research and the lived experiences of Massachusetts communities.

We would like to thank former Secretary of Education Patrick Tutwiler for his leadership, passion, and dedication to this work. We are deeply grateful to the members of the Council for their expertise and collaboration; to the participants across our advisory groups whose feedback was crucial in refining the recommendations; and to the thousands of caring stakeholders across the state who contributed their voices to this work. All of this input strengthened the recommendations and reinforced the importance of a transparent and inclusive process.

The recommendations outlined in this Final Report are designed to balance rigor with flexibility, statewide consistency with local innovation, and high expectations with equitable access and support. Together, they reflect a comprehensive approach to learning experiences, demonstrating mastery, and preparing for postsecondary success while keeping multiple doors open for students and recognizing the diverse ways they each grow and achieve.

This report reflects an important milestone in this work but is not an endpoint. We look forward to continued partnership with you and communities across the state as we move together toward implementation in a thoughtful and collaborative manner. It is on all of us to see that every student in Massachusetts is prepared for success—no matter who they are or where they come from. Our students deserve nothing less.

With respect for the continued work ahead,

Dr. Stephen Zrike
Secretary of Education

Pedro Martinez
Commissioner of Elementary & Secondary Education

EXECUTIVE OVERVIEW

PURPOSE OF THE FINAL REPORT AND STATUTORY CONTEXT

Ballot Question 2, approved by Massachusetts voters in November 2024, removed the requirement that students earn a qualifying score on the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) exams to earn a high school diploma, while preserving a statewide graduation standard through a revised Competency Determination. Under current law, students earn the Competency Determination by demonstrating mastery of a common core of skills, competencies and knowledge in English Language Arts, Mathematics, and Science, and satisfactorily completing coursework certified by their local district. MCAS assessments continue to be administered as required by state and federal law but no longer serve as the mechanism through which students earn a diploma.

While the revised Competency Determination maintains a statewide standard, it sets a limited and uneven bar for student readiness. Mastery for the Competency Determination is confined to the skills, competencies, and knowledge defined in state curriculum frameworks through grade 10, as stated in Massachusetts law.¹ The statutory language provides no guidance around expectations for learning in grades 11 and 12. In practice, this leaves districts to independently define how students demonstrate mastery and what constitutes sufficient preparation for life after high school, contributing to variability in expectations and outcomes across the Commonwealth.

Since 2003, MCAS functioned as the primary statewide mechanism tied to the Competency Determination. Voters' decision to move away from MCAS as a graduation requirement created an opportunity to design a more meaningful, student-centered system that continues to support postsecondary success. The Statewide Graduation Council was established to examine how Massachusetts could strengthen its graduation requirements in ways that reflect contemporary expectations for students' futures.

This work is urgent. Despite Massachusetts' strong overall academic performance, substantial disparities persist in postsecondary enrollment, persistence, and earnings among student groups.² Too many students, particularly those from historically marginalized communities, graduate without a clear pathway to economic mobility or

¹ [Massachusetts](https://malegislature.gov/Laws/GeneralLaws/PartI/TitleXII/Chapter69/Section1d) General Laws, ch. 69, § 1D. Massachusetts Legislature, <https://malegislature.gov/Laws/GeneralLaws/PartI/TitleXII/Chapter69/Section1d>

² "2024 Massachusetts college and career outcomes report." Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. Updated March 2025. Retrieved April 24, 2026. <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/2024-massachusetts-college-and-career-outcomes-report>

postsecondary success. Massachusetts has the opportunity to establish a more uniform, rigorous, and equitable system of graduation requirements that supports all students in setting and achieving big goals, and graduating prepared to thrive as thinkers, leaders, and contributors in a rapidly changing world.

In December 2025, the Council co-chairs submitted an [Interim Report](#) to the Governor and Legislature to outline initial recommendations and frame key questions guiding its ongoing work. Building on the Interim Report, this Final Report reflects the culmination of the Council’s work, incorporating additional stakeholder input, further analysis, and continued deliberation among Council members. The recommendations presented herein represent a comprehensive and unified framework to define the meaning behind a Massachusetts high school diploma, affirming a common standard of rigor while allowing appropriate flexibility to meet the diverse strengths, needs, and aspirations of all students across the state.

Consistent with Governor Healey’s Executive Order 639 that created the Council, this report is intended to inform policy decisions by the Governor and the Legislature.

The work of the Council has been supported by Public Consulting Group LLC (PCG); this firm was selected through a competitive public procurement process.

GRADUATION FRAMEWORK: STRONG FOUNDATIONS FOR BRIGHT FUTURES

For the past two decades, Massachusetts has held a high standard for public education nationally. The graduation requirement framework that follows represents the next chapter in that legacy, charting an ambitious path forward. Based in extensive research on graduation requirements and best practices across the other 49 states and the District of Columbia, the set of requirements that the Council co-chairs propose is the most novel in the country. While many states require certain components of this framework, no other state has taken this comprehensive of an approach to get all students future ready. *For more information about graduation requirements across the other 49 states and the District of Columbia, see Appendix F.*

Guided by the vision of the co-chairs, these recommendations look boldly to the future, reimagining what it means to be truly prepared for college, career, and civic life in a rapidly changing world. They challenge us to think big, to set a high bar for all students, and to embrace innovation so that our students are equipped with the relevant competencies that will lead to bright futures. At their core, these recommendations are about building a system that creates the conditions for districts, schools, and educators to guide students to thrive within, and beyond, the classroom.

The following design principles were developed with the Statewide Graduation Council and guided the development of the recommendations:

Figure 1: Design Principles

STATEWIDE GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS SHOULD:	Allow all students to pursue the postsecondary path of their choice, including college and the workforce.
	Maintain a consistent standard of rigor across schools and districts, ensuring diplomas hold equal value.
	Support equitable access to rigorous coursework, supports, and learning opportunities, regardless of background.
	Meet the coursework requirements for admissions to Massachusetts public universities.
	Accommodate diverse learning needs, including those of students with disabilities, English learners, and students seeking alternative pathways.
	Include both academic and real-world skills such as critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and digital literacy.
	Support and assess essential life skills such as financial literacy and civic responsibility.
	Allow for multiple and varied demonstrations of mastery.
	Value student growth over time.
	Provide flexibility for students to personalize their learning and pursue interests aligned with future goals.

Recommendations Framework

Strong Foundations for Bright Futures reflects a core belief that every student in Massachusetts deserves an education that prepares them for meaningful choice and opportunity after high school. This charge is not simply about awarding diplomas, but to make sure that graduation signifies readiness for what comes next. At the heart of this framework is the notion that all students can achieve at high levels, and that it is the responsibility of adults in the system to design expectations, supports, and learning experiences that make that achievement possible. This commitment applies to every student across the Commonwealth, including

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students with disabilities, English learners, students with limited or interrupted formal education (SLIFE), students who arrive to Massachusetts late in their high school experience, and students from communities that have been historically marginalized. High expectations paired with the right supports lead to postsecondary success for all students.

The Council co-chairs' vision for a statewide graduation framework begins with a goal to provide all students with the knowledge, skills, dispositions, and confidence to navigate an increasingly complex world and to pursue their aspirations without unnecessary barriers. This preparation for success in college, career, and civic life recognizes that students learn and demonstrate readiness in different ways and that a modern diploma should reflect how students use their learning to solve problems with creativity, make responsible decisions, and navigate life with self-awareness, while effectively communicating and collaborating with others—competencies that are highlighted in the Vision of a Massachusetts Graduate (*see Figure 6*). Having developed a solid foundation, graduation serves as a launchpad toward bright futures.

Components of the Recommendations

To translate this framework into clear statewide expectations, the recommendations distinguish between Primary Components and Embedded Components. **Primary Components** function as the core required elements of our graduation framework (Figure 2) and establish consistent expectations for coursework, assessment, and postsecondary planning.

Figure 2: Graduation Framework



Embedded Components are intentionally integrated across multiple core requirements to support college, career, and civic readiness. Together, the recommendations promote a common statewide expectation for what a Massachusetts diploma represents, while preserving local flexibility in how districts support students in meeting, and exceeding, that standard. A high-level overview of each recommended Primary and Embedded Component is listed below in Figure 3 and Figure 4. Each component is explained in further detail later in the report.

Figure 3: Primary Component Recommendations

Primary Components	Rationale	Recommendation
Foundational Coursework	Foundational coursework establishes a rigorous program of study with built-in flexibilities that prepares students for their futures.	Students will complete MassCore, a rigorous program of study that aligns with the admissions requirements for higher education and keeps all postsecondary options available to students.
End-of-Course Assessments	End-of-course assessments provide a consistent measure of mastery in select subjects.	Students will complete end-of-course (EOC) assessments in specified MassCore subjects. EOC assessments are designed, administered, and scored by the state. Performance on the EOC assessments will meaningfully count toward students' academic record and path to graduation.
Postsecondary Planning	Postsecondary planning through My Career and Academic Plan (MyCAP) promotes student agency, reflection, and future readiness.	Students will develop a postsecondary plan that meets required year-by-year milestones defined in the state's MyCAP framework, along with locally determined activities. Required milestones will include financial literacy, artificial intelligence and digital literacy, work-based learning, and FAFSA/MASFA (<i>see Figure 4</i>) completion or opt-out.
Culminating Experiences	Culminating experiences allow students to demonstrate, apply, and make connections in their learning.	Students will complete a culminating experience, which can be either a capstone project or a portfolio of work. The state will define the parameters of the culminating experience and establish a standardized rubric specifying what students must demonstrate. Student work will be assessed locally using the state-developed rubric.

Figure 4: Embedded Component Recommendations

Embedded Components	Recommendation
Financial Literacy	Students will develop financial literacy knowledge and skills through a required MyCAP milestone. Students may further demonstrate advanced knowledge and skills through a culminating experience and/or a potential Seal of Distinction.
Work-Based Learning	Students will engage in work-based learning experiences through a required MyCAP milestone. These experiences will support career exploration and preparation. Students may further demonstrate advanced knowledge and skills through a culminating experience and/or a potential Seal of Distinction.
FAFSA/MASFA	Students will be educated on the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and the Massachusetts Application for State Financial Aid (MASFA) through a required MyCAP milestone. Students will then complete the FAFSA or MASFA form or choose to opt out.
Artificial Intelligence & Digital Literacy	Students will develop artificial intelligence (AI) and digital literacy knowledge and skills through a required MyCAP milestone. These competencies will be integrated across the graduation framework through MassCore coursework, relevant culminating experiences, and a potential Seal of Distinction.
Civic Readiness	Students will develop civic knowledge and skills through coursework and applied learning experiences. These competencies will be integrated across the graduation framework through MassCore coursework, required Civics Action Projects, relevant culminating experiences, and a potential Seal of Distinction.

Seals of Distinction

While not a direct part of the graduation requirements framework, the Council co-chairs believe that it is important to recognize and celebrate noteworthy student achievement across the Commonwealth with State Seals of Distinction. In addition to the Seal of Biliteracy that Massachusetts currently offers, the co-chairs recommend building a statewide seals program that provides students with the opportunity to attain a state-endorsed seal for their unique accomplishments within particular fields, signaling to employers and institutions of higher education that these students are highly dedicated to their work. More details about seals, and all of the co-chairs' recommendations, are included later in this report.

INTRODUCTION AND CHARGE OF THE STATEWIDE GRADUATION COUNCIL

BACKGROUND ON EXECUTIVE ORDER NO. 639 AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE COUNCIL

On January 17, 2025, Governor Maura Healey issued Executive Order 639, formally establishing the K-12 Statewide Graduation Council to advise the Governor and the Legislature on the development of a new statewide high school graduation requirement for Massachusetts. The Executive Order affirms the Administration's commitment to promoting equitable educational opportunities for all students so that a Massachusetts high school diploma reflects a consistent and rigorous standard that prepares graduates for college, career, and civic life.

The Executive Order created the Council as an advisory body co-chaired by the Secretary of Education and the Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education, with diverse membership representing educators, students, families, higher education, nonprofits, labor, business, and other key stakeholders from across the Commonwealth. The Executive Office of Education and the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education were directed to provide staffing and support for the Council's work, and the Council was instructed to meet regularly to carry out its charge. *For information about the Council membership and meeting schedule, see Appendix A.*

SUMMARY OF THE COUNCIL'S CHARGE

Executive Order 639 charged the Statewide Graduation Council with studying and making recommendations on a new statewide graduation requirement for Massachusetts. Specifically, the Council was directed to examine the role of assessment, the potential for differentiated pathways to earning a Competency Determination, and the completion of additional learning experiences that demonstrate students' readiness for college, career, and civic life.

To inform its recommendations, the Executive Order required the Council to:

- Engage stakeholders across the Commonwealth through regional listening sessions;
- Conduct a review of research and best practices from other states and countries;
- Assess existing local graduation requirements to understand current variation; and

- Consider what Massachusetts students should know and be able to do prior to graduation, as well as how students should demonstrate their learning and achievements.³

The Executive Order further required the Council to submit both an interim report and a final written report to the Governor and the Legislature, with the final report detailing findings, recommendations, and key considerations related to implementation, including statutory and regulatory implications, timelines, equitable access and opportunities, and supports for successful statewide rollout.

HOW STAKEHOLDER INPUT AND RESEARCH INFORMED THE RECOMMENDATIONS

Stakeholder Input

Stakeholder input played a central role in the refinement of the recommendations. Feedback gathered through statewide surveys, listening sessions, student-specific engagement, and advisory groups consistently reinforced the need for graduation requirements that balance academic rigor with real-world relevance and student agency. Concerns raised by educators, families, and advocates regarding feasibility, necessary supports, and potential barriers directly informed refinements that strengthen implementation design.

³ Healey, Maura. "No. 639: Establishing a K-12 statewide graduation council." Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Published January 17, 2025. Retrieved October 3, 2025. <https://www.mass.gov/executive-orders/no-639-establishing-a-k-12-statewide-graduation-council>

The following table provides an overview of the stakeholder engagement activities conducted by the Council over the course of eighteen months.

Figure 5: Statewide Graduation Council Stakeholder Engagement Activities

Activities	Description
Listening Sessions	There were eight opportunities (including in-person and virtual) for stakeholders across Massachusetts to share their thoughts directly with the Council regarding what should and should not be included in the new graduation requirements. Approximately 400 attendees were present across the eight sessions, representing students, families, educators, employers, and community members.
Student-Specific Sessions	One of the eight listening sessions was dedicated solely to hearing from students, with 42 attendees. An additional student focus group was convened by the Council co-chairs to solicit feedback as the initial recommendations were being drafted, which drew approximately 70 students, as well as a feedback workshop for nearly 200 students presented at the Massachusetts Association of Student Councils conference.
Statewide Online Survey	A comprehensive online survey was administered to gather stakeholders' input on graduation requirements in Massachusetts. The survey was open to any resident of the state and was available in six languages: Simplified Chinese, English, Haitian Creole, Brazilian Portuguese, Spanish, and Vietnamese. The survey received 6,615 responses.
School District Leader Survey	A survey specifically for Massachusetts local education agency (LEA) leaders was conducted to understand current local graduation requirement practices, as well as to capture their perspectives on what components should and should not be included in the new graduation requirements. The survey received 103 responses across the Commonwealth.
Advisory Groups	Five advisory groups were convened to provide additional perspectives from Special Education and English Learner advocacy groups, educators, school leaders, counselors, and district leaders. The areas of focus for the advisories were: Students with Disabilities; Multilingual Learners; Learning Experiences & Mastery; College, Career, and Civic Readiness; and LEA Leadership. There was a total of 23

	meetings across the five advisory groups to share direct input as the recommendations were being shaped.
Public Input Form	A public input form was deployed following the release of the proposed graduation framework to gather targeted feedback on implementation considerations and design details. The form received over 800 responses. This input helped the Council refine the recommendations to make sure they are equitable, meaningful, and practical for districts and students across the Commonwealth.

Research

To inform the development of the framework for the Final Report, the Council also undertook a set of coordinated research activities. This work included an analysis of Massachusetts graduation practices, a review of national graduation requirements, and a scan of policies and approaches used in other states. Additionally, the research effort examined existing literature and evidence related to assessment models, coursework expectations, and postsecondary transitions. Together, these activities provided a foundation for examining how different components could be designed and organized, and they informed the rationale documented for each element of the recommendations. *For a more detailed overview of stakeholder engagement and research, see Appendices.*

VISION OF A MASSACHUSETTS GRADUATE

In September 2025, the Executive Office of Education (EOE) and Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), in partnership with the Statewide Graduation Council, released the [Vision of a Massachusetts Graduate](#) to articulate a shared understanding of what it should mean to earn a Massachusetts high school diploma. Informed by an extensive review of local district visions of a graduate⁴ and grounded in deep engagement with students, families, educators, employers, and community members across the Commonwealth, the Vision reflects a broad consensus that a Massachusetts diploma should prepare every student to succeed in college, career, and civic life.

The Council co-chairs reaffirm this Vision as the foundation for the recommendations that follow. The Vision establishes a clear north star for the Commonwealth, describing the skills and competencies that will guide the preparation of high school students for the real world. The graduation framework presented in this report is designed to translate this vision into a coherent, rigorous, and equitable set of statewide expectations.

Figure 6: Vision of a Massachusetts Graduate



⁴ This review included local district Vision of a Graduate documents and other similar documents, such as Portraits of a Learner, Vision of a Scholar, etc.

OVERVIEW OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS

The graduation framework is designed as a cohesive and integrated system that supports all Massachusetts students in graduating with the preparation necessary to succeed in college, careers, and civic life as thinkers, leaders, and contributors. Today, considerable variation exists in students' experiences after high school, reflected in differences in post-high-school earnings, college enrollment, and college persistence among student groups.⁵ Grounded in the Vision of a Massachusetts Graduate, the recommended graduation framework promotes a future where all students have the opportunity to acquire essential knowledge and skills, demonstrate mastery, and apply their learning in meaningful ways, supporting their postsecondary journeys. The framework is organized into **Primary Components** and **Embedded Components**.

PRIMARY AND EMBEDDED COMPONENTS

Primary Components establish the core requirements of the statewide graduation framework. These include:

- **Foundational coursework** in the form of a rigorous program of study with built-in flexibilities that prepares students for their futures. Through this recommendation, students will complete MassCore, a rigorous program of study that aligns with the admissions requirements for higher education and keeps all postsecondary options available to students.
- **End-of-course assessments**, which provide a consistent measure of mastery in select subjects. Through this recommendation, students will complete end-of-course (EOC) assessments in specified MassCore subjects. EOC assessments are designed, administered, and scored by the state. Performance on the EOC assessments will meaningfully count toward students' academic record and path to graduation.
- **Postsecondary planning** through My Career and Academic Plan (MyCAP), which promotes student agency, reflection, and future readiness. Through this recommendation, students will develop a postsecondary plan that meets required year-by-year milestones defined in the state's MyCAP framework, along with locally determined activities. Required milestones will include financial literacy, artificial intelligence and digital literacy, work-based learning, and FAFSA/MASFA completion or opt-out.

⁵ "2024 Massachusetts college and career outcomes report." Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. Updated March 2025. Retrieved April 24, 2026. <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/2024-massachusetts-college-and-career-outcomes-report>

- **Culminating experiences**, which allow students to demonstrate, apply, and make connections in their learning. Through this recommendation, students will complete a culminating experience, which can be either a capstone project or a portfolio of work. The state will define the parameters of the culminating experience and establish a standardized rubric specifying what students must demonstrate. Student work will be assessed locally using the state-developed rubric.

Additional implementation information for the Primary Components is included in the *Recommendations and Rationale* section of this report.

Embedded Components represent essential learning priorities that are intentionally integrated throughout the primary components, spanning multiple areas of students' high school experiences. These include financial literacy, AI and digital literacy, work-based learning, FAFSA/MASFA completion, and civics education:

Spotlight on Real-World Relevance

Preparing students for life through real-world skills development such as **financial literacy, AI and digital literacy, work-based learning, and civics education**, is a top priority for Massachusetts stakeholders. These elements are deeply integrated throughout recommendations, creating diverse opportunities for students to engage and build these critical life skills.

- **Financial literacy** standards are present in the History and Social Sciences curriculum framework. Financial literacy is also included as a required MyCAP milestone and may be further recognized through a potential Seal of Distinction. Districts have flexibility with how they provide students with access to these learning experiences, including through coursework or a state-developed financial literacy module.
- **Artificial intelligence and digital literacy** is included as a required MyCAP milestone. Students may further engage with these competencies through culminating experiences and/or a potential Seal of Distinction. Districts have flexibility with how they provide students access to these learning experiences, including through coursework or a state-developed AI and digital literacy learning module.
- **Work-based learning** is included as a required MyCAP milestone, promoting opportunities for all skills through a culminating experience and/or a potential Seal of Distinction. Districts have flexibility with how they provide students with access to these learning experiences, including through internships, apprenticeships, co-ops, service-oriented work, or other high-quality, career-connected projects.

- **FAFSA/MASFA** education is included as a required as a MyCAP milestone to provide all students with exposure to the opportunities and financial benefits that these applications promote. Students and their families have the option to opt out of completing either form if they so choose. Districts have flexibility with how they manage completion of these applications and opt-out forms.
- **Civics education** is present in the History and Social Sciences curriculum framework and in the [Civics Action Project](#) (required for high school students as of 2020). Students may further engage with these competencies through culminating experiences and/or a potential Seal of Distinction.

The Primary and Embedded Components form a comprehensive graduation framework that values academic rigor, multiple demonstrations of mastery, and personalized learning. The individual components reflect evidence-based practices already implemented in many districts across the Commonwealth. By bringing these elements together within a unified framework, we establish a system where every student receives the holistic preparation needed to succeed in college, career, and civic life.

The framework is designed to maintain a clear statewide standard while providing districts the flexibility to implement high-quality, locally responsive approaches that meet the diverse needs and aspirations of Massachusetts students.

HOW THE RECOMMENDATIONS HAVE EVOLVED

Since the release of the Interim Report, the Statewide Graduation Council has continued to engage students, families, educators, district leaders, and advocacy groups to refine and strengthen the proposed recommendations. Feedback collected through additional public input and advisory groups largely affirmed the direction set forth in the initial recommendations from the Interim Report, particularly the emphasis on rigorous academic preparation, real-world skills, and multiple ways for students to show what they have learned. At the same time, stakeholders raised important considerations related to equity and implementation, which helped shape recommendations that are clear and feasible across diverse local contexts. Ultimately, this continued engagement strengthened the recommendations by helping to clarify expectations, surfacing potential challenges, and reinforcing the need for guardrails that support consistent statewide standards while honoring local flexibility.

The following table displays how the recommendations have evolved at a high level.

Figure 7: Statewide Graduation Council Initial and Current Recommendations

Component	Initial Recommendation	Current Recommendation
Foundational Coursework	Students will complete a rigorous program of study that aligns with the admissions requirements for higher education.	Students will complete MassCore, a rigorous program of study that aligns with the admissions requirements for higher education and keeps all postsecondary options available to students.
End-of-Course Assessments	Students will participate in end-of-course assessments that are connected to select courses and that are designed, administered, and scored by the state.	Students will complete end-of-course (EOC) assessments in specified MassCore subjects. EOC assessments are designed, administered, and scored by the state. Performance on the EOC assessments will meaningfully count toward students' academic record and path to graduation.
Culminating Experiences	Students will complete a capstone or portfolio that is defined by the state, and designed, administered, and scored locally.	Students will complete a culminating experience, which can be either a capstone project or a portfolio of work. The state will define the parameters of the culminating experience and establish a standardized rubric specifying what students must demonstrate. Student work will be assessed locally using the state-developed rubric.
Postsecondary Planning	Students will develop and maintain an individual career and academic plan (MyCAP).	Students will develop a postsecondary plan that meets required year-by-year milestones defined in the state's My Career and Academic Plan (MyCAP) framework, along with locally determined activities. Required milestones will include financial literacy, artificial intelligence and
Financial Literacy	Students will develop knowledge and skills in financial literacy.	
FAFSA/MASFA	Students will complete the FAFSA or MASFA (depending	

Component	Initial Recommendation	Current Recommendation
	on eligibility), or opt out of this requirement.	digital literacy, work-based learning, and FAFSA/MASFA completion or opt-out.
Seals of Distinction	Students will have the option to earn state-designated seals of distinction.	The state will develop and define a list of State Seals of Distinction. Districts will offer a minimum number of these state-designated seals that all students have access to attain. The criteria and parameters for issuing seals will be determined by the state.

Additional Recommendations

While **Work-Based Learning, Civics Readiness, and AI and Digital Literacy** were not explicitly named as formal recommendations in the Interim Report, stakeholders have consistently emphasized their importance to student readiness and equitable outcomes. These were frequent themes in listening sessions, the statewide survey, and the public input form. As a result, the Council co-chairs have elevated these components for the Final Report to reflect stakeholder priorities and to acknowledge their significance and relevance to students’ postsecondary success. Given the emerging and evolving nature of artificial intelligence specifically, it is understood that the AI and Digital Literacy recommendation may need to be updated over time.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND RATIONALE

The new statewide requirements will establish a system to support every Massachusetts student along their journey to graduation and life beyond high school. Students will build a strong foundation through MassCore, a rigorous program of study that is validated through a selection of end-of-course assessments. Building on this foundation, students will develop an individual career and academic plan and complete a culminating experience that supports postsecondary readiness and fosters students' agency to achieve their goals. The recommendations work as one integrated system to equip students with the competencies they need to excel as thinkers, leaders, and contributors. The following section elaborates on the recommendations, explains the reasoning behind each one, and spotlights some of the Vision of a Massachusetts Graduate competencies supported by each recommendation.

FOUNDATIONAL COURSEWORK



Recommendation: Students will complete MassCore, a rigorous program of study that aligns with the admissions requirements for higher education and keeps all postsecondary options available to students.

Why MassCore Matters

A program of study should prepare all Massachusetts students for any aspirations they may have after high school, including college, workforce, military, or other endeavors. MassCore (Figure 8) is an established, research-backed program of study that meets Massachusetts public higher education admissions requirements, is a strong predictor of postsecondary success, and is already implemented across many Massachusetts districts. MassCore aligns students' academic journeys with the high standards of higher education admissions, creating a foundation where students graduate with all postsecondary doors open, including a path to college if that is what they aspire to. *For MassCore alignment with public higher education admissions requirements, see Appendix H.*

MassCore leverages Massachusetts' strong [curriculum frameworks](#) that pair key content area knowledge and skills with transferable competencies such as creative problem-solving, effective communication, and intentional collaboration.



Figure 8: MassCore Framework

Subject	Units	Notes
English Language Arts	4 Units	
Mathematics	4 Units	Including completion of Algebra II or the Integrated Mathematics equivalent. A mathematics course during senior year is recommended for all students. Students may substitute one unit of Computer Science that includes rigorous mathematical concepts and aligns with the Digital Literacy and Computer Science standards for a mathematics course.
Science	3 Units of lab-based science	Coursework in technology/engineering courses may also count for MassCore science credit. Students may substitute one unit of Computer Science that includes rigorous scientific concepts and aligns with the Digital Literacy and Computer Science standards for a laboratory science course.
History and Social Science	3 Units	Including U.S. History and World History. [^]
World Language	2 Units	Of the same language.
Physical Education	As required by law	"Physical education shall be taught as a required subject in all grades for all students" (M.G.L. c.71 §3).
Arts	1 Unit	
Additional Core Courses	5 Units	Other additional coursework (including Career and Technical Education) or any of the above.

* A unit represents a full academic year of study or its equivalent in a subject that covers all the standards contained in a specific Curriculum Framework.

** Students enrolled in a state-approved Career and Technical Education program of studies have the option of opting out of World Language and Art and still fulfill MassCore.

*** Districts may designate students with demonstrated fluency and literacy in language(s) other than English as meeting the MassCore World Language requirement.

[^]*Demonstration of civics knowledge, skills, and dispositions is a History and Social Science curriculum standard.*⁶

⁶ "History and social science framework." Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. Published 2018. Retrieved April 22, 2026. <https://www.doe.mass.edu/frameworks/hss/2018-12.pdf>

MassCore and Postsecondary Outcomes

MassCore aligns with the admissions requirements of Massachusetts public four-year colleges and universities. MassCore also aligns with higher education admissions requirements more broadly, beyond Massachusetts, largely mirroring the course of study recommended by the National Association for College Admissions Counseling.⁷

Going beyond admissions, MassCore is a lever for promoting students' continued success in college and career. National research literature indicates that high school coursework and academic performance is correlated with postsecondary success, including high school graduation, wages, and college enrollment, persistence, and academic performance.^{8,9,10,11}

High school coursework and academic performance is correlated with postsecondary success, including high school graduation, wages, and college enrollment, persistence, and academic

⁷ "High school classes required for college admission." National Association for College Admissions Counseling. Retrieved April 22, 2026. <https://www.nacacnet.org/high-school-classes-required-for-college-admission>

⁸ Allensworth, Elaine M. & Clark, Kallie. "High school GPAs and ACT scores as predictors of college completion: Examining assumptions about consistency across high schools." American Educational Research Association. Published January 2020. Retrieved August 6, 2025. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.3102/0013189X20902110>

⁹ Horn, Laura, & Carroll, C. Dennis. "High school academic curriculum and persistence path through college." National Center for Educational Statistics. Published August 2001. Retrieved August 6, 2025. <https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2001/2001163.pdf>

¹⁰ Long, Mark C., Conger, Dylan, & Iatarola, Patrice. "Effects of high school course-taking on secondary and postsecondary success." American Educational Research Association. Published April 2012. Retrieved August 6, 2025. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.3102/0002831211431952>

¹¹ Rose, Heather, & Betts, Julian R. "The effects of high school courses on earnings." Public Policy Institute of California. Published May 2004. Retrieved August 6, 2025. <https://econweb.ucsd.edu/~jbetts/Pub/A41%20Rose%20Betts%20%20The%20Effect%20of%20High%20School%20Courses%20on%20Earnings%20RESTAT%202005.pdf>

Engaging in more rigorous coursework is correlated with increased high school graduation, postsecondary enrollment and persistence, and higher earnings.^{12,13,14} Furthermore, the specific sequence of high school coursework can predict college enrollment. Math coursework sequencing is especially linked to postsecondary success.^{15,16,17,18} Even among workers with the same level of education, those who took more math in high school have higher wages on average and are less likely to be unemployed.¹⁹

As it relates to Massachusetts specifically, the Annenberg Institute conducted an analysis that indicates that MassCore completion is a strong predictor of postsecondary outcomes.²⁰ The researchers found that high school graduates who complete MassCore course recommendations are much more likely to enroll in and complete postsecondary education across the MCAS score distribution.²¹

¹² Horn, Laura, & Carroll, C. Dennis. "High school academic curriculum and persistence path through college." National Center for Educational Statistics. Published August 2001. Retrieved August 6, 2025. <https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2001/2001163.pdf>

¹³ Long, Mark C., Conger, Dylan, & Iatarola, Patrice. "Effects of high school course-taking on secondary and postsecondary success." American Educational Research Association. Published April 2012. Retrieved August 6, 2025. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.3102/0002831211431952>

¹⁴ Rose, Heather, & Betts, Julian R. "The effects of high school courses on earnings." Public Policy Institute of California. Published May 2004. Retrieved August 6, 2025. <https://econweb.ucsd.edu/~jbetts/Pub/A41%20Rose%20Betts%20%20The%20Effect%20of%20High%20School%20Courses%20on%20Earnings%20RESTAT%202005.pdf>

¹⁵ Ogut, Burhan.; Circi, Ruhan. & Yee, Darrick. "Why does high school coursework matter? The case for increasing exposure to advanced courses." American Institutes for Research. Retrieved April 30, 2026. <https://air.org/project/why-does-high-school-coursework-matter-case-increasing-exposure-advanced-courses>

¹⁶ Huffaker, Elizabeth. "Evidence-based practices for algebra I access, placement, and success." SCALE Initiative at Stanford University. Published May 2025. Retrieved August 6, 2025. https://edresearchforaction.org/wp-content/uploads/FINAL-Algebra-1-EdResearch_designed.pdf

¹⁷ "The building blocks of success. Higher-level math for all students." Achieve. Published May 2008. Retrieved April 30, 2026. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED501786.pdf>

¹⁸ Finkelstein, Neal D., & Fong, Anthony B. "Course-taking patterns and preparation for postsecondary education in California's public university systems among minority youth." Regional Educational Laboratory West. Published January 2008. Retrieved August 6, 2025. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED500642>

¹⁹ James, Jonathan. "The surprising impact of high school math on job market outcomes." Federal Reserve Bank of Cleveland. Published November 1, 2013. Retrieved October 8, 2025. <https://doi.org/10.26509/frbc-ec-201314>

²⁰ Papay, John P., Mantil, Ann, Mumane, Richard J., Ferguson, Ian M., LoPresti, James, Mbekeani, Preeya P., McDonough, Aubrey, & Zorfass, Emma (2024). "The MCAS as a graduation requirement: Findings from a research-practice partnership." Annenberg Institute at Brown University. Published in July 2024. Retrieved April 30, 2026. <https://annenberg.brown.edu/sites/default/files/Annenberg%20-%20MCAS%20as%20a%20Graduation%20Requirement.pdf>

²¹ Ibid.

Stakeholder Voices

Stakeholders broadly support MassCore. In the statewide survey (see *Appendix C*), respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they agree with the following statement: “All Massachusetts high school graduates should be required to complete coursework in the following areas...” Rating options ranged from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree. Across all roles, including students, parents/caregivers, educators, employers, and more, respondents agreed or strongly agreed with every item included in MassCore at a rate of 70 percent or greater.²² Advisory groups composed of educators, school leaders, counselors, and district leaders further affirmed MassCore as a valuable and well-rounded program of study that appropriately sets high expectations for students and schools.

MassCore in the Field

MassCore is already widely used in Massachusetts districts. Of the 97 percent of high schools in Massachusetts that submitted their graduation requirements for this review, nearly three-quarters (74 percent) have local graduation

Nearly three-quarters of Massachusetts high schools have local graduation requirements that meet or exceed MassCore unit requirements for all core academic subjects.

requirements that meet or exceed MassCore unit requirements for all core academic subjects (English Language Arts, Math, Science, History and Social Science).²³ An analysis of local graduation requirement alignment with each MassCore subject is shown in Figure 9.²⁴

²² The number of years listed in the statewide survey for English Language Arts, Math, History, lab-based Science, World Language, and Arts align with the MassCore program of study.

²³ “CD data: Local graduation requirements – 2025.” Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. Retrieved January 28, 2026. [Microsoft Excel].

²⁴ Ibid.

Figure 9: MassCore and Local Graduation Requirements

Subject	MassCore Units Required	Percent of High Schools Meeting or Exceeding MassCore Number of Required Units in Local Graduation Requirement
English Language Arts	4 Units	97%
Mathematics	4 Units	79%
Science	3 Units of Lab-Based Science	92%
History and Social Science	3 Units	89%
World Language	2 Units	70% ²⁵
Arts	1 Unit	66% ²⁶
Additional Core Courses	5 Units	88%

Forty-six percent of high schools that submitted their graduation requirements for review required MassCore in its totality, including all required units in the core subject areas, World Language, Arts, and the additional core courses. At the same time, 24% of schools are one subject away from meeting MassCore requirements. Additionally, 82% of Massachusetts graduates meet MassCore requirements, suggesting that while MassCore may not be required at scale, most schools make the program of study available and most students complete it.²⁷

A review of high school graduation requirements across 49 states and the District of Columbia (excluding Massachusetts) revealed that as of the 2024-2025 school year, 46 states included coursework in English, Mathematics, Social Studies, and Science as part of their graduation requirements.^{28,29} Additionally, 23 states required students to complete Arts coursework for high school graduation, and 14 states included Arts coursework as one option for meeting a graduation requirement. Twelve states required students to complete World Language coursework, and 12 states included World Language coursework as one option for meeting a requirement. Many states had a

²⁵ World Language percent excludes wall-to-wall CTE schools as CTE students may opt out of World Language and still fulfill MassCore.

²⁶ Art percent excludes wall-to-wall CTE schools as CTE students may opt out of Art and still fulfill MassCore.

²⁷ Commonwealth of Massachusetts. (2026). Massachusetts Education-to-Career (E2C) Research and Data Hub. "MassCore Data Trends." Retrieved May 22, 2026, from <https://educationtocareer.data.mass.gov/stories/s/MassCore-Data-Trends/5c4k-sik5/>

²⁸ Any reference to "states" includes the District of Columbia.

²⁹ The complete national landscape assessment of high school requirements and data sources for each of the states are included in Appendices F and G.

course requirement that allows students to complete one or a combination of World Language, Arts, and Career and Technical Education (CTE) coursework.

How MassCore Works

MassCore balances rigorous preparation for all students with flexibility that allows for individualized student paths. MassCore currently allows:

- **Computer Science** coursework to substitute for:
- One Mathematics unit (if it includes rigorous math concepts and aligns with Digital Literacy and Computer Science standards)
- One lab-based Science unit (if it includes rigorous scientific concepts and aligns with those same standards)
- **Technology/Engineering** courses to count toward the lab-based Science requirement
- Students in [Chapter 74 Career and Technical Education programs](#) to:
- Opt out of World Language requirement
- Opt out of the Arts requirement
- Apply CTE coursework toward Additional Core Courses requirement
- Students with **demonstrated fluency and literacy in languages other than English** to waive the World Language requirement.
- Students to select any other additional coursework, including Career and Technical Education, to satisfy the five required **Additional Core Course** units.
- The measure of a unit to be defined flexibly, **representing a full academic year of study or its equivalent** in a subject that covers all the standards contained in a specific Curriculum Framework.

Furthermore, it is recommended that English as a Second Language (ESL) coursework count towards up to two units of the English Language Arts requirement for students at foundational English proficiency levels (ACCESS Levels 1 and 2), provided courses explicitly integrate grade-appropriate English Language Arts and English Language Development standards with appropriate scaffolds.

Fostering Innovation and Creativity

This coursework recommendation intends to maintain the flexibility that is integral to MassCore. With that, it is recommended that the state encourage continued innovation and creativity among districts in developing a variety of course offerings that fulfill MassCore subject area requirements. These may include, for example, the state identifying additional courses that may count toward certain subject area requirements (such as Engineering counting as a Mathematics unit).

Supporting Students to Fulfill MassCore Requirements

With this recommendation, all students will be required to complete MassCore requirements to graduate, and supports will be provided to specific student groups, including English Learners and students with disabilities, to enable their success in meeting graduation requirements. This may include course accommodations and/or waivers for students with disabilities in accordance with their individualized education programs (IEP).

In the case that a student fails to successfully complete a required course, districts would be expected to engage the support necessary to help the student recover credit and meet graduation standards. Examples of supports currently provided by districts include offering summer school programs, credit recovery options, tutoring, course retakes, or alternative demonstrations of learning. Through these supports, districts create multiple opportunities for students to fulfill MassCore requirements and graduate on time.

END-OF-COURSE ASSESSMENTS



Recommendation: Students will complete end-of-course (EOC) assessments in specified MassCore subjects. EOC assessments are designed, administered, and scored by the state. Performance on the EOC assessments will meaningfully count toward students' academic record and path to graduation.

Why End-of-Course Assessments Matter

EOC assessments promote uniformity, equity, and rigor in the graduation framework and serve as validation of student learning through the MassCore program of study. More specifically, EOC assessments work alongside MassCore to demonstrate a student's proficiency in core content, their readiness to progress in a course sequence, and their preparedness for success in their postsecondary pursuits.

As part of a comprehensive set of graduation requirements, EOC assessments that are designed, administered, and scored by the state provide a consistent statewide measure of students' academic content mastery. These assessments are directly tied to course standards and allow students to practice and demonstrate creative problem-solving and effective communication of their content mastery.

EOC assessments also promote equity and comparability across the state. Without a uniform measurement tool, definitions of mastery and academic readiness can vary significantly across districts and schools. Our vision is that every student, regardless of zip code or background, will have the necessary preparation for what comes after graduation. This statewide standard, in the form of EOC assessments, will help provide the data to guide us toward that vision.

EOC assessments work alongside MassCore to demonstrate a student's proficiency in core content, their readiness to progress in a course sequence, and their preparedness for success in their postsecondary pursuits.



End-of-Course Assessments and Postsecondary Outcomes

MassCore defines courses and standards that are necessary for students' postsecondary success. End-of-course assessments, which are standards-aligned and course-aligned, serve as a measure of whether or not a student has gained the knowledge, skills, and abilities described in those standards.³⁰ Assessment research consistently finds that standards-aligned, course-aligned assessments provide a valid measure of student mastery of the curriculum standards.³¹ This measure provides critical information for students, educators, families, and policymakers.

End-of-course assessments, serve as a valid measure of whether or not a student has gained the knowledge, skills, and abilities described in course standards.

Additionally, research on EOC assessments points to a generally positive correlation with high school graduation rates, with the impacts of Math and English Language Arts EOC assessments being statistically significant.³² Additionally, administering a greater number of EOC assessments generally correlates with higher graduation rates.³³

Stakeholder Voices

In open-ended responses to the statewide survey, many stakeholders noted a desire for a standardized measurement of mastery, emphasizing the need to promote consistency across districts and to understand and address any disparities across districts and student populations. Additionally, some stakeholders noted the value of standardized tests as important preparation for when students encounter similar tasks (such as licensure exams, graduate school admissions exams, etc.) in their postsecondary plans.

At the same time, in listening sessions, advisory group sessions, and open-ended survey responses, stakeholders voiced a concern about standardized testing playing too large a role if assessment results single-handedly prevent a student from earning a diploma. This important feedback helped inform the refinement of this recommendation.

³⁰ The Center on Standards and Assessment Implementation. "Standards Alignment to Curriculum and Assessment." Published March 2018. Retrieved May 11, 2026. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED588503.pdf>

³¹ Ibid.

³² Tyner, Adam, & Larsen, Matthew. "End-of-course exams and student outcomes." Thomas B. Fordham Institute. Published August 27, 2019. Retrieved April 30, 2026. <https://fordhaminstitute.org/sites/default/files/publication/pdfs/20190827-end-course-exams-and-student-outcomes.pdf>.

³³ Ibid.

End-of-Course Assessments in the Field

End-of-course assessments are already widely used in Massachusetts, with 73 percent of reporting districts meeting the Competency Determination using one or more end-of-course assessments in the form of course-connected final exams, most often in Math and/or

Science.^{34,35} Beyond Massachusetts, end-of-course assessments have gained attention as an alternative to exit exams. As of 2025, seven states required end-of-course assessments for graduation.³⁶

Nearly three-quarters of Massachusetts districts report using one or more end-of-course assessment.

How End-of-Course Assessments Work

Through this recommendation, all students will be required to complete EOC assessments in specified MassCore subjects. EOC assessments will include one exam in English Language Arts, one exam in Math, and one exam in Science, in alignment with the federal requirements. It is recommended that the state further explore the feasibility of also requiring one EOC assessment in History and Social Science. End-of-course assessments will be: aligned with standards associated with a specific course, administered near the completion of that course, and scored within weeks. End-of-course assessments will meaningfully count towards students' academic record and path to graduation. Following additional planning and engagement of stakeholders, the Council co-chairs will determine the specific role that EOCs will play in students' academic record and graduation.

EOC assessments are designed to be taken after the student has completed the course content, regardless of the student's grade level. Though the specific courses that would incorporate an EOC assessment have not yet been selected, it is recommended that these exams be associated with courses that most students take in 9th or 10th grade. As an example, this could mean that students take a Biology exam as their Science EOC assessment.

Scheduling these assessments earlier in high school leads to greater flexibility for students in their later academic choices, allowing them to select individualized electives,

³⁴ Ninety-seven percent of Massachusetts LEAs that serve high school grades participated in this data collection.

³⁵ "CD data: Local graduation requirements – 2025." Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. Retrieved January 28, 2026. [Microsoft Excel].

³⁶ The complete national landscape assessment of high school requirements and relevant data sources for each state are included in the Appendices F and G.

advanced courses, or specialized study pathways. Early completion of EOC assessments also enables schools to identify readiness for course progression and learning gaps sooner, making it possible to provide targeted support and remediation while students are still in the building and before academic pressures increase in 11th and 12th grade.

Additionally, aligning EOC assessments with specific courses allows these assessments to be used as a valuable instructional tool, providing educators with timely data showing how well students grasped the specific curriculum content, allowing educators to refine their practice and equipping districts to identify where additional support is needed. To further support educators, the state would develop instructional resources aligned with EOC assessments. As an example, this could include tools used by instructors to assess student progress throughout a course, supporting teachers in making instructional adjustments and helping keep students on track for success by the end of the course. Interim results may also help identify where additional instructional resources, professional support, or targeted student interventions are needed, rather than waiting until the end of the course when opportunities to course correct are more limited.

EOC assessments are to be designed, administered, and scored at the state level. To design and evaluate the assessments, consistent with current practice, the state will engage teams of educators with a focus on promoting alignment to the standards, grade-level appropriateness, instructional worthiness, content accuracy, equity, and universal accessibility. Additionally, the state will need to identify necessary test accommodations and work with districts to arrange accommodations for students who need them. These include, for example, linguistic accommodations for English learners, IEP-identified or Section 504-identified testing accommodations for students with disabilities, and alternatives to EOC assessments for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities.

End-of-Course Assessments and MCAS

As EOC assessments become operational, they are intended to replace the current high school MCAS exams in English Language Arts (ELA), Math, and Science. EOC assessments differ from MCAS exams in several important ways, as described in Figure 10.

Figure 10: Comparing MCAS Exams and EOC Assessments

	MCAS	End-of-Course (EOC) Assessments
When it's taken	<p>ELA and Math assessments are taken in 10th grade, regardless of a student's course sequence and even if the student is taking advanced or remedial coursework.</p> <p>Current Science assessments focus on Biology and Physics and are taken when the student completes the relevant course, in either 9th or 10th grade.</p>	<p>For all tested subject areas, EOC assessments will be taken at the end of each relevant course, matching the student's actual academic trajectory.</p>
Diploma stakes	<p>Qualifying score was previously required to meet the state's competency determination and earn a diploma.</p>	<p>EOC results inform the overall picture of student readiness and meaningfully count towards students' academic record and path to graduation.</p>
Relationship to instruction	<p>Tested content may not match current course.</p>	<p>Directly tied to course content and standards.</p>
Subjects covered	<p>In ELA and Math, subject areas/frameworks.</p> <p>In Science, Biology and Physics, course standards.</p>	<p>Targeted by course (e.g., Algebra I, U.S. History I, Biology)</p>
Transition plan	<p>Remains in place during transition.</p> <p>10th grade MCAS continues until EOC assessments are fully</p>	<p>Will phase in as EOC system is developed with stakeholder input.</p>

	MCAS	End-of-Course (EOC) Assessments
	operational (and with federal approval).	
Score availability	Scores available within months.	Scores available to schools within weeks.

End-of-Course Assessments and the Every Student Succeeds Act

The federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), signed into law in 2015, is intended to “provide all children significant opportunity to receive a fair, equitable, and high-quality education, and to close educational achievement gaps.”³⁷ As part of this, the law requires that states administer to all students statewide assessments in reading/language arts and in mathematics once in grades 9-12, and in science once in grades 6-9 and once in grades 10-12.³⁸ Pending federal approval, EOC assessments would fulfill the ESSA high school assessment requirements.

³⁷ Every Student Succeeds Act, 20 U.S.C. § 6301 (2015).
³⁸ Every Student Succeeds Act, 20 U.S.C. § 6311(b)(2)(B)(v) (2015).

POSTSECONDARY PLANNING



Recommendation: Students will develop a postsecondary plan that meets required year-by-year milestones defined in the state’s My Career and Academic Plan (MyCAP) framework, along with locally determined activities. Required milestones will include financial literacy, artificial intelligence and digital literacy, work-based learning, and FAFSA/MASFA completion or opt-out.

Why MyCAP Matters

High school graduation is a milestone achievement for students, capping their K-12 education, while also marking the beginning of their postsecondary trajectory. MyCAP connects high school to what comes next, providing a structured, statewide approach for students to plan, reflect on, and align their coursework and learning experiences with individualized college and career goals, supporting student agency while keeping all postsecondary options open. MyCAP supports students in becoming responsible decision-makers and self-aware navigators.



Developing and maintaining a career and academic plan using the MyCAP framework will support students in identifying their college and career goals and charting their individual path to attaining those goals.

Stakeholder Input

The following themes emerged among stakeholders, indicating a desire for the personalized, future-focused work that students engage in through MyCAP:

- **Student Agency and Personalized Learning.** Participants in the statewide survey and in listening sessions emphasized a desire for a more student-centered approach to education, advocating for personalized learning and student agency. This included offering students choice in their learning pathways, selecting coursework connected to their interests and passions, and prioritizing skills needed for future careers.
- **Real-World Readiness and Life Skills.** Participants in the listening sessions highlighted a strong desire for practical education that prepares students for life after high school, including job skills (e.g., resume building) as well as digital

literacy and financial literacy, which are included within the recommended MyCAP milestones.

In open-ended responses to the statewide survey, students emphasized a desire for greater postsecondary readiness support and for greater alignment between their high school experience and their college and career goals.

Students emphasized a desire for greater postsecondary readiness support and for greater alignment between their high school experience and their college and career goals.

MyCAP and Postsecondary Outcomes

The process of developing and maintaining an individual plan requires students to define their college and career expectations and to pursue the experiences, including coursework, that support those expectations. Research literature indicates that when students continuously work with teachers, parents/caregivers, and counselors to develop and revise individual college and career plans, they are more likely to:

- Graduate from high school³⁹
- Apply to college⁴⁰
- Enroll in college⁴¹

Additionally, when students complete specific MyCAP milestones, including those related to financial aid, financial literacy, work-based learning, and digital literacy, they experience positive postsecondary outcomes, as detailed below.

Financial Aid. Research demonstrates that students who complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid by the end of senior year are 84 percent more likely to enroll in college.⁴² Twelve states currently have, or are in the process of implementing, universal FAFSA policies.⁴³ Alabama, Illinois, Louisiana, and Texas were early adopters of universal FAFSA policies, and saw an average increase of 11 percentage points in FAFSA completion rates for high school seniors in the cycles following policy implementation.⁴⁴ Louisiana additionally reduced the gap in FAFSA completion between "low-income" and "high-income" school districts. Several Northeast states have recently adopted universal FAFSA policies, including Connecticut (starting

³⁹ Engelmann, A., Solberg, V.S.H., & Tucker, A. "Colorado school counseling investments payoff for students: a CCD center case study." Coalition for Career Development Center. Published 2022. Retrieved August 6, 2025. <https://open.bu.edu/server/api/core/bitstreams/b7e49272-868d-4ffb-9ed0-7450a9c5fbda/content>

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² "Opportunities and challenges of universal FAFSA?". UAspire. Published April 27, 2023. Retrieved August 13, 2025.

<https://www.uaspire.org/getattachment/40c4f21c-2240-4a58-998f-5832789338b5/Opportunities-Challenges-of-Universal-FAFSA.pdf>

⁴³ Martinez-Alvarado, Sayda. "A scan of state universal FAFSA policies." EdTrust. Published February 2025. Retrieved August 14, 2025. <https://edtrust.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/Universal-FAFSA-Report-V4.pdf>

⁴⁴ "Digging deeper into universal FAFSA impacts in four states." National College Attainment Network. Published September 7, 2022. Retrieved April 23, 2026. https://www.ncan.org/Web/Web/News/Digging_Deeper_into_Universal_FAFSA_Impacts.aspx

with the class of 2027), New Jersey (starting with the class of 2025), and New York (starting with the class of 2025).⁴⁵

Financial Literacy. Research literature also indicates that when students are required to study financial literacy in high school, they are more likely to:

- Have higher credit scores⁴⁶
- Pay credit card bills on time (fewer delinquencies)⁴⁷
- Avoid credit default⁴⁸
- Carry less debt⁴⁹
- Have fewer personal bankruptcies⁵⁰

As of 2025, 30 states require students to complete coursework or demonstrate mastery in financial literacy to graduate high school.⁵¹

Work-Based Learning. Work-based learning can be defined broadly, including, for example, internships, apprenticeships, cooperative education programs, community service experiences, field-based projects, work-based simulations, and other career-connected experiential learning activities. While research across the many variations of work-based learning is limited, research on specific modalities of work-based learning suggests positive postsecondary outcomes. Work-based learning participation has been linked to the development of skills that are highly valued by employers and aligned with the Vision of a Massachusetts Graduate, including teamwork and collaboration, exploratory and divergent thinking, and communication.^{52,53} Additionally, researchers have found that work-based learning participation may be associated with increased likelihood that students will matriculate into a postsecondary institution after high school graduation, even when those students have a lower high school GPA.^{54,55} One potential

⁴⁵ See Appendix G for data sources used in national landscape analysis.

⁴⁶ Urban, Carly, Schmeiser, Maximilian, Collins, J. Michael, & Brown, Alexandra. "The effects of high school personal financial education policies on financial behavior." *Economics of Education Review*. Published October 2020. Retrieved September 16, 2025. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0272775718301699>

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Brown, Meta, van der Klaauw, Wilbert, Wen, J., & Zafar, Basit. "Financial education and the debt behavior of the young." Federal Reserve Bank of New York. Published September 2013. Retrieved September 16, 2025. <https://www.econstor.eu/bitstream/10419/93586/1/771626673.pdf>

⁵⁰ Baulkaran, Vishaal. "Personal bankruptcy and consumer credit delinquency: The case of personal finance education." *International Review of Financial Analysis*. Published May 2022. Retrieved October 21, 2025. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S1057521922000680#preview-section-snippets>

⁵¹ See Appendix G for data sources used in national landscape analysis.

⁵² Gamboa, Vitor, Paixão, Maria Puala, & Neves de Jesus, Saúl. "Internship quality predicts career exploration of high school students." *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 83, 78-87. Published August 2013. Retrieved April 30, 2026. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0001879113000651>

⁵³ Ross, Martha, Moore, Kristin Anderson, Murphy, Kelly, Bateman, Nicole, DeMand, Alex, & Sacks, Vanessa. "Pathways to high-quality jobs for young adults." Brookings Institution. Published October 2018. Retrieved April 30, 2026. <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/pathways-to-high-quality-jobs-for-young-adults/>

⁵⁴ Theodos, Brett, Pergamit, Michael., Hanson, Devlin, Edelstein, Sara, Daniels, Rebecca, & Srini, Tanaya. "Pathways after high school: evaluation of the urban alliance high school internship program. research report." The Urban Institute. Published August 19, 2017. Retrieved April 30, 2026. <https://www.urban.org/research/publication/pathways-after-high-school-evaluation-urban-alliance-high-school-internship-program>

⁵⁵ Modestino, Alicia Sasser, Paul, Urbashee, & McLaughlin, Joseph. "What's in a job? Evaluating the effect of private sector employment experience on student academic outcomes." *American Economic Association*. Published May 2022. Retrieved April 30, 2026. <https://www.aeaweb.org/articles?id=10.1257/pandp.20221035>

contributing factor related to the positive postsecondary outcomes is the increased tendency for students to see themselves in a particular college major or career after participating in work-based learning experiences, particularly for students from demographic backgrounds that are underrepresented in their careers of interest.⁵⁶

Artificial Intelligence and Digital Literacy. Emerging research shows that digital literacy is a determinant of workforce success, with its significance growing consistently as digital technology and, particularly, artificial intelligence (AI) continue to integrate in the workplace. As of 2023, 92 percent of all jobs required digital skills, with this demand seen across industries.⁵⁷ Workers in jobs requiring digital skills earned an average of 23 percent more than those working in jobs that did not require digital skills.⁵⁸ The AI wage differential is even greater, with a 56 percent wage premium when comparing workers in the same job with AI skills and without AI skills.⁵⁹ As of 2025, 11 states required students to complete digital literacy coursework.^{60,61}

By integrating these research-backed components as milestones in MyCAP, students are supported in designing a well-informed postsecondary plan and in developing the real-world skills that will equip them to accomplish the goals laid out in that plan.

MyCAP in the Field

Currently, the MyCAP framework is strongly recommended by DESE for whole school implementation for all students in grades 6-12 and is required for all middle and high schools engaged in Chapter 74 CTE programs, Innovation Career Pathways, Early College programs, among other programs. Approximately 40 percent of Massachusetts districts engage in MyCAP.

Many states have programming for students to develop individualized career and academic plans during their high school tenure or earlier. Twenty-five states require that students complete an individual career and academic plan in high school, and another seven states recommend it.⁶²

⁵⁶ Hsu, Pei-Ling. & Venegas, Laura. "Activity features of high school students' science learning in an open-inquiry-based internship programme," *International Journal of Science Education*. Published June 1, 2018. Retrieved April 30, 2026. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/09500693.2018.1479801>

⁵⁷ National Skills Coalition & Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta. "Closing the Digital Skill Divide: The Payoff for Workers, Business, and the Economy." Published February 2023. Retrieved May 1, 2026. https://nationalskillscoalition.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/NSC-DigitalDivide_report_Feb2023.pdf

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ PwC. "2025 Global AI Jobs Barometer." Published June 3, 2025. Retrieved May 7, 2026. <https://www.pwc.com/qx/en/services/ai/ai-jobs-barometer.html>

⁶⁰ See Appendix G for data sources used in national landscape analysis.

⁶¹ MultiState. "How States Are Regulating AI in Education this Legislative Session." Published April 9, 2026. Retrieved May 1, 2026. <https://www.multistate.us/insider/2026/4/9/how-states-are-regulating-ai-in-education-this-legislative-session>

⁶² Sixteen states include individual career and academic plans as graduation requirements; an additional nine states require the plans through another mechanism. See Appendix F for national landscape analysis of graduation requirements.

How MyCAP Works

MyCAP is a framework in which students develop and continuously iterate on their individual plan and engage in a scope and sequence of activities across three domains (Personal/Social, Academic, and Career) that support their plan. With this recommendation, the state will define intentional year-by-year milestones that all students must complete as part of their individual plan. Examples of milestones that support students' postsecondary readiness are listed in Figure 11.

Figure 11: MyCAP Milestone Examples

MyCAP Milestone Examples	
Set goals in each domain (Personal/Social, Academic, Career)	Research postsecondary education options
Develop a four-year course plan	Develop and document a postsecondary plan
Complete a financial literacy module	Complete an artificial intelligence and digital literacy module
Complete or opt out of the FAFSA/MASFA	Engage in a work-based learning experience

Additional details on select milestones recommended by the Council co-chairs are listed below:

- **Financial Literacy Module.** All students will complete a financial literacy module aligned with the state's existing [high school standards for personal financial literacy](#) as a MyCAP milestone.⁶³ To support local flexibility, the module may be offered in one of three formats, to be decided by each district. Module options include:
 - Virtual DESE-developed module, which can serve as a high-quality default option
 - Standalone locally delivered course
 - Portion of a locally delivered course (for example, embedded as a module within a math course)

⁶³ "Personal financial literacy in the Massachusetts curriculum frameworks: Aligned to key topics in Chapter 438 of the Acts of 2018, an Act relative to financial literacy in schools." Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. Published January 20, 2019. Retrieved April 18, 2026. <https://www.doe.mass.edu/frameworks/financial-literacy.docx>

- **Artificial Intelligence and Digital Literacy Module.** All students will complete an AI and digital literacy learning module to gain a deeper understanding and proficiency of AI and digital technologies and their implications for the future. The module would align to AI and digital literacy standards, which will need to be developed. Standards content may include, but is not limited to:
 - The nature of AI, including generative and predictive AI, and its uses; ethical and responsible use of AI; critical thinking and AI; how AI is shaping postsecondary pathways
 - The role of digital technology in society and workforce; ethics and laws pertaining to digital technology; safety, security, and data protection
 - Identifying credible sources of information; the role of algorithms; intellectual property, copyright, and ownership of digital content

As the state further refines the details of this requirement, including the development of AI standards, it will benefit from collaboration with the [Massachusetts AI Hub](#), which was launched in 2024 with the goal of cementing the state as a global leader in the development, deployment, and governance of artificial intelligence. Anchored at the intersection of public sector priorities, world-class academic institutions, and a vibrant innovation ecosystem, the Massachusetts AI Hub operates as a neutral convener and catalyst to connect, accelerate, and scale AI initiatives that advance innovation, economic growth, workforce development, and public good across Massachusetts.

As is the case for financial literacy, per the recommendation, districts would have the option of utilizing a virtual, DESE-developed AI and digital literacy module or including the content in a locally delivered course.

- **FAFSA/MASFA.** All students will complete the FAFSA or the MASFA, or opt out of the requirement. With this milestone, all students would be educated on federal and state financial aid and the process of submitting the FAFSA/MASFA forms. Students and families would either complete the FAFSA or MASFA, or submit a low-barrier opt-out without the need to disclose their reasons or any sensitive personal circumstances.
- **Work-Based Learning Experience.** All students will take part in a work-based learning experience as a required MyCAP milestone. With this requirement, students engage in experiential, career-connected learning, including, for example, an apprenticeship, an internship, a co-op, a service-learning experience, or a career-connected project.

Under this MyCAP recommendation, the state will provide a template MyCAP scope and sequence, including state-defined required milestones, that districts can build upon and adapt for local program design and implementation.

As part of the development of the MyCAP scope and sequence, the state will explore the interaction between MyCAP and IEPs for students with disabilities, with specific focus on IEP transition plans, ensuring that these tools are developed in a complementary way and work together efficiently to support students with disabilities in planning for their futures beyond high school.

CULMINATING EXPERIENCES



Recommendation: Students will complete a culminating experience, which can be either a capstone project or a portfolio of work. The state will define the parameters of the culminating experience and establish a standardized rubric specifying what students must demonstrate. Student work will be assessed locally using the state-developed rubric.

Why Culminating Experiences Matter

Capstones and portfolios allow students to demonstrate and apply their skills and competencies in a way that is authentic and meaningful to them and aligned to their interests and future goals.

These performance-based assessments support personalization, student agency, and deeper learning, and allow students to further develop their skills as self-aware navigators, creative problem-solvers, and effective communicators.



Stakeholder Voices

In statewide listening sessions, participants highlighted the need for flexible mastery options, such as portfolios and capstones, that give students choices in how they demonstrate their learning. Educators noted that giving students options to demonstrate mastery supports differentiation and equity, enabling all students to showcase their strengths effectively.

In the statewide survey, there was also strong support for capstones and portfolios. Respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they agree with the following question: How should students demonstrate their learning and college, career, and civic readiness? Across all roles, 87 percent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that students should demonstrate their learning and college, career, and civic readiness through a Portfolio of Work, and 72 percent agreed with Capstone Projects.

Most statewide survey respondents supported the use of portfolios and capstones as demonstrations of student learning and college, career, and civic readiness.

In open-ended survey responses, district leaders specifically suggested diversifying assessment methods beyond standardized tests. Portfolios, capstone projects, and other forms of performance-based assessments were recommended to allow students to showcase their knowledge and skills.

Culminating Experiences and Postsecondary Outcomes

Research on the impact of capstones and portfolios is limited but encouraging, suggesting that engaging in these types of experiences may be associated with positive outcomes for students, including increased sense of responsibility over academic progress, increased opportunity for student reflection, and achievement in high school and beyond.^{64,65,66}

As the emerging field of capstone projects, portfolios of work, and other similar assessments continues to develop, Massachusetts has an opportunity to be an innovator in supporting these opportunities for all students.

Culminating Experiences in the Field

Most Massachusetts districts engage students in the types of work that could comprise a culminating experience. Of the 97 percent of districts whose data is available for this review, 69 percent of districts offer portfolios and 46 percent offer capstones as a way for students to demonstrate mastery.⁶⁷ Additionally, many districts have opportunities such as senior projects, independent research, and Advanced Placement (AP) capstones, all of which may meet the culminating experience requirement.

As of 2025, six states incorporated capstones, portfolios, or similar cumulative projects into their graduation requirements. Examples include:

- In Idaho, students must complete a Future Readiness Project to graduate. This culminating project may be a capstone or a portfolio and must demonstrate a

⁶⁴ Fine, Michelle, & Pryiomka, Karyna. "Assessing college readiness through authentic student work: How the City University of New York and the New York Performance Standards Consortium are collaborating toward equity." Learning Policy Institute. Published July 2020. Retrieved April 30, 2026. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED606677.pdf>

⁶⁵ Wei, R.C., LaFors, Jeanette, Jackson, Orville, & Pecheone R. L. "Redesigning teaching and learning: A new approach to high school graduation by portfolio." Academia. Published April 17, 2009. Retrieved August 8, 2025. https://www.academia.edu/24169016/Redesigning_Teaching_and_Learning_A_New_Approach_to_High_School_Graduation_by_Portfolio

⁶⁶ Fine, Michelle, & Pryiomka, Karyna. "Assessing college readiness through authentic student work: How the City University of New York and the New York Performance Standards Consortium are collaborating toward equity." Learning Policy Institute. Published July 2020. Retrieved April 30, 2026. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED606677.pdf>

⁶⁷ "CD data: Local graduation requirements – 2025." Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. Retrieved January 28, 2026. [Microsoft Excel].

student's application of the Idaho College and Career Readiness Competencies and exploration of potential post high school options.⁶⁸

- In Rhode Island, students must complete at least one performance-based diploma assessment, defined as a multifaceted assignment and/or experience that serves as a culminating demonstration of a student's applied learning skills and knowledge of one or more content areas, to graduate.⁶⁹
- Colorado and Kansas both provide students with a menu of options for demonstrating mastery, which include a district capstone (Colorado)⁷⁰ and a senior project (Kansas).⁷¹

How Culminating Experiences Work

Under this recommendation, students will be required to complete a culminating experience, including either a capstone or a portfolio. Districts may offer capstones, portfolios, or both.

Capstones are culminating demonstrations of learning in which students synthesize and apply knowledge and skills to a complex question, problem, performance, and real-world context. Capstones often include research and authentic student products and may be interdisciplinary, involving sustained inquiry, creation or application, reflection, and a formal presentation or defense.

Portfolios are defined as purposeful collections of student work that document evidence of learning, performance, and proficiency over a period of time. Portfolios include varied artifacts across disciplines and/or competencies and are accompanied by student reflection that demonstrates learning, progress, and skill development.

To support uniformity and equity of student experience, the state is responsible for defining the requirement and establishing a rubric that is aligned to the state's Vision of a Massachusetts Graduate. Districts score capstones and portfolios locally using the statewide rubric and have the flexibility to determine where and how culminating experiences integrate in their high school program of study.

⁶⁸ "Idaho high school graduation requirements." Idaho State Department of Education. Published May 3, 2023. Retrieved April 30, 2026. <https://www.sde.idaho.gov/high-school-graduation-requirements/>

⁶⁹ "The Rhode Island diploma system & graduation requirements." Rhode Island Department of Education. Published May 2023. Retrieved July 28, 2025. <https://ride.ri.gov/students-families/ri-public-schools/diploma-system>

⁷⁰ "Graduation guidelines fact sheet: Menu of college and career-ready demonstrations." Colorado Department of Education. Published October 2024. Retrieved July 21, 2025.

<https://www.cde.state.co.us/postsecondary/graduationguidelinesmenuofoptionspdf>

⁷¹ "Graduation." Kansas State Department of Education. Retrieved April 30, 2026. <https://www.ksde.gov/student-success/graduation>

Figure 12: State and District Culminating Experiences Responsibilities


	State	District
Options offered to students	Require that all students complete either a capstone or portfolio as their required culminating experience.	Choose to offer either a capstone, a portfolio, or give students the option of choosing between the two experiences.
Definition and Scoring	Define what constitutes a capstone and a portfolio and, through engagement with teams of educators, establish a rubric for each that is aligned with the Vision of a Massachusetts Graduate.	Locally score capstones and portfolios using, at a minimum, the state-determined definition and rubric.
Integration in program of study	Provide resources and examples to support implementation.	Determine where and how capstones and/or portfolios are integrated in the high school experience. For example, capstones and/or portfolios could be implemented through a standalone course, integrated into a course or course sequence, or span multiple courses. Capstones and/or portfolios could also be delivered through existing mechanisms, such as civics action projects, internship experiences, independent research, AP capstone courses, arts portfolios, etc., provided that they align with the state-determined definition and rubric.

ADDITIONAL EQUITY CONSIDERATIONS

The Council emphasizes that the graduation framework must be implemented in ways that promote equitable access and high expectations for all students. Namely, the state will need to identify supports and accommodations available for any specific student groups who may need additional support in meeting the requirements. These student groups may include, for example, students with disabilities, English learners, students with limited or interrupted formal education (SLIFE), students who arrive to Massachusetts late in their high school experience, and students from communities that have been historically marginalized. Thoughtful implementation will require balancing flexibility with a clear commitment to providing all students with meaningful opportunities to meet the statewide graduation expectations. Supporting success for all Massachusetts students will depend upon ongoing collaboration among the state, districts, schools, families, and community organizations.

RECOGNIZING STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

SEALS OF DISTINCTION

 **Recommendation:** The state will develop and define a list of State Seals of Distinction. Districts will offer a minimum number of these state-designated seals that all students have access to attain. The criteria and parameters for issuing seals will be determined by the state.

Why Seals of Distinction Matter

Seals provide an opportunity to recognize the unique accomplishments of students beyond the baseline graduation requirements. By working towards and earning seals of distinction, students have the opportunity to identify their unique strengths, areas of focus, and aspirations; work steadily towards goals; and receive recognition for their accomplishments that can be leveraged as they transition to postsecondary studies and/or career opportunities.

Stakeholder Voices

Stakeholders in listening sessions and in the statewide survey expressed a strong desire for increased agency and personalization across student learning experiences. Seals present a way for students to receive recognition for pathways that they pursue and unique achievements that they reach.

Seals of Distinction in the Field

Massachusetts currently awards the State Seal of Biliteracy to students who attain high functional and academic levels of proficiency in English and a world language in recognition of having studied and attained proficiency in two or more languages by high school graduation. The State Seal of Biliteracy takes the form of a seal that appears on the transcript of the graduate and is a statement of accomplishment for future

employers and for college admissions.⁷² In 2025, 4,793 students earned the Seal; to date, more than 18,000 students have earned it.⁷³

Many states now offer various seals or endorsements that are reflective of students' K-12 learning experiences and postsecondary aspirations.⁷⁴ These distinctions create opportunities to acknowledge and celebrate individual students' achievements and areas of focus. Common seals and endorsements include those highlighting digital literacy, civic engagement, biliteracy, academic honors, and career and technical education.

How Seals of Distinction Work

Per this recommendation, the state will define specific Seals of Distinction intended to encourage and commend student accomplishments across a range of areas aligned with our Vision of a Massachusetts Graduate. The existing State Seal of Biliteracy will serve as a model for new seals.

Seals recommended for exploration and consideration include:

- Civic Engagement
- Financial Literacy
- Artificial Intelligence & Digital Literacy
- Global Competency
- Industry Recognized Credential Achievement
- Early College Credit Achievement
- Military Readiness
- Climate Literacy
- Artistic Accomplishment
- Massachusetts Inclusive Postsecondary Enrollment

By definition, seals are meant to acknowledge student work and/or competency development that exceed minimum graduation requirements.

⁷² "Massachusetts state seal of biliteracy." Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. Updated March 20, 2025. Retrieved September 17, 2025. <https://www.doe.mass.edu/scholarships/biliteracy/>

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ See Appendix G for data sources used in national landscape analysis.

As is the current case for the State Seal of Biliteracy:

- The state will define seals' criteria, using clear and verifiable criteria to promote consistency and to uphold the seals' value as a postsecondary credential.
- Districts will certify and report student attainment of seals.

To promote equity of student access to seals, the state will establish a minimum number of seals that districts are required to make available to students.

FROM RECOMMENDATIONS TO IMPLEMENTATION

IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE

The recommended timeline phases implementation over multiple stages to allow for thoughtful planning and adjustments, as needed. This approach balances the need for timely progress with the practical realities of capacity, resources, and change management.

The recommended timeline for the full MassCore requirement to take effect is for the incoming 9th grade cohort in the fall of 2027. The majority of Massachusetts high schools are already requiring the core four elements (four years of English Language Arts and Mathematics; three years of History/Social Science and lab-based Science) and the state is committed to helping all schools meet the full MassCore requirements (see Figure 8 for all MassCore framework elements), including providing resources and supports. See Figure 9 for the percentages of districts currently meeting or exceeding required MassCore units in their local graduation requirements.

The recommended timeline for the remaining requirements (EOC Assessments, MyCAP, and Culminating Experiences) to begin taking effect is for the incoming 9th grade cohort in the fall of 2028.

In order for the state to collect information from districts about the implementation of the new requirements, updated data reporting and monitoring infrastructure will need to be built out.

Figure 13: Implementation Timeline

School Year	Implementation Focus	Key Activities & Milestones for the State	Key Activities & Milestones for Districts
2026-27	Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct landscape assessment of needs Engage with teams of educators to begin collaborating Establish statutory and regulatory authority to 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct a needs analysis to determine resource requirements Engage with teams of educators to begin collaborating

School Year	Implementation Focus	Key Activities & Milestones for the State	Key Activities & Milestones for Districts
		<p>support the new graduation framework</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and issue initial statewide implementation guidance, exemplars, and tools • Support district planning • Start building shared understanding with students, families, and communities, including communications in multiple languages 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare and organize for professional learning • Start building shared understanding with students and families, including communications in multiple languages
2027-28	Preparation and Initial Implementation of MassCore (entering Grade 9)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Align statewide resources to support implementation • Continue providing guidance, exemplars, and tools • Support professional learning and technical assistance for districts • Continue building shared understanding with students, families, and communities • Support rollout of MassCore graduation requirement taking effect for students entering 9th grade 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct local readiness activities, including continued professional learning • Continue building shared understanding with students and families • Welcome entering 9th grade cohort and begin implementing MassCore requirements
2028-29	Initial Implementation of Remaining	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support rollout of remaining new statewide graduation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcome entering 9th grade cohort and begin implementing

School Year	Implementation Focus	Key Activities & Milestones for the State	Key Activities & Milestones for Districts
	Requirements (entering Grade 9)	requirements taking effect for students entering 9 th grade <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide ongoing guidance, monitoring, and technical support • Use early implementation feedback to inform refinements 	remaining new requirements <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide early implementation feedback to the state
2029-30	Continued Rollout of Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand and strengthen required components across districts • Provide targeted supports to promote consistency and equitable access • Monitor implementation data and make ongoing adjustments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement requirements for 9th and 10th grade cohorts • Continue providing implementation feedback to the state • Engage in monitoring and reporting with the state
2030-31	Continued Rollout of Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement full set of graduation requirements across 9th-11th grades • Provide ongoing professional learning and system supports • Refine guidance and practices continuously based on evidence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement requirements for 9th, 10th, and 11th grade cohorts • Continue providing implementation feedback to the state • Engage in monitoring and reporting with the state
2031-32	Full Implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fully implement all requirements across secondary grade levels • Transition from implementation phase 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fully implement all requirements with all 9th-12th grade cohorts • Continue engaging with the state for

School Year	Implementation Focus	Key Activities & Milestones for the State	Key Activities & Milestones for Districts
		to sustained practice, monitoring, and continuous improvement	monitoring and reporting, and to share effective strategies

While the table above presents the timeline recommended by the co-chairs to best prepare for a successful statewide rollout of the new graduation requirements, districts are encouraged to get out ahead. Early adopters give themselves more time to adjust and their initial learnings can be shared with the field, helping to inform implementation efforts in other districts.

STATE AND LOCAL ROLES

The statewide graduation framework is intentionally designed to balance clear and consistent state requirements with reasonable local flexibility. Through this approach, the Commonwealth establishes a common set of standardized expectations while preserving districts’ ability to design learning experiences that respond to local contexts, student needs, and community priorities. This balance reflects broad stakeholder support for a statewide “floor” that promotes equity, consistency, and high expectations, coupled with local discretion in how students meet and demonstrate those expectations.

Within the framework, the state’s role is to define core components and guardrails, such as the required elements of the program of study, the expectations for demonstrating mastery, and the essential features of culminating experiences and postsecondary planning, while districts can exercise flexibility in implementation. By pairing statewide consistency with local adaptability, the framework supports equitable access to high-quality learning opportunities across districts and provides clarity and transparency for students and families about what it means to earn a Massachusetts diploma.

A high-level summary of the state and district role for each of the elements of the system of graduation requirements is captured in Figure 14.

Figure 14: State and District Roles in Framework Implementation

	State Role	District Role
MassCore	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define subjects and units required within MassCore • Define MassCore flexibilities • Establish curriculum standards • Review and approve district requests for implementation waivers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify courses that may satisfy subject area requirements • Design a program of study, including course offerings and course sequencing, that meets MassCore requirements • Determine curriculum and instructional approach for MassCore courses • If a student fails to successfully complete a required course, engage the support necessary to help them recover credit and meet graduation standards
End-of-Course Assessments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determine courses that are assessed through an end-of-course assessment • With engagement of educators, design end-of-course assessments • Identify necessary test accommodations for students who need them • Score end-of-course assessments and provide score reports to districts in time for scores to meaningfully count toward students' academic record and path to graduation • Develop instructional resources aligned with EOC assessments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare students to take end-of-course assessments • Provide accommodations for students who need them • Use end-of-course assessment data to identify student needs and provide relevant support

	State Role	District Role
MyCAP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Define required MyCAP milestones With engagement of practitioners, develop a model scope and sequence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and deliver a local MyCAP scope and sequence that includes the state-defined required MyCAP milestones
Culminating Experiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Define the parameters of the culminating experiences Provide resources and exemplars to support local implementation With engagement of educators, develop examples of capstone and portfolio assignments With engagement of educators, develop a rubric for assessing capstones and portfolios 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Choose to offer either a capstone, a portfolio, or give students the option of choosing between the two experiences Determine where and how to integrate culminating experiences in the program of study Score culminating experiences using the state-determined definition and rubric

As with the State Seal of Biliteracy, for other seals of distinction, the state will be responsible for establishing the definition and criteria, and districts will report student attainment.

Across all components of the new graduation requirements, the state will be responsible for providing guidance, professional learning, technical assistance, and capacity-building resources, and for establishing the necessary data and reporting infrastructure.

RESOURCES AND SUPPORT FOR DISTRICTS

Core to the recommended system of graduation requirements is the vision that every Massachusetts student, no matter their identity or background, graduates prepared to succeed in college, career, and civic life. At the same time, Massachusetts districts vary widely in size, geography, student demographics, and existing programmatic capacity. The Council co-chairs recognize that districts have varying needs and that moving from the current state to the future state will require intentional, sustained resources and support. This section outlines key forms of support that will be necessary to promote equitable, high-quality implementation statewide.

Guidance. The Commonwealth will provide an integrated system of guidance, professional learning, and technical assistance to support district planning and implementation of the new graduation requirements. This support will include clear expectations and alignment with existing policies, along with examples of acceptable and high-quality approaches to help districts interpret and apply the framework. State-supported professional learning will build educator and administrator understanding of the graduation framework and its instructional implications, with a focus on developing shared understanding, strengthening practice, and supporting consistent implementation across districts while respecting local context. Ongoing technical assistance will complement these efforts by offering needs-based support, including targeted assistance for districts facing specific challenges and opportunities for peer learning and the sharing of effective practices. These supports will evolve over time to reflect lessons learned during early implementation and to respond to district feedback.

Staffing. The co-chairs recognize ongoing staffing challenges faced by districts with particular focus on subject areas required under MassCore where qualified educators have historically been more difficult to recruit and retain. Thoughtful implementation of the graduation framework will require coordinated state and local strategies to support targeted staffing capacity, including workforce development and alternative licensure pathways where shortages persist.

Financial Resources. The co-chairs recognize that successful implementation may require additional resources and recommends that the Commonwealth consider appropriate financial supports. Funding could be used to support planning, professional learning, systems development, and other activities necessary to promote equitable access and high-quality implementation.

Pilots and Incentives. The co-chairs recognize the value of optional pilot opportunities for early adopting districts and schools that are interested in implementing elements of the graduation framework ahead of the full statewide rollout. Pilots can serve as learning opportunities to inform guidance, tools, and supports, and lessons learned can be used to help strengthen broader implementation efforts statewide. To encourage early engagement, the co-chairs recommend that the Commonwealth explore avenues for grants and other funding opportunities to support and incentivize pilot participation and related planning activities.

Waivers. The co-chairs also acknowledge that waivers currently exist as a tool to address a range of unique local circumstances and recommend continuing to remain open to their limited use, as appropriate and necessary, during implementation. Maintaining some flexibility through existing waiver processes is intended to help districts and schools navigate unique challenges while upholding the integrity and goals of the graduation framework.

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY, REGULATION, AND STATUTE

Moving forward, the co-chairs recommend that the Governor and Legislature work together to enact legislation that will codify the requirements within this report, and that the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) promulgate regulations on the requirements. The Executive Office of Education and the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education are ready to support the work of moving forward with the necessary statutory and regulatory changes in the next legislative session.

CONCLUSION: THE PATH FORWARD

Massachusetts has long been recognized as a national leader in public education; this recommended graduation framework represents an opportunity to build on that legacy, creating **a system where every student graduates prepared for the demands of college, career, and civic life**. Advancing this vision will require a collective commitment from state leaders, educators, districts, students, families, and communities to work together in service of high standards and equity. As the Commonwealth establishes new policy and moves to statewide implementation, collaborative planning and sustained engagement with stakeholders will be essential to translate this vision into lasting practice. With shared responsibility and a focus on continuous improvement, Massachusetts will strengthen its public education and cultivate a system that serves all students today and for the future.

APPENDICES

The background of the page is a dark blue color. On the right side, there is a decorative pattern consisting of various squares and lines. Some squares are solid and filled with a lighter shade of blue, while others are hollow with a thin white outline. The lines are thin and white, connecting some of the squares in a network-like structure. The overall effect is a modern, geometric design.

APPENDIX A: STATEWIDE GRADUATION COUNCIL

The Council consisted of the following participants:

- **Adda Santos-Smith**, Somerville High School Educator
- **Amanda Seider**, OneGoal
- **Annabelle Griffith**, Norton High School Student
- **Beth Anderson**, Massachusetts Charter Public School Association
- **Bob Bardwell**, Massachusetts School Counselors Association
- **David Martinez**, Haverhill High School Student, Governor's Youth Advisory Council
- **Denise Pigeon**, Nashoba Valley Technical High School Superintendent, Massachusetts Association of Vocational Administrators
- **Doug Howgate**, MA Taxpayers Foundation
- **Ed Lambert**, MA Business Alliance for Education
- **Ellen Kennedy**, Berkshire Community College President, Massachusetts Association of Community Colleges
- **Erik Berg**, Boston Teachers Union
- **Hirak Shah**, Senate Minority Appointee
- **Jason Fraser**, Plympton/Silver Lake School Committee, Massachusetts Association of School Committees
- **JD Chesloff**, MA Business Roundtable
- **Jenny Curtin**, Barr Foundation
- **Jessica Tang**, American Federation of Teachers Massachusetts
- **Jeyden Santos**, Boston Arts Academy High School Student
- **James Peyser**, House Minority Appointee
- **Kay Seale**, Chief of Specialized Services, Boston Public Schools
- **Linda Thompson**, Westfield State University President, Massachusetts State University Council of Presidents
- **Manikka Bowman**, Public School Parent
- **Max Page**, Massachusetts Teachers Association

- **Michael Bobbitt**, Massachusetts Cultural Council
- **Michael Dannenberg**, DHE Commissioner Appointee
- **Michelle Terry**, Plymouth North High School Educator and Milken Award Winner
- **Monique Ching**, Senate President Appointee
- **Patrick Tutwiler**, Secretary of Education (former)
- **Pedro Martinez**, DESE Commissioner
- **Russell Johnston**, DESE Commissioner (former acting)
- **Representative Alice Peisch**, House Speaker Appointee
- **Simo Ouazzani**, Brockton High School Educator, Massachusetts Association of Teachers of Speakers of Other Languages
- **Stephen Zrike**, Secretary of Education (current)
- **Tamara Rivera-DeJesus**, Bristol-Plymouth Regional Technical School Student, State Student Advisory Council
- **Thea Stovell**, Randolph Public Schools Superintendent, Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents
- **Victor Caraballo-Anderson**, Lawrence High School Principal, Massachusetts School Administrators' Association

The Statewide Graduation Council met regularly from March 2025 through May 2026:

- March 18, 2025
- April 14, 2025
- May 19, 2025
- June 4, 2025
- July 16, 2025
- August 13, 2025
- September 8, 2025
- September 30, 2025
- October 17, 2025
- November 19, 2025
- February 9, 2026
- March 9, 2026
- April 15, 2026
- May 12, 2026

APPENDIX B: COUNCIL ADVISORY GROUPS

Five different advisory groups were convened from fall 2025 to spring 2026. The section below outlines participation and meeting schedules.

College, Career, and Civic Readiness (CCCR) Advisory Group

The following individuals attended one or more CCCR advisory group meetings:

- **Albert Mercado**, Barnstable High School
- **Becki DeMarco**, Wachusett Regional
- **Charlsey Penney**, Worcester Alternative School
- **Dani Charbonneau**, Mashpee Public Schools
- **Desiree Enos**, Worcester Public Schools
- **Erin Jaques**, Boston Public Schools
- **Erin Lachapelle**, Ashland Middle School
- **Farida Graham**, Academy of the Pacific Rim Charter
- **Gavin Smith**, Boston Latin Academy
- **Kevin McCaskill**, Brockton High School
- **Kristen Hayden**, Monomoy Regional Middle School
- **Nina Davidson**, Chelsea Public Schools
- **Pete Anderson**, Wahconah Regional High School
- **Sara Avery**, McCann Technical School
- **Shereen Tyrell**, Burlington Public Schools

CCCR Advisory Group meeting schedule:

- January 29, 2026
- February 26, 2026
- March 26, 2026
- April 29, 2026
- May 28, 2026

Learning Experiences & Mastery (LE&M) Advisory Group

The following individuals attended one or more LE&M advisory group meetings:

- **Allison Little**, Department of Higher Education
- **April Rist**, Ludlow Public Schools
- **Carla Crisafulli**, Hopkinton Public Schools
- **Cedric Jacobson**, Brooke Charter
- **Dilashminelle Rivera Diaz**, Holyoke Public Schools
- **Erin Eastman**, Barnstable High School
- **Fernanda Marinho Kray**, Brockton High School
- **Jedd Cohen**, **Phoenix Charter Academy**
- **Jill Sawyer**, Essex North Shore
- **Julie Riley**, Andover Public Schools
- **Ralph Saint Louis**, Lowell Public Schools
- **Sara Hamerla**, Waltham Public Schools
- **Sarah Morland**, Boston Collegiate Charter
- **Tamara Stras**, Newton South High School
- **Tara Goodhue**, Lowell Public Schools
- **Wesley Lima**, Dartmouth Public Schools

LE&M Advisory Group meeting schedule:

- January 28, 2026
- February 25, 2026
- March 25, 2026
- April 30, 2026
- May 28, 2026

Local Education Agency (LEA) Leaders Advisory Group

The following individuals attended one or more LEA Leaders advisory group meetings:

- **Almi Abeyta**, Chelsea Public Schools
- **Amy McKinstry**, Northbridge Public Schools
- **Danielle Klingaman**, Duxbury Public Schools
- **Darius Modestow**, Frontier Regional and Union 38 School Districts
- **Dave Murphy**, Cambridge Public Schools
- **David Sawyer**, Attleboro Public Schools
- **Eric Duda**, Pathfinder Regional Vocational Technical School District
- **Heidi Riccio**, Essex North Shore Agricultural and Technical School
- **Jeff Schoonover**, Somerset-Berkley Public Schools
- **Jenna Ogundipe**, Boston Collegiate Charter
- **Jennifer Bellville**, Chicopee Public Schools
- **Kerri Anne Quinlan-Zhou**, Bourne Public Schools
- **Latifah Phillips**, Pittsfield Public Schools
- **Liz Homan**, Arlington Public Schools
- **Marcus Ware**, Chicopee Public Schools
- **Melissa Spash**, Natick Public Schools
- **Modesto Montero**, Libertas Charter Academy
- **Owen Stearns**, Excel Academy Charter School
- **Sheryl Stanton**, Mohawk Trail Regional School District
- **Sonia Dinnall**, Springfield Public Schools
- **Stephanie Burroughs**, Foxboro Public Schools
- **Tim Piwovar**, Westwood Public Schools
- **Tracey Curley**, Fall River Public Schools

LEA Leaders Advisory Group meeting schedule:

- January 26, 2026
- March 2, 2026
- April 6, 2026
- April 27, 2026
- May 18, 2026

Multilingual Learners (MLL) Advisory Group

The following individuals attended one or more MLL advisory group meetings:

- **Alberto Carrero**, Chelsea Public Schools
- **Cambria Russell**, Federation for Children with Special Needs
- **Christine Montecillo Leider**, UMass Lowell
- **Diana Santiago**, Massachusetts Advocates for Children
- **Erin Goldstein**, Worcester Public Schools
- **Helen Solórzano**, Massachusetts Association of Teachers of Speakers of Other Languages
- **Joyce Cardoza**, New Bedford Public Schools
- **Kellie Jones**, Brockton Public Schools
- **Marialuisa Di Stefano**, UMass Amherst
- **Meghan Chapman**, Federation for Children with Special Needs
- **Meg Burn**, Multistate Association for Bilingual Education
- **Phyllis Hardy**, Multistate Associate for Bilingual Education
- **Rania Caldwell**, Woburn Public Schools
- **Tatiana Lara Melendez**, Leominster Public Schools
- **Tony King**, Boston Public Schools
- **Yasuko Kanno**, Boston University

MLL Advisory Group meeting schedule:

- September 3, 2025
- October 9, 2025
- May 4, 2026
- June 2, 2026

Students with Disabilities (SWD) Advisory Group

The following individuals attended one or more SWD advisory group meetings:

- **Andrea Stolar**, Chicopee Public Schools
- **April Rist**, Ludlow Public Schools
- **Carla Jentz**, Massachusetts Administrators for Special Education
- **Elizabeth Becker**, Massachusetts Association of Approved Special Education Schools
- **Janine Solomon**, Massachusetts Advocates for Children
- **Jean Spera**, Cambridge Public Schools
- **Joanne Haley-Sullivan**, Massachusetts Organization of Educational Collaboratives
- **Pam Nourse**, Federation for Children with Special Needs
- **Ruth Diaz**, Federation for Children with Special Needs

SWD Advisory Group meeting schedule:

- August 28, 2025
- October 16, 2025
- April 29, 2026
- June 1, 2026

APPENDIX C: STATEWIDE SURVEY

To support the Statewide Graduation Council and solicit feedback from across the state, PCG distributed a statewide survey. Any resident of the Commonwealth could respond. The web-based survey was open from June 2, 2025 through June 30, 2025. The survey was available in six languages: Simplified Chinese, English, Haitian Creole, Brazilian Portuguese, Spanish, and Vietnamese. The statewide survey received 6,615 responses. The roles and demographics of respondents are detailed in Figure 15 through Figure 18.

Figure 15: Statewide Survey Respondents by Role and Demographics

		Number of Respondents	Percent of Respondents
Role⁷⁵	Student	393	6%
	Graduate	305	5%
	Parent/Caregiver	2,361	36%
	School-based Staff	3,129	47%
	District Staff	461	7%
	Partner ⁷⁶	441	7%
	Employer	69	1%
	Other	635	10%
Demographics	Respondents who speak a language other than English at home	983	15%
	Parents/Caregivers of children with disabilities ⁷⁷	798	12% (34% of parent/caregiver respondents)
	Students with Disabilities ⁷⁸	101	2% (14% of student and graduate respondents)
Race/Ethnicity⁷⁹	American Indian or Alaska Native	11	0.2%

⁷⁵ Respondents had the option to select multiple roles.

⁷⁶ The role of “Partner” included advocates, researchers, and respondents affiliated with community-based organizations.

⁷⁷ Respondents who selected the role of “Parent/Caregiver” were asked the question, “Are you a parent/caregiver of a child with a disability?”

⁷⁸ Respondents who selected the role of “Student” or “Graduate” were asked the question, “Do you have a disability?”

⁷⁹ Due to the low number of respondents, the data from respondents who identified as *American Indian or Alaska Native* or *Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander* has not been reported in disaggregated manner.

	Number of Respondents	Percent of Respondents
Asian	210	3%
Black or African American	210	3%
Hispanic or Latino	301	5%
Multi-Race, not Hispanic or Latino	94	1%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	6	0.2%
White	4966	75%
Did not disclose	817	12%

Figure 16: Respondents by Role

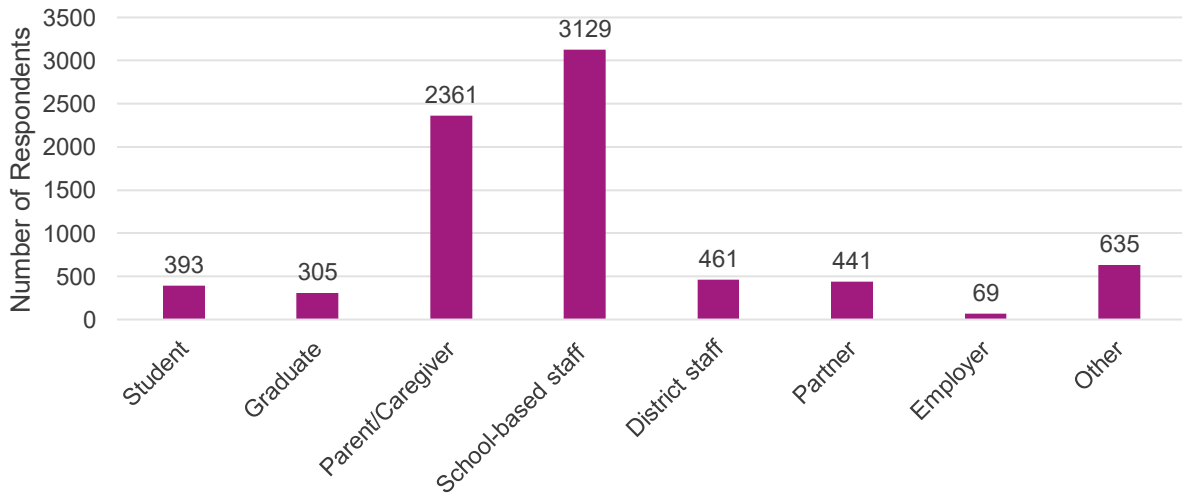


Figure 17: Respondents by Demographic

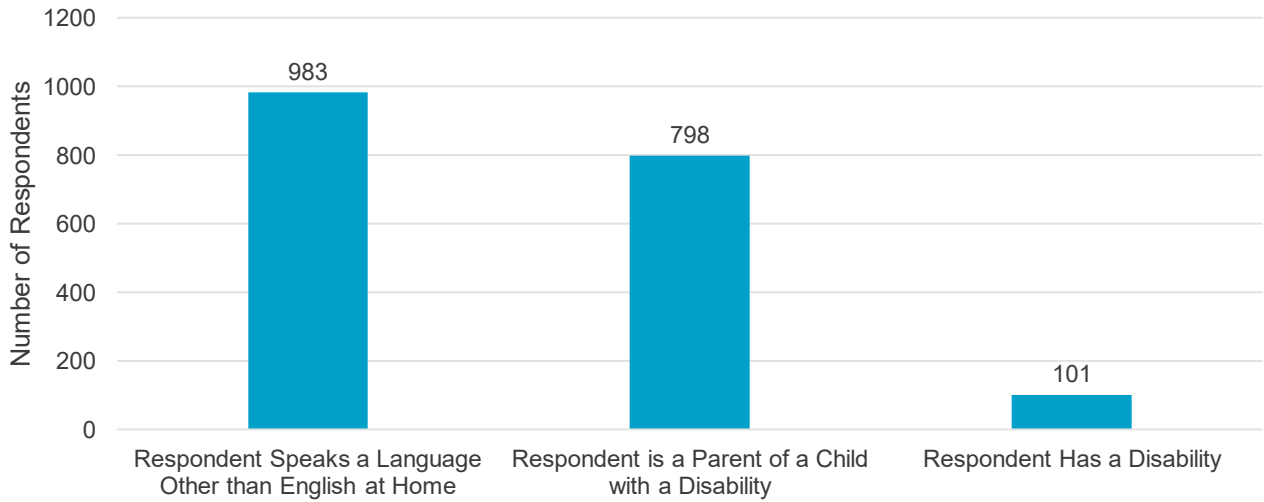


Figure 18: Respondents by Race/Ethnicity

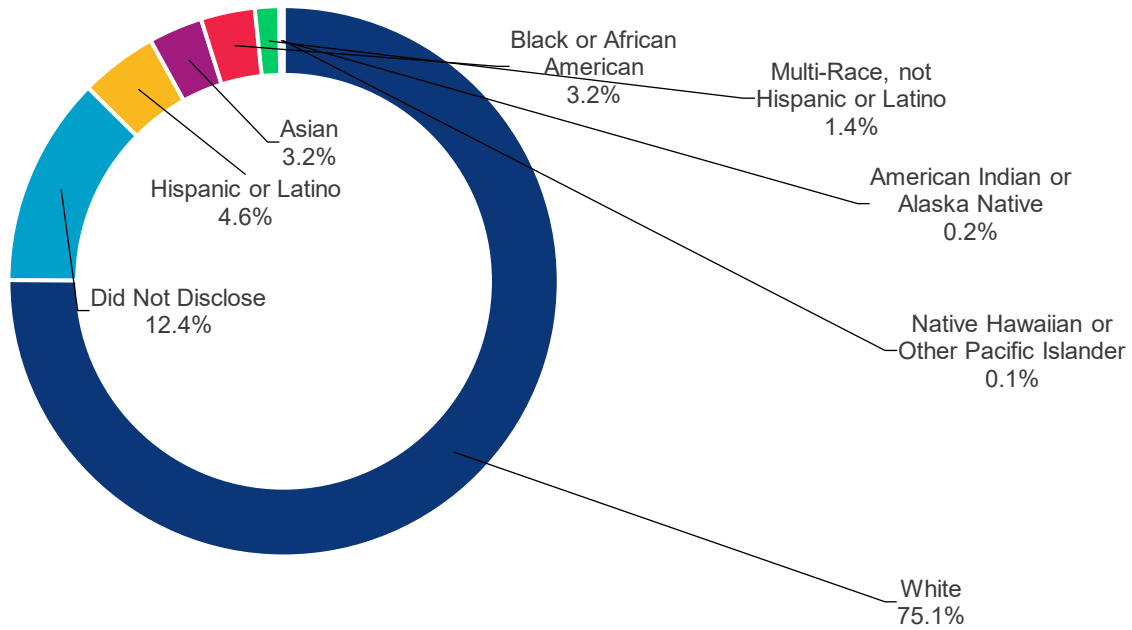
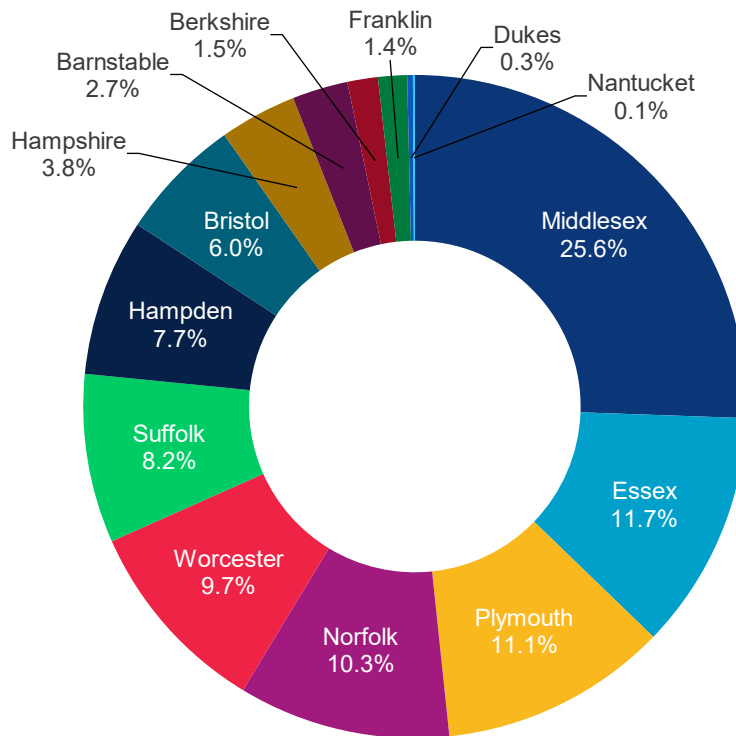


Figure 19: Respondents by County



Quantitative Summary of Responses

What do we want students to know and be able to do when they graduate high school?

Respondents were asked to rate the importance of various items based on the following statement:

All Massachusetts high school graduates should demonstrate the following knowledge and/or skills...

Rating options ranged from 1 (Less Important) to 5 (More Important).

Figure 20: “What Should Students Know and Be Able to Do?” by Role

What should students know and be able to do? (average rating)	All	Student	Graduate	Parent/ Caregiver	School- based staff	District staff	Partner	Employer
Communicate effectively verbally	4.7	4.6	4.7	4.7	4.7	4.8	4.7	4.8
Exhibit critical thinking	4.6	4.4	4.7	4.6	4.7	4.7	4.7	4.6
Interact respectfully with people from diverse backgrounds	4.6	4.4	4.6	4.5	4.7	4.8	4.6	4.5
Identify credible sources of information	4.6	4.2	4.7	4.5	4.6	4.6	4.7	4.7
Communicate effectively in writing	4.5	4.2	4.5	4.5	4.5	4.6	4.5	4.6
Collaborate with others	4.5	4.3	4.4	4.4	4.5	4.6	4.5	4.6
Read and understand complex texts	4.4	4.1	4.5	4.4	4.4	4.5	4.5	4.5
Be able to receive and apply feedback	4.4	4.3	4.3	4.3	4.4	4.4	4.3	4.4
Manage their time	4.4	4.4	4.2	4.4	4.4	4.3	4.1	4.3
Be digitally literate	4.3	4.1	4.3	4.3	4.3	4.3	4.3	4.3
Solve complex problems	4.3	4.1	4.3	4.2	4.3	4.4	4.3	4.2
Understand basic personal finance principles	4.3	4.3	4.4	4.5	4.4	4.4	4.3	4.5
Develop strategies to achieve their goals	4.2	4.1	4.1	4.3	4.2	4.3	4.2	4.2
Maintain healthy habits	4.2	4.4	4.1	4.2	4.2	4.3	4.1	4.1
Think creatively	4.2	4.1	4.1	4.2	4.2	4.3	4.2	4.2
Set goals	4.2	4.1	4.0	4.2	4.1	4.2	4.1	4.1

Participate in civic life	4.1	3.9	4.1	4.0	4.1	4.3	4.2	4.2
Analyze data	3.8	3.5	3.8	3.8	3.8	3.9	3.9	4.0
Conduct research	3.7	3.8	3.7	3.7	3.7	3.8	3.6	3.9
Engage with the arts	3.7	3.4	3.8	3.6	3.8	3.8	3.7	3.6

Figure 21: “What Should Students Know and Be Able to Do?” by Home Language and Disability Status

What should students know and be able to do? (average rating)	All	Home Language other than English	Parent of a Child with a Disability	Student /Graduate with a Disability
Communicate effectively verbally	4.7	4.7	4.6	4.7
Exhibit critical thinking	4.6	4.6	4.4	4.6
Interact respectfully with people from diverse backgrounds	4.6	4.6	4.5	4.6
Identify credible sources of information	4.6	4.5	4.5	4.7
Communicate effectively in writing	4.5	4.5	4.3	4.3
Collaborate with others	4.5	4.5	4.3	4.3
Read and understand complex texts	4.4	4.5	4.2	4.4
Be able to receive and apply feedback	4.4	4.4	4.3	4.3
Manage their time	4.4	4.5	4.4	4.2
Be digitally literate	4.3	4.3	4.2	4.3
Solve complex problems	4.3	4.4	4.0	4.2
Understand basic personal finance principles	4.3	4.4	4.5	4.4
Develop strategies to achieve their goals	4.2	4.4	4.3	4.2
Maintain healthy habits	4.2	4.4	4.2	4.2
Think creatively	4.2	4.3	4.1	4.2
Set goals	4.2	4.3	4.2	4.0
Participate in civic life	4.1	4.1	3.9	4.2
Analyze data	3.8	3.9	3.6	3.7
Conduct research	3.7	3.9	3.5	3.8
Engage with the arts	3.7	3.8	3.6	3.8

Figure 22: “What Should Students Know and Be Able to Do?” by Race/Ethnicity

What should students know and be able to do? (average rating)	All	Asian	Black or African American	Hispanic or Latino	Multi- Race, not Hispanic or Latino	White
Communicate effectively verbally	4.7	4.7	4.8	4.7	4.5	4.7
Exhibit critical thinking	4.6	4.7	4.7	4.7	4.6	4.6
Interact respectfully with people from diverse backgrounds	4.6	4.6	4.7	4.7	4.6	4.6
Identify credible sources of information	4.6	4.5	4.6	4.5	4.5	4.6
Communicate effectively in writing	4.5	4.5	4.7	4.5	4.5	4.5
Collaborate with others	4.5	4.5	4.5	4.4	4.4	4.5
Read and understand complex texts	4.4	4.4	4.6	4.4	4.4	4.4
Be able to receive and apply feedback	4.4	4.4	4.4	4.5	4.4	4.4
Manage their time	4.4	4.6	4.5	4.5	4.3	4.3
Be digitally literate	4.3	4.4	4.3	4.4	4.4	4.3
Solve complex problems	4.3	4.4	4.3	4.4	4.3	4.3
Understand basic personal finance principles	4.3	4.4	4.5	4.5	4.3	4.4
Develop strategies to achieve their goals	4.2	4.4	4.4	4.4	4.2	4.2
Maintain healthy habits	4.2	4.5	4.4	4.4	4.3	4.2
Think creatively	4.2	4.3	4.3	4.4	4.3	4.2
Set goals	4.2	4.3	4.4	4.4	4.1	4.1
Participate in civic life	4.1	4.0	4.2	4.1	4.0	4.1
Analyze data	3.8	4.0	3.9	3.9	3.8	3.8
Conduct research	3.7	3.9	3.9	4.0	3.8	3.7
Engage with the arts	3.7	3.6	3.8	3.8	3.8	3.7

What do you believe are the most important knowledge and/or skills for Massachusetts graduates to have? (Select up to 3)

Figure 23: “What Should Students Know and Be Able to Do?” (Percent of Respondents Who Selected as One of Top Three by Role)

What should students know and be able to do? (% of respondents who selected as one of top three)	All	Student	Graduate	Parent/ Caregiver	School- based staff	District staff	Partner	Employer
Communicate effectively verbally	41%	38%	35%	43%	41%	41%	36%	41%
Exhibit critical thinking	36%	28%	47%	35%	38%	36%	41%	38%
Read and understand complex texts	28%	19%	31%	27%	29%	24%	32%	38%
Communicate effectively in writing	25%	11%	24%	25%	26%	23%	24%	25%
Interact respectfully with people from diverse backgrounds	25%	30%	26%	22%	27%	30%	28%	19%
Collaborate with others	24%	27%	21%	22%	25%	31%	23%	23%
Understand basic personal finance principles	20%	24%	17%	26%	17%	16%	16%	16%
Identify credible sources of information	17%	10%	21%	15%	17%	14%	21%	20%
Solve complex problems	12%	12%	11%	11%	11%	14%	15%	19%
Be digitally literate	8%	8%	10%	8%	7%	5%	7%	6%
Participate in civic life	8%	6%	10%	6%	9%	9%	13%	7%
Manage their time	8%	20%	7%	9%	7%	6%	3%	4%
Develop strategies to achieve their goals	8%	7%	9%	10%	8%	7%	9%	6%
Maintain healthy habits	8%	16%	6%	8%	7%	7%	5%	3%
Think creatively	7%	13%	5%	7%	7%	9%	8%	7%
Be able to receive and apply feedback	6%	4%	7%	6%	6%	8%	4%	6%
Set goals	3%	6%	2%	5%	3%	4%	2%	7%
Engage with the arts	3%	4%	2%	3%	4%	5%	4%	0%
Analyze data	2%	5%	3%	2%	2%	3%	4%	4%
Conduct research	1%	4%	1%	1%	1%	1%	0%	1%

Figure 24: “What Should Students Know and Be Able to Do?” (Percent of Respondents Who Selected as One of Top Three by Home Language and Disability Status)

What should students know and be able to do? (% of respondents who selected as one of top three)	All	Home Language other than English	Parent of a Child with a Disability	Student /Graduate with a Disability
Communicate effectively verbally	41%	42%	42%	37%
Exhibit critical thinking	36%	31%	31%	40%
Read and understand complex texts	28%	31%	25%	19%
Communicate effectively in writing	25%	23%	23%	18%
Interact respectfully with people from diverse backgrounds	25%	30%	26%	33%
Collaborate with others	24%	21%	23%	14%
Understand basic personal finance principles	20%	19%	27%	23%
Identify credible sources of information	17%	12%	15%	28%
Solve complex problems	12%	14%	7%	8%
Be digitally literate	8%	7%	9%	8%
Participate in civic life	8%	7%	8%	12%
Manage their time	8%	10%	11%	12%
Develop strategies to achieve their goals	8%	9%	12%	7%
Maintain healthy habits	8%	9%	9%	9%
Think creatively	7%	8%	7%	9%
Be able to receive and apply feedback	6%	5%	7%	9%
Set goals	3%	5%	6%	2%
Engage with the arts	3%	3%	2%	6%
Analyze data	2%	3%	2%	2%
Conduct research	1%	2%	0%	2%

Figure 25: “What Should Students Know and Be Able to Do?” (Percent of Respondents Who Selected as One of Top Three by Race/Ethnicity)

What should students know and be able to do? (% of respondents who selected as one of top three)	All	Asian	Black or African American	Hispanic or Latino	Multi-Race, not Hispanic or Latino	White
Communicate effectively verbally	41%	36%	42%	41%	31%	42%
Exhibit critical thinking	36%	36%	39%	30%	48%	37%
Read and understand complex texts	28%	22%	35%	33%	31%	28%
Communicate effectively in writing	25%	19%	33%	21%	15%	25%
Interact respectfully with people from diverse backgrounds	25%	26%	26%	35%	29%	26%
Collaborate with others	24%	23%	16%	18%	23%	25%
Understand basic personal finance principles	20%	18%	24%	21%	17%	20%
Identify credible sources of information	17%	11%	10%	9%	19%	18%
Solve complex problems	12%	17%	13%	12%	14%	11%
Be digitally literate	8%	11%	8%	10%	4%	8%
Participate in civic life	8%	6%	9%	6%	7%	9%
Manage their time	8%	15%	8%	9%	9%	8%
Develop strategies to achieve their goals	8%	10%	10%	11%	7%	8%
Maintain healthy habits	8%	12%	6%	9%	9%	7%
Think creatively	7%	9%	4%	8%	13%	7%
Be able to receive and apply feedback	6%	5%	2%	5%	10%	6%
Set goals	3%	6%	5%	8%	3%	3%
Engage with the arts	3%	3%	3%	2%	2%	3%
Analyze data	2%	5%	1%	3%	3%	2%
Conduct research	1%	4%	0%	1%	2%	1%

What coursework and learning experiences should all students complete for college, career, and civic life?

Respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they agree with the following statement:

All Massachusetts high school graduates should be required to complete coursework in the following areas...
Rating options ranged from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree.

Figure 26: “What Coursework and Learning Experiences Should All Students Complete for College, Career, and Civic Life?” by Role

What coursework and learning experiences should all students complete for college, career, and civic life? (% Agree and Strongly Agree)	All	Student	Graduate	Parent/ Caregiver	School- based staff	District staff	Partner	Employer	Other
Personal Finance	93%	93%	91%	94%	92%	93%	91%	94%	94%
4 years of English Language Arts	92%	84%	92%	91%	94%	93%	95%	93%	95%
Civics	92%	78%	92%	91%	94%	93%	95%	93%	96%
3 years of History	87%	82%	88%	85%	89%	88%	89%	86%	93%
Health and Physical Education	87%	78%	86%	86%	89%	87%	86%	87%	91%
1 year of Arts	84%	74%	87%	82%	86%	86%	87%	84%	90%
Community service	83%	81%	78%	81%	85%	84%	82%	75%	86%
Work-based learning	81%	86%	75%	82%	80%	80%	79%	77%	79%
Career and technical education	80%	84%	74%	81%	79%	78%	75%	68%	78%

4 years of Math	80%	80%	80%	79%	80%	80%	80%	84%	81%
3 years of lab-based Science	79%	81%	82%	76%	80%	82%	75%	83%	82%
2 years of World Language	75%	73%	75%	71%	77%	76%	76%	74%	80%
College coursework (e.g., dual enrollment, early college)	58%	74%	50%	56%	55%	58%	59%	58%	60%

Figure 27: “What Coursework and Learning Experiences Should All Students Complete for College, Career, and Civic Life?” by Home Language and Disability Status

What coursework and learning experiences should all students complete for college, career, and civic life? (% Agree and Strongly Agree)	All	Home Language other than English	Parent of a Child with a Disability	Student /Graduate with a Disability
Personal Finance	93%	93%	95%	95%
4 years of English Language Arts	92%	93%	90%	86%
Civics	92%	93%	91%	90%
3 years of History	87%	88%	82%	90%
Health and Physical Education	87%	87%	84%	78%
1 year of Arts	84%	85%	81%	81%
Community service	83%	83%	81%	76%
Work-based learning	81%	81%	84%	83%
Career and technical education	80%	79%	83%	76%
4 years of Math	80%	79%	74%	71%
3 years of lab-based Science	79%	79%	70%	77%
2 years of World Language	75%	74%	59%	66%
College coursework (e.g., dual enrollment, early college)	58%	56%	52%	56%

Figure 28: “What Coursework and Learning Experiences Should All Students Complete for College, Career, and Civic Life?” by Race/Ethnicity

What coursework and learning experiences should all students complete for college, career, and civic life? (% Agree and Strongly Agree)	All	Asian	Black or African American	Hispanic or Latino	Multi-Race, not Hispanic or Latino	White
Personal Finance	93%	92%	96%	94%	88%	93%
4 years of English Language Arts	92%	89%	95%	90%	88%	93%
Civics	92%	85%	95%	89%	88%	93%
3 years of History	87%	85%	84%	81%	87%	89%
Health and Physical Education	87%	88%	90%	88%	90%	88%
1 year of Arts	84%	86%	82%	82%	85%	85%
Community service	83%	87%	89%	88%	81%	84%
Work-based learning	81%	86%	93%	90%	81%	81%
Career and technical education	80%	86%	91%	90%	76%	79%
4 years of Math	80%	88%	88%	81%	72%	79%
3 years of lab-based Science	79%	87%	81%	79%	77%	79%
2 years of World Language	75%	83%	79%	83%	81%	75%
College coursework (e.g., dual enrollment, early college)	58%	67%	78%	81%	55%	56%

How should students demonstrate their learning and college, career, and civic readiness?

Respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they agree with the following statement:

All Massachusetts high school graduates should be required to demonstrate their learning and readiness for college, career, and civic life through...

Rating options ranged from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree.

Figure 29: “How Should Students Demonstrate Their Learning and College, Career, and Civic Readiness?” by Role

How should students demonstrate their learning and college, career, and civic readiness? (% Agree and Strongly Agree)	All	Student Graduate	Parent/ Caregiver	School- based staff	District staff	Partner	Employer	Other	
Portfolio of Work	87%	85%	88%	85%	87%	87%	88%	84%	90%
Seal of Financial Literacy	74%	77%	69%	73%	73%	75%	71%	78%	78%
Capstone Project	72%	71%	73%	67%	75%	79%	76%	68%	73%
Industry-Recognized Credential	68%	71%	63%	65%	70%	73%	69%	70%	68%
Seal of Biliteracy	57%	65%	53%	48%	61%	61%	62%	65%	59%
Assessment or Test	51%	53%	49%	48%	48%	50%	49%	73%	56%

Figure 30: “How Should Students Demonstrate Their Learning and College, Career, and Civic Readiness?” by Home Language and Disability Status

How should students demonstrate their learning and college, career, and civic readiness? (% Agree and Strongly Agree)	All	Home Language other than English	Parent of a Child with a Disability	Student /Graduate with a Disability
Portfolio of Work	87%	87%	85%	85%
Seal of Financial Literacy	74%	73%	72%	71%
Capstone Project	72%	72%	64%	76%
Industry-Recognized Credential	68%	67%	64%	66%
Seal of Biliteracy	57%	54%	45%	59%
Assessment or Test	51%	49%	36%	39%

Figure 31: “How Should Students Demonstrate Their Learning and College, Career, and Civic Readiness?” by Race/Ethnicity

How should students demonstrate their learning and college, career, and civic readiness? (% Agree and Strongly Agree)	All	Asian	Black or African American	Hispanic or Latino	Multi-Race, not Hispanic or Latino	White
Portfolio of Work	87%	91%	91%	88%	82%	87%
Seal of Financial Literacy	74%	76%	86%	80%	71%	73%
Capstone Project	72%	76%	84%	77%	76%	72%
Industry-Recognized Credential	68%	74%	78%	76%	63%	67%
Seal of Biliteracy	57%	67%	74%	80%	59%	56%
Assessment or Test	51%	68%	51%	55%	48%	50%

Qualitative Summary of Responses

The survey's open-ended questions were optional and included the following:

- *What requirements should be included in a new statewide graduation policy?* (3,821 responses)
- *What requirements should not be included in a new statewide graduation policy?* (3,382 responses)
- *Please provide any additional comments or feedback you have related to the development of a new statewide graduation requirement.* (1,949 responses)

The following section names the key topics that emerged in the responses to these questions. A few quotes that exemplify each theme have been included.

What requirements should be included in a new statewide graduation policy?

All Respondents

Topics have been ordered by frequency, with the most frequently named topic (financial literacy and life skills) listed first.

Financial Literacy and Life Skills

- "Students should be able to [use] money, make change, budget real-life expenses. Math should be applicable to real-life use."
- "Basic life skills. Money Management, (Banking. Loans, Taxes) Cooking, Home and Auto maintenance, how to live on your own."
- "Creating a series of Financial Literacy courses that empower our young students to become financially literate in personal and entrepreneurship finance."

Core Academic Competencies

- "The statewide graduation policy MUST at a minimum require the prerequisite number of math, ELA, science, history, and foreign language classes that are required to enter a state university."

- "Students should have to pass a basic literacy and math skills assessment – whatever level most texts are these days, should be the level they have to pass."
- "Students need to be proficient in the core classes."

Assessment Methods

- "Students should have options for how to demonstrate their competency."
- "A portfolio or body of work representing a student's knowledge along with grades versus a 'one-size fits all' test."
- "Students complete a capstone or portfolio demonstrating their ability to tackle real-world problems by integrating knowledge from science, humanities, math, and the arts."
- "Portfolio assessment that provides evidence of goals met at each grade level."
- "Capstone project or portfolio showing use of skills to solve a problem or enhance their community."

Civics and Community Engagement

- "Teach students about government and civic duty."
- "Community service project or work experience to build basic skills like teamwork, collaboration, problem solving."
- "Civic engagement: interaction with communities - participating in bettering a situation for another human being."

College and Career Readiness

- "High school graduation requirements should focus on core competencies needed for careers and postsecondary education."
- "Skill(s) development with real world application to one or more fields that will secure entry level employment upon graduation."
- "In addition to academic requirements that ensure proficiency with standards and a capstone that demonstrates competency with core district competency goals, each student should have a post-graduation plan and at least 1 micro credential certifying their proficient learning in 1 choice area of special focus."

Standardized Testing

- "Standardized test. No one likes data that shows our students aren't doing well, but removing it is just hiding the truth."
- "There needs to be some standardized element to ensure equity across school districts and avoiding districts passing students through who are not ready to graduate."

Critical Thinking and Media Literacy

- "Demonstrated ability to evaluate information and identify misinformation."
- "Ability to understand and interpret statistics, determine fact from opinion (fake news) [and] author's bias."
- "Requirements that combat the erosion of student attention spans and abilities in reading, writing, and critical thinking/info analysis."

Arts Education

- "More than one year of Arts requirement. The Arts satisfy 21st Century Skills that other subjects might not. Music is identified in ESSER as a core subject."
- "Two years of music, grow the arts and allow for more student interest to build community in schools!"

World Language Requirement

- "World Language Study, but make it effective. Students should be able to actually use the language!"
- "At least 4 years of a second language. One that is prominent in their area."
- "Students should take at least 3 years of a second language and demonstrate they have achieved an intermediate level by the time they graduate from high school."

Physical Education and Health

- "Health education including sex ed."
- "Physical education and health science are essential to focus on every semester to stress the importance of making healthy choices and getting exercise."
- "Health- physical, mental, social, financial- for personal safety and community safety net."

Attendance

- "Attendance should be highly considered as a graduation requirement. The state needs to hold students and families to a standard that students are required to be at school, on time and stay at school for the entire day."
- "Attendance should have reasonable limits similar to what a job post high school would have."

Students

Student responses were aligned with the overall themes named above. Students especially emphasized civic and community service, life skills, and postsecondary readiness, as exemplified in the quotes below.

Life Skills

- "Everyone in life whether that is attending college or not should be able to have the basis knowledge of how to do their own taxes and just learn how to do things that you do as a human being."
- "Having a mandatory class that shows teens how to write taxes, do daily stuff like organizing. And a mandatory mental health class that focuses on the kids mental health because that is a major issue even if kids don't talk about it."
- "Should take a home economics class, or a class on financial literacy."
- "A few things that should be included consist of: - being able to do real world things (properly spending, living within their means, learning how to do taxes, learning how to take out a mortgage, etc.)"

- “Completion of a course or workshops on diversity, equity & inclusion, and cross-cultural communication. - BASIC LIFE SKILL COURSE (e.g cooking, cleaning, money management, taking out your 1st debit/credit card, banking basics, etc).”

Postsecondary Readiness

- "Career & College Readiness Plan."
- "More guidance on how to find work, and the system of applying to college/how to get into a good one. We should get guidance for college before junior year so we can actually prepare."
- "Internship, research project, or industry-related work."
- "Students should be able to pursue their interests and meet the graduation requirement at the same time."
- "At least college prep knowledge in math, science, english and history for those intending to go to college, as well as basic knowledge of civics and current events."

Civic and Community Engagement

- "Community Service. Co-op work or internships or some work experience. Financial Literacy."
- "Taking required classes, community service."
- "community service, helping the community."
- "I think at least a little civic engagement should be required if you're old enough."

What requirements should not be included in a new statewide graduation policy?

All Respondents

The most common theme across responses is strong opposition to standardized testing as a graduation requirement.

Standardized Testing

- "Not all students test well even though their grades indicate competency and decent to high grades."
- "A standardized test does not measure all a student has learned or show their commitment to learning and being successful."
- "No standardized tests!"
- "Standardized testing as the only means for measuring learning and readiness."
- "Testing and memorization of facts. People have phones to identify information at the tip of the fingers, memorization is not a skill requirement of the next generation."

Rigid Graduation Requirements

- "A one-size-fits-all academic track can block students from pursuing career and technical education."
- "There should be multiple, equally rigorous ways that students can meet graduation requirements."
- "The requirements should not be so rigid that it excludes students with neurodiverse mindsets."
- "Assessments and rigid guidelines that don't offer some choices for the diversity of learners."

Excessive Math and Science Requirements

- "Four years of math seems excessive."
- "Upper-level math and science that are unnecessary for the students' career path."

Mandatory Foreign Language Requirements

- "A second language is nice but should not be required for graduation."
- "I don't know that we need to have two full years of a language."

Physical Education

- "I have never understood the focus on physical education."
- "PE if a student participates in a sports team."

Art

- "Although art and music classes should remain an option, they should not be a graduation requirement, nor should they replace more important classes, such as civics or math."
- "Arts because not everyone has an interest. In large high schools, students are sometimes randomly placed in art electives due to demand and class size. It should not be forced."

Concerns Over Equity and Access

- "Graduation policies should promote equity, readiness, and access."
- "Policies must be inclusive and reflective of the rich diversity in Massachusetts communities."
- "Requirements should not become barriers to all students earning a diploma."

Students

Students' perspectives were largely consistent with the overall themes. When reflecting on what should not be included in a statewide graduation policy, students in particular emphasized coursework that does not align with their future goals, as exemplified in the quotes below.

Coursework that Does Not Align with Future Goals

- "A new statewide graduation policy should not include arbitrary course mandates that don't serve all pathways. Mandating this would force students to take classes that don't align with their career plan. This would not aid them in their journey."
- "Students should not be forced to study subjects for three or four years of high school that do not relate to their career goals, though those subjects should still be available to those who do."
- "I don't think an art requirement should be put into place due to the fact that there is obviously very limited room in a schedule, so if art (which is very subjective and difficult for a lot of people) is taking up a spot, it can take one away from another class that is more useful to a future career, such as science - I know that for me, I have to take multiple science classes per year for the medical career I would like to pursue, so an art requirement would be more harmful than good."

What additional comments or feedback do you have related to the development of a new statewide graduation requirement?

All Respondents

Equitable Resources

- "Equal investment in ALL our children throughout the commonwealth to assure that they are provided the financial and material tools so that each may exhibit the skills to be successful citizens."
- "There needs to be equitable funding tied to actual need. There is a bill proposed from the Senate (Lewis S.400) that if approved would establish a Chapter 70 Review Commission. A regular, independent review — conducted every year or every two years — could ensure that graduation requirements and funding formulas evolve together."

Equitable Access and Support

- "Please make sure there are pathways for all types of learners to be able to graduate; especially, multilingual, special needs, and global majority students."
- "Please involve organizations that represent our special education and disability community."
- "Students with disabilities should be allowed to receive a diploma taking courses that are appropriate for the students level of learning. Allow flexibility for students to receive both a high school diploma and attend a transition 18-22 program. Look at states that already offer this such as Connecticut for examples."
- "Consider the needs of English language learners and newcomer students."
- "A new statewide graduation requirement presents a powerful opportunity to reimagine what success looks like for all students—not just those who thrive in traditional academic settings."

Local Control

- "Allow districts to be creative within the framework and standards (ex 4 years of English could be semester based classes that fit curriculum and meet state standards)"
- "Trust schools to meet the competitive standards."
- "Let local school districts set their own standards and give them the state funding to do so. Eliminate unfunded state education mandates such as required courses to take."
- "The problem with the MCAS was that it was the same for every city/town. To develop a new statewide grad requirement would not honor the differences in demographics across the state. Each city/town is unique and therefore they should determine what students need to do in order to be prepared to further their education or enter the workforce."

Students

There were no unique themes from students in response to this survey item.

APPENDIX D: SUMMARY REPORT OF LISTENING SESSION FEEDBACK

In order to gather community input related to the establishment of new statewide graduation requirements, the state held eight listening sessions, including:

- Five in-person sessions across the state (Taunton, Worcester, Somerville, Holyoke, and Barnstable)
- Two virtual listening sessions
- One student-only virtual listening session

Figure 32: Listening Session Dates and Attendees

Session (Date)	Number of Attendees
Taunton (4/10/25)	19
Worcester (5/1/25)	19
Somerville (5/28/25)	44
Virtual Session #1 (6/3/25)	127
Holyoke (6/5/25)	42
Barnstable (6/9/25)	19*
Virtual Session #2 (6/25/25)	72
Student Listening Session (6/30/25)	42

*Note. The number of participants at the Barnstable session reflects only those who made public comments, not total attendees.

Each listening session began with a brief overview of the work of the Statewide Graduation Council before asking participants to consider the following four questions:

1. *What do we want students to know and be able to do when they graduate high school?*
2. *What coursework and learning experiences should all students complete for college, career, and civic life?*
3. *How should students demonstrate their learning and college, career, and civic readiness?*
4. *How do we ensure that all students are meeting the same high standards for graduation?*

Below is a curated selection of quotes from the eight graduation requirement listening sessions. PCG has reviewed and analyzed all session notes to identify recurring

themes and trends that emerged from educators, students, families, and community members. For each theme, representative quotes have been chosen to illustrate the context and perspectives in which these ideas were raised.

Student Agency and Personalized Learning

“Students were given options – you can create a portfolio, you can meet this performance-based assessment, or you can do the sit-down standardized test. The student, in conversation with a counselor/teacher, made that decision. It is an idea that feels so obvious. Students were picking things that were challenging and interesting to them and picking things that were strengths to them.” –Teacher, Holyoke Listening Session

“Let students follow pathways. We do this in the alternative education world, for example I have a student who is interested in forensics, and all of her coursework incorporates forensics.” – Teacher and Parent, Barnstable Listening Session

“Have you considered two tracks for education like they do in Europe? MyCAP actually does that – it gives students the opportunity to strive for high standards on their own path.” – Career Education Coordinator, Barnstable Listening Session

“We could instead be thinking about more holistic frameworks of what we could do, schools could design courses built on the passions of teachers because you get a better end product for the students. You can have a course that studies forensics but touches on algebraic thinking.” – Teacher, Barnstable Listening Session

“The purpose of high school is to empower our students to thrive in the career they choose. We have MyCAP that has a couple bullets about college and career readiness. We have crowded it out with minutes and seat time. Let’s be student centered – what do students need from us?” – Former Administrator, Holyoke Listening Session

“I like the idea of a student-driven capstone project that is worked on over time that is supported by MyCAP, supported by coursework, supported by internships.” –High School Teacher and Parent, Worcester Listening Session

“I noticed that the students in CTE courses had to put away a lot of time for those classes, which could be used for AP classes (Stats, US History, etc.). Because they are making that commitment, is there anyone way that students can earn their CD that is relevant to their CTE courses?” – Student, Virtual Listening Session

The Role of Assessment

“Testing takes time away from project-based learning and deep learning. The focus should be on authentic assessment and trusting our educators. Particularly for students with disabilities testing can provoke anxiety. A move away from testing could provide an opportunity for spontaneity in education.” – Teacher, Virtual Session

“Performance assessments are feasible and worthwhile and are supported by evidence. Teachers who participated in institutes and portfolio pilot overwhelmingly indicated that it was worth the effort. While comparability across schools requires more work, it can be done, maybe in a more equitable way.” – Advocate, Virtual Session

“It should be a portfolio of all of the subjects in school, not just the ones currently assessed in school. A portfolio goes with them as something to give to a future college or future employer. Will cost less.” – Librarian, Holyoke Listening Session

“As a special ed teacher, we have the portfolios that we could do but there should in general be a different way of assessing our students. We implement and differentiate our instruction, but our testing is one way for everyone. We need different pathways for students to show their competency.” – Special Education Teacher, Barnstable Listening Session

“I have seen high stakes standardized testing my whole career and I’m grateful that the high stakes have been pulled out. I really believe that if we are to give all students meaningful experience in public education, we need to look at different pathways with different measurements to see if students have really achieved and grown during their time in K-12. A portfolio and capstone are great things to have for students.” – Math Teacher, Somerville Listening Session

“Let’s not be afraid to use performance assessments. Let’s dare to innovate, but let’s start with the students and design around that.” – Former Administrator, Holyoke Listening Session

“In my personal opinion, MCAS should be required for the benefit of teachers’ accountability. Not necessarily for students, but to ensure that students are being taught what they need to be taught. In my sophomore year, my school admin changed a lot, and I didn’t have a math teacher for more than half the year, and then I had to take the 10th grade MCAS. MCAS is one way to hold teachers accountable and ensure teachers are teaching what they should be, and at the level that they should be. If not the MCAS, there should be some other way to ensure teachers are teaching what they should be at the rate that they should be.” – Student, Virtual Listening Session

Real-World Readiness and Life Skills

“A lot of students, once they leave high school, are stranded. They don’t have any help or guidance handling bills or working jobs. I think that if there was a class that could support students dealing with financial issues and show them how to build a bank account, etc. I think it’s important.” – Student, Holyoke Listening Session

“Students are begging for life skills – taxes, driving, rentals, financial literacy, interviewing, viewing how to vote and be an educated active voter, how to make a doctor’s appointment... Young people deserve to feel empowered to thrive, not just survive.” – Community Organizer, Virtual Listening Session

“Fourth graders requesting a financial analyst to teach them... City projects – critical thinkers, problem solvers, etc. Imagine students working with district leaders, government officials, etc. by working with non-profit organizations, helping with legislation, and then teaching that to another group.” – Teacher, Virtual Listening Session

“My child wants a summer job. One of the requirements is to upload a resume. My kid doesn’t know anything about a resume...I had to teach him. He doesn’t use Microsoft Word and Excel at school. I want to see him using those things more.” – Parent, Worcester Listening Session

“I think there should be something in civic affairs. A lot of kids in my grade don’t understand how elections work. Even APUSH or AP Government, kids stray away from these classes.” – Student, Student Listening Session

“Community service should be a graduation requirement. It teaches people a lot about their community and helping others. Being able to serve the community helps everyone. It’s accessible for most people to be able to do.” – Student, Student Listening Session

Equity, Inclusion, and Diverse Learners

“Capstone project seems to be huge in a lot of towns. Even our students with disabilities can engage with it. More and more kids who need language-based instruction... This capstone will help alleviate some of that piece because you are taking in the auditory, the kinetic, the visual. It’s their strength.” – Special Education Teacher, Worcester Listening Session

“MCAS has helped close the divide for students by creating a consistent measure of learning and aligning standards to instruction... If local competency determination pathways are introduced, how do we make sure that they are being implemented with fidelity and regularly checked?” – Guidance Counselor, Barnstable Listening Session

“Many of these students who were on track to earn a certificate of attainment are now going to get a diploma and services will end. DDS [Department of Developmental Services] will not provide services until they are 22, so there will be a 4-year gap for these students.” – Transition Specialist, Holyoke Listening Session

“Expectations of students with disabilities has to be at the forefront of this process. The kids who would participate in surveys and on the council are students who would be comfortable with the norms of this session. We’re failing the kids who don’t feel like their voices matter and don’t have the social-emotional skills to share.” – Educational Leader, Virtual Listening Session

Modern Learning and Curriculum Innovation

“AI is making students less literate. Math literacy and financial literacy help students understand credit cards and putting money away.” – Math Teacher, Holyoke Listening Session

“An effective method of ensuring climate literacy is through a graduation requirement.” – Student, Somerville Listening Session

“Digital literacy, I know we have the digital literacy standards. I think we have forgotten about them... We assume everyone knows because they have their phones. You need to walk seniors in high school through how to use a spreadsheet.” – Principal, Worcester Listening Session

“The curriculum was designed in a world where information was not at our fingertips. Much more critical thinking and digging into the why.” – Advocate, Virtual Listening Session

“As students are entering a world that is increasingly reliant on AI, cybersecurity seems to be something that is right up there with financial literacy.” – Researcher, Virtual Listening Session

“Many feel unprepared after high school and want preparation in financial literacy and self-advocacy. Many youth mentioned that they don’t have that support or lack the resources to find that support. As youth take on those responsibilities, schools should try to step up and teach these skills via mentorship, even after high school. Young people deserve to feel empowered to thrive, not just survive.” – Recent Graduate, Barnstable Listening Session

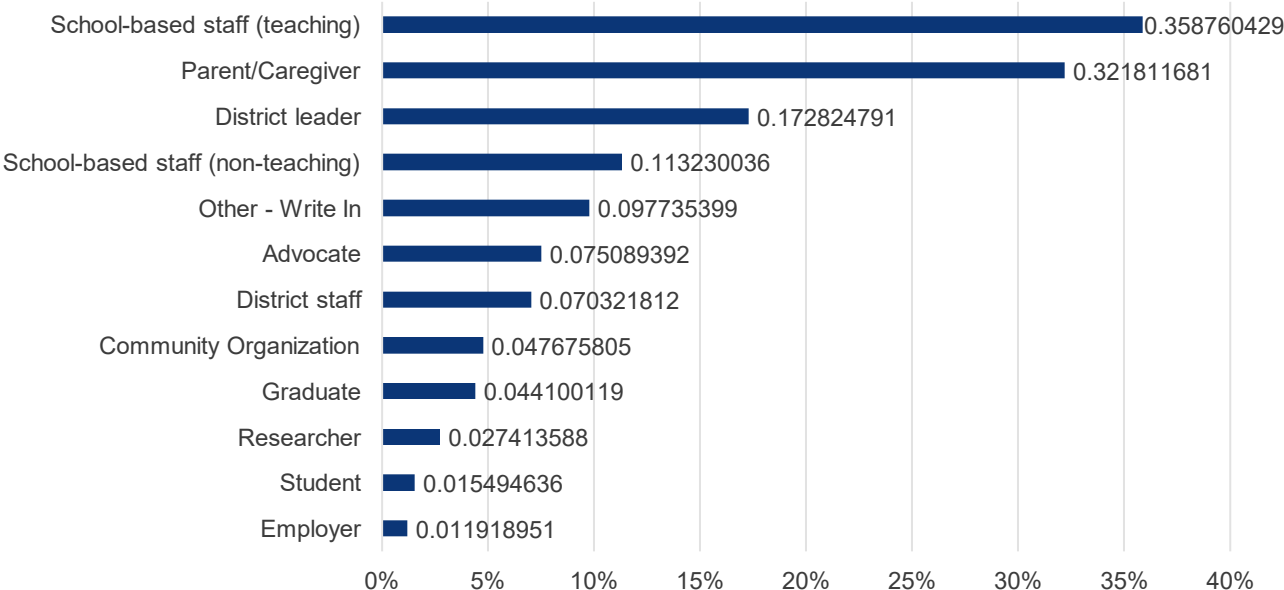
APPENDIX E: PUBLIC INPUT FORM SUMMARY

PCG launched a Public Input Form in February 2026 to gain feedback from the general public on the initial recommendations included in the Interim Report. Participants were presented with the initial statewide graduation framework and each recommendation related to coursework, mastery, and college, career, and civic readiness. Participants were asked the following two questions:

- What else should be considered as the additional details of this recommendation are defined?
- What suggestions do you have for how to successfully implement the considerations listed above and/or any additional considerations you noted?

As of May 1, 2026, the form received 839 responses. As the graph below shows, the most common response groups were school-based staff (teaching) (36%) and parents/caregivers (32%). Many participants selected more than one role category (e.g., parent and school-based staff). When isolating roles, 23% of respondents were solely school-based staff (teaching), 14% were solely parents/caregivers, and 13% were only district leaders.

Figure 33: Public Input Form Respondents



The following themes emerged across responses in the Public Input Form:

- **Need for flexibility and multiple pathways to graduation:** Respondents voiced the need for flexible graduation requirements to support diverse learners, alternative programs of study, and multiple pathways aligned to both college-bound and workforce-bound students.
- *“There needs to be multiple ways for kids to graduate. Some children have difficulties on tests so there needs to be different ways to show competence.”*
- *“One size does not fit all”*

- **Equity, access, and implementation capacity are central concerns:** Respondents highlighted the need for funding, staffing, and professional development to support high-quality and equitable implementation of new requirements, with particular concern for rural, small, and demographically diverse districts, as well as special populations.
- *“Schools that are already under-resourced will need targeted state investment, or this framework will produce very different results depending on your zip code.”*
- *“The state must provide continuous professional development at the district and school level to ensure coherence, alignment and the intended output is being monitored properly to ensure student success.”*

- **Graduation requirements emphasizing real-world skills and readiness:** Respondents advocated for graduation frameworks centered on life skills, civics, career readiness, digital and AI literacy, media literacy, and health education to prepare students for postsecondary life. Many participants specifically emphasized a desire for financial literacy but differed on delivery models, including standalone course, integration into existing coursework, or more flexible local approaches.
- *“In addition to financial literacy, students should have technological literacy: digital literacy (including AI tools and media literacy) and foundational computer science skills (data, how the internet works, simple programming skills, problem-solving experiences using a computer, etc.)”*
- *“Additionally, students need preparation for today’s world, including AI and digital literacy skills so they can evaluate information critically.”*

- **Desire for authentic, performance-based assessment:** Respondents supported capstones, portfolios, project-based learning, and applied demonstrations to meaningfully show mastery, while also emphasizing the need for clear rubrics, statewide guidance, and calibration.
- *“Portfolios are an excellent tool to demonstrate mastery of concepts, particularly for students with disabilities. They should not be limited to some courses required for HS graduation.”*
- *“Allow multiple pathways to demonstrate mastery. Offer retake opportunities, performance-based alternatives, and portfolio components that allow students to show learning growth over time rather than relying on a single high-stakes assessment.”*

APPENDIX F: NATIONAL LANDSCAPE OF GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

In 2025, PCG researched and summarized high school graduation requirements across 49 states and the District of Columbia, excluding Massachusetts. In this analysis, any reference to “states” includes the District of Columbia. Graduation requirements were identified from state-level department of education websites and relevant state-specific legislation. A full list of sources used for this section is available in Appendix G.

Coursework

As many states define course credits differently, all coursework requirements were converted into years for ease of comparison. Massachusetts was not included in this research, although the coursework required for MassCore (Figure 34) is highlighted when applicable.

Figure 34: MassCore Course Requirements

Subject	Years Required	Additional Notes
English Language Arts (ELA)	4 years	
Mathematics	4 years	Includes Algebra II or Integrated Math
Science	3 years	Science courses must be lab-based
History/Social Studies	3 years	Includes U.S. History and World History
World Language	2 years	2 years of the same World Language
Arts	1 year	
Physical Education	As required by law	
Additional core courses	5 years	Students are required to complete the equivalent of 5 additional year-long core courses.

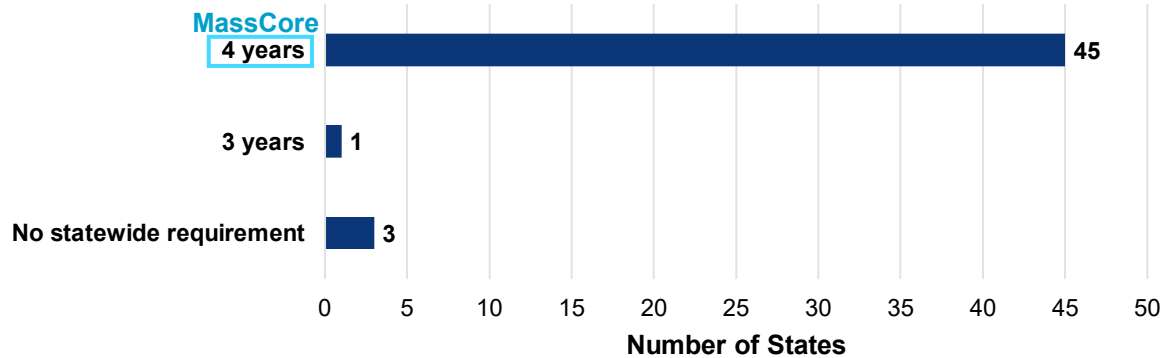
Source: Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

Forty-six states included coursework in English, Mathematics, Social Studies, and Science as part of their graduation requirements. Connecticut had statewide course requirements in Humanities (including English, Social Studies, Civics, and Arts) and in STEM (including Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math).⁸⁰ Vermont, Colorado,

⁸⁰ “Required public school program of study.” The Office of Legislative Research. Published July 8, 2022. Retrieved August 18, 2025. <https://www.cga.ct.gov/2022/rpt/pdf/2022-R-0145.pdf>

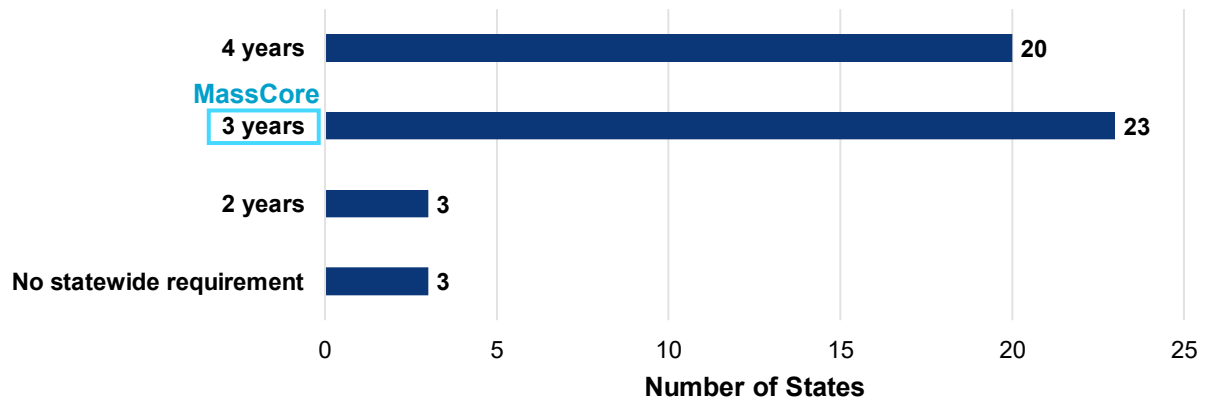
and Pennsylvania did not have statewide course requirements for high school graduation.

Across the four core subjects (English Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, and History/Social Studies), 20 states had **coursework requirements that meet or exceed the requirements of MassCore**. The following 11 states required the same core coursework as MassCore: Arizona, Arkansas, Delaware, Florida, Kentucky, Maryland, Michigan, Ohio, Rhode Island, South Carolina, and Tennessee. The following nine states had core course requirements that exceed MassCore: Alabama, District of Columbia, Georgia, Indiana, Louisiana, Mississippi, New Mexico, North Carolina, and West Virginia.

Figure 35: English Language Arts Course Requirements by State

Note. Data retrieved from state agency websites. Connecticut has a Humanities requirement that may be inclusive of English Language Arts coursework but does not have a specific English Language Arts requirement; Connecticut has been excluded from this count.

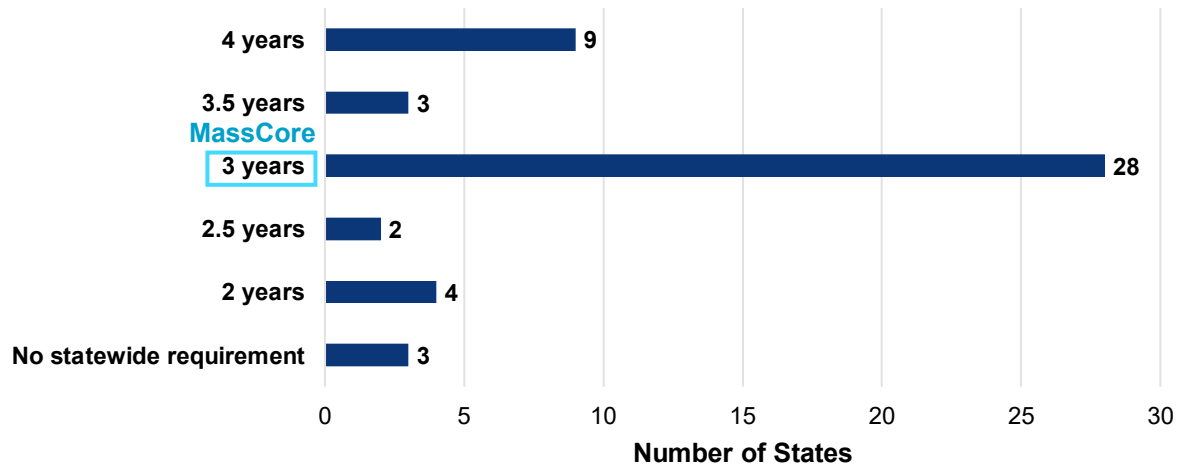
As shown in Figure 35, 46 states required coursework in English for graduation. Of these 46 states that had statewide requirements, **only one (California) required three years of English** instead of four. This requirement aligns with the MassCore recommendation of 4 years.

Figure 36: Mathematics Course Requirements by State

Note. Data retrieved from state agency websites. Connecticut has a STEM requirement that may be inclusive of Mathematics but does not have a specific Mathematics requirement; Connecticut has been excluded from this count.

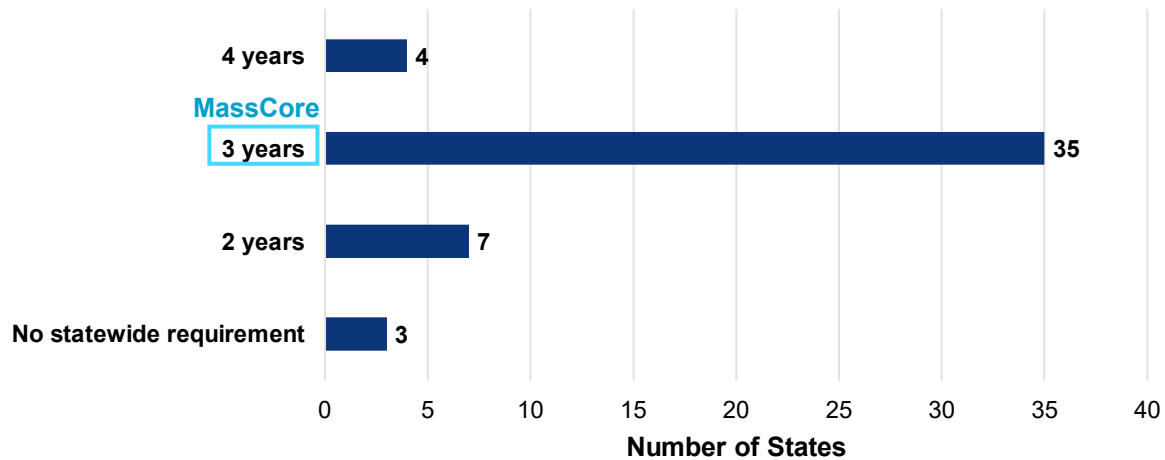
As shown in Figure 36, 43 states required three or four years of Mathematics. Thirty-four states specified which Math courses (such as Algebra I or Geometry) or content areas must be covered to meet the graduation requirement. **Thirteen states required Algebra II (or an equivalent course). Twenty states required four years of Mathematics**, which is the MassCore recommendation.

Figure 37: History and/or Social Studies Course Requirements by State



Note. Data retrieved from state agency websites. Connecticut has a Humanities requirement that may be inclusive of History/Social Studies but does not have a specific History/Social Studies requirement; Connecticut has been excluded from this count.

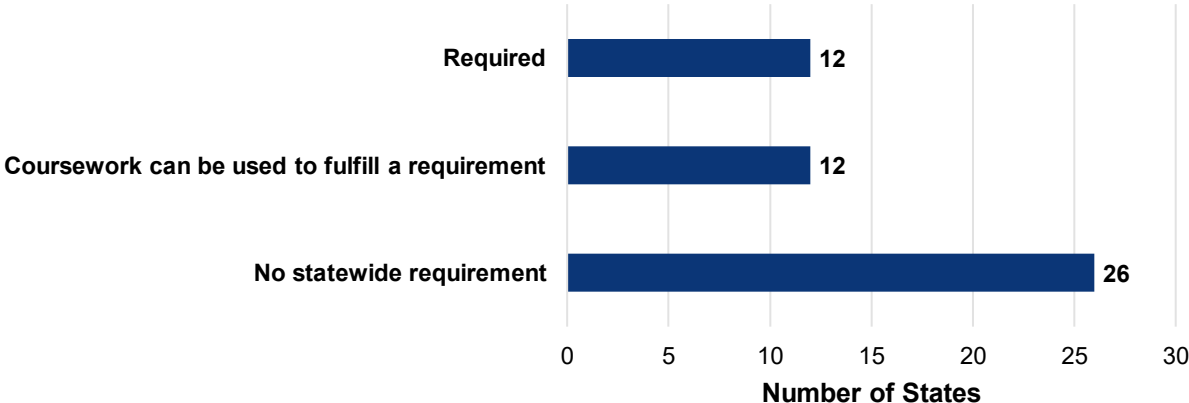
As displayed in Figure 37, **28 states required three years of Social Studies or History**, which aligns with the MassCore recommendation. Thirty-five states specified courses required within their broader Social Studies requirement, such as U.S. History, Government, World History, Civics, Economics, and Geography. **Twenty-one states required students to complete Civics coursework and/or pass a Civics exam.** Civics was typically a standalone credit requirement or had to be completed within Social Studies credits.

Figure 38: Science Course Requirements by State

Note. Data retrieved from state agency websites. Connecticut has a STEM requirement that may be inclusive of Science but does not have a specific Science requirement; Connecticut has been excluded from this count.

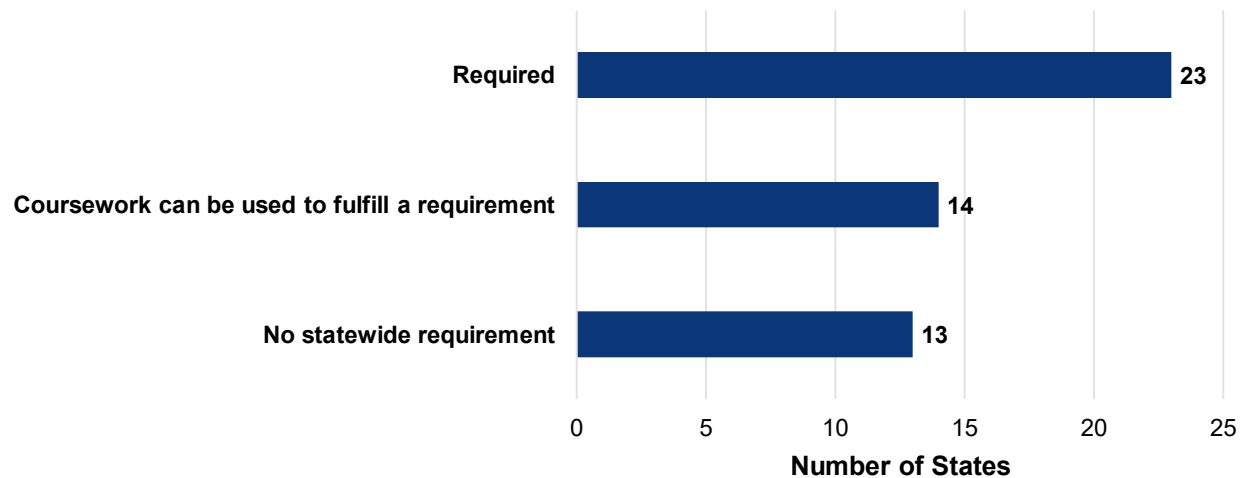
As highlighted in Figure 38, **35 states required students to complete three years of Science** to graduate high school, which matches MassCore’s guidelines. Thirty-two states articulated specific provisions regarding Science coursework. Of those 32 states, 25 states specified what Science coursework (such as Biology, Life Science, Physical Science, Chemistry, and Earth/Space Science) students must complete to meet the requirement. Sixteen states had a requirement that students complete lab-based Science courses.

Figure 39: World Language Course Requirements by State



Note. Data retrieved from state agency websites.

As shown in Figure 39, **12 states required students to complete World Language coursework**, and 12 states included World Language coursework as one option for meeting a requirement. Of the 12 states that required World Language coursework, **seven states required MassCore’s recommended two years of World Language coursework.**

Figure 40: Art Course Requirements by State

Note. Data retrieved from state agency websites.

As highlighted in Figure 40, **23 states required students to complete Art coursework** for high school graduation, and **14 states included Art coursework as an option for meeting a graduation requirement**. Of the 23 states that required students to complete Art coursework, 19 states have requirements that match or exceed MassCore’s recommended one year of Art.

Many states had **a course requirement that allows students to complete either World Language, Career and Technical Education (CTE), or Arts coursework**. For example, California required students to complete one year of either Art, World Language, or CTE coursework.

Beyond the coursework recommended by MassCore, **11 states required a Digital Literacy or Computer Science course** for high school graduation. Additionally, **23 states required a Financial Literacy or Personal Finance course** for high school graduation.

Mastery

Some states included assessments in their graduation requirements. While the majority of states required students to pass an assessment to graduate high school in the early 2000s, many states have shifted away from this requirement in recent years.⁸¹

Figure 41: Table of Mastery Requirements by State

End-of-Course Assessments (7)	Assessment can be used to fulfill requirement (7)	Exit Exams (4)
Florida	Alabama	Florida
Louisiana	Colorado	New Jersey
Maryland	Indiana	Oklahoma
Mississippi	Kansas	Pennsylvania
Tennessee	Nevada	
Texas	Ohio	
Virginia	Washington	

Note. Data retrieved from state agency websites. New York was excluded from this count as it is currently phasing out its assessment requirement.

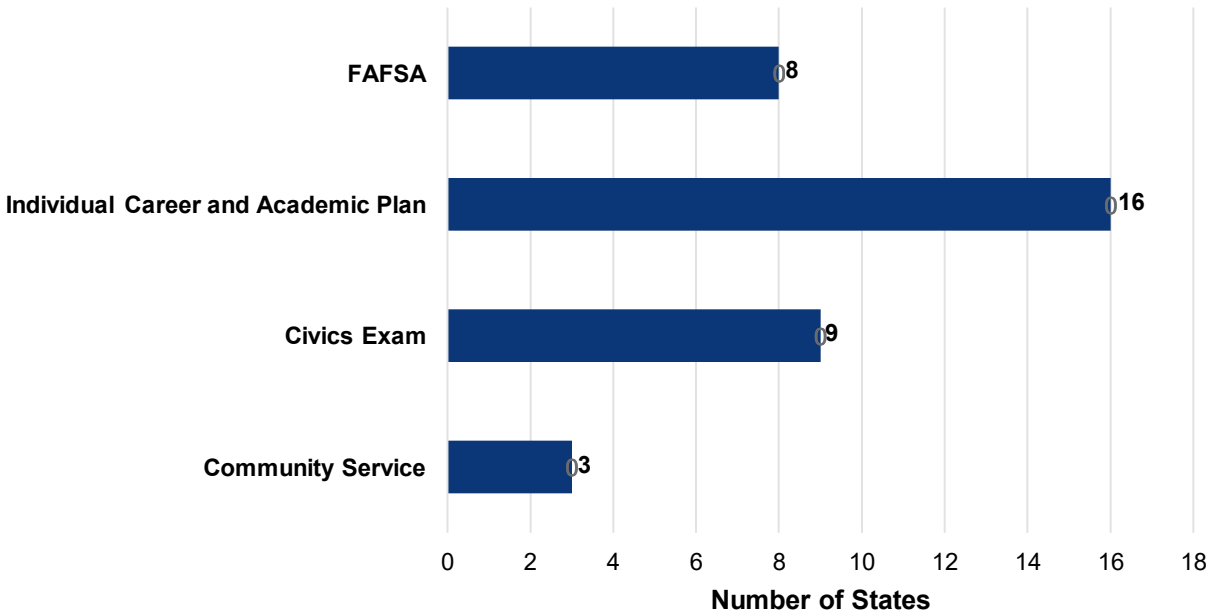
As shown in Figure 41, **seven states required students to demonstrate mastery on one or more end-of-course assessment to graduate high school.** Additional states included end-of-course assessments within required courses (courses that students must pass to graduate high school). **Seven states included other assessments** (e.g., SAT/ACT, AP/IB, or ASVAB) as one option for students to demonstrate mastery. **Four states required students to demonstrate mastery on an exit exam to graduate high school.** Florida required students to pass both end-of-course assessments and an exit exam. New York was excluded from this analysis as the state is currently phasing out its assessment requirement.

⁸¹ "Is this the end of the high-stakes high school graduation exam?" National Education Association. Published October 30, 2024. Retrieved September 17, 2025. <https://www.nea.org/nea-today/all-news-articles/end-high-stakes-high-school-graduation-exam>

College, Career, and Civic Readiness

Beyond coursework and assessments, several states had additional graduation requirements focused on students' college, career, and civic readiness.

Figure 42: College, Career, and Civic Readiness Requirements



Note. Data retrieved from state agency websites.

As shown in Figure 42, **16 states required students to complete individual career and academic plans (ICAPs)** to graduate from high school. The MyCAP model, which is not currently required statewide but is utilized by many districts, is Massachusetts' equivalent of the ICAP. **Nine states required students to pass a Civics exam, and eight states required students to submit the FAFSA** (Free Application for Federal Student Aid). Finally, three states (Arkansas, District of Columbia, and Maryland) required students to complete a certain number of **community service** hours to graduate.

APPENDIX G: REFERENCES FOR NATIONWIDE LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

Alabama

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Florida

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Georgia

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Iowa

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Kansas

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Kentucky

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Louisiana

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Maine

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Maryland

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Missouri

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South Dakota

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Texas

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Wisconsin

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Wyoming

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APPENDIX H: MASSCORE ALIGNMENT WITH HIGHER EDUCATION

Figure 43 presents a side-by-side comparison of MassCore and the minimum required coursework for admissions into four-year state colleges and universities in Massachusetts.

Figure 43: MassCore Components and Minimum Four-Year State Admissions Standards

Course	MassCore	Minimum 4-Year State Admissions Standards
English Language Arts	4 units	4 courses
Mathematics	4 units; including completion of algebra II or the integrated math equivalent. A math course during senior year is recommended for all students. Students may substitute 1 unit of Computer Science that includes rigorous mathematical concepts and aligns with the Digital Literacy and Computer Science (DLCS) standards for a mathematics course.	4 courses (including algebra I and II and geometry or trigonometry, or comparable coursework) including math in senior year. Computer Science courses may be considered a mathematics course based on the inclusion of rigorous mathematical concepts and topics.
Science	3 units of lab-based science; coursework in technology/engineering courses may also count for MassCore science credit. Students may substitute 1 unit of Computer Science that includes rigorous scientific concepts and aligns with the DLCS standards for a laboratory science course.	3 courses of lab-based science (drawn from natural science and/or physical science and/or technology/engineering). Computer Science courses may be considered a science course based on the inclusion of rigorous science concepts and topics.

Course	MassCore	Minimum 4-Year State Admissions Standards
History & Social Science	3 units, including U.S. History and World History	2 courses, including U.S. History
World Language	2 units of the same language	2 courses of the same language
Physical Education	As required by law	-
Arts	1 unit	-
Additional Core Courses	5 units	2 courses (from the above subjects or from the arts and humanities or computer sciences)

APPENDIX I: COMPETENCY DETERMINATION AND LOCAL GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS DATA SUMMARY

PCG conducted an analysis to examine how Massachusetts high schools align graduation requirements with MassCore and how districts define mastery within Competency Determination (CD) policies. PCG analyzed two datasets collected by DESE through the GEM\$ platform in 2025:

- Local Graduation Requirements (403 high schools; 97% of Massachusetts high schools)
- CD Policy Data (301 LEAs; 99% of Massachusetts LEAs)

Key Findings

Subject	MassCore Units Required	Percent of High Schools Meeting or Exceeding MassCore Number of Required Units in Local Graduation Requirement
English Language Arts	4 Units	97%
Mathematics	4 Units	79%
Science	3 Units of lab-based science	92%
History and Social Studies	3 Units	89%
World Language	2 Units	70% ⁸²
Arts	1 Unit	66% ⁸³
Additional Core Courses	5 Units	88%

Many schools require MassCore subjects.

- Three quarters of Massachusetts high schools (74%) require the core MassCore subjects (ELA, Math, Science, and History).
- Massachusetts schools meet or exceed each MassCore subject requirement at a rate of 66% or higher.

⁸² World Language percent excludes wall-to-wall CTE schools as CTE students may opt out of World Language and still fulfill MassCore.

⁸³ Art percent excludes wall-to-wall CTE schools as CTE students may opt out of Art and still fulfill MassCore.

Based on existing MassCore completion rates and local MassCore-aligned requirements, between 82 and 85% of students in the class of 2029 are projected to complete MassCore core subject units by SY2029.

- This includes 60% of all students in the class of 2029 that are required to complete MassCore and 21-25% of students not required to complete MassCore, but who are projected to complete MassCore nonetheless.

Schools' MassCore Gaps are Driven by Math, World Language, and Art.

- Of the core subjects, Math is the biggest gap: 79% of schools meet Math MassCore units, while 89% meet History, 92% meet Science, and 97% meet ELA.
- Larger gaps exist in World Language (70% of schools meet MassCore World Language requirement) and Art (66%).
- 24% of schools fall just one subject short of meeting MassCore.

School context matters.

- Large high schools are less likely to meet MassCore and show the largest math gaps.
- Schools with higher proportions of students of color and higher proportions of high-needs students (students with disabilities, low-income students, and English learners) are more likely to require MassCore.

EOC assessments are the most common type of mastery; 73% of districts require an EOC assessment, 69% of districts offer a portfolio, and 46% offer a capstone.

- Mastery differs by school type. Charter schools, urban districts, and districts with lower proportions of English learner students are less likely to offer an EOC, portfolio, or capstone.



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