

REIMAGINING HIGH SCHOOL

Reimagining Readiness

Interim Report of the

Statewide Graduation Council

DECEMBER 2025

Reimagining High School

Reimagining Readiness

*Interim Report of the
Statewide Graduation Council*

December 2025

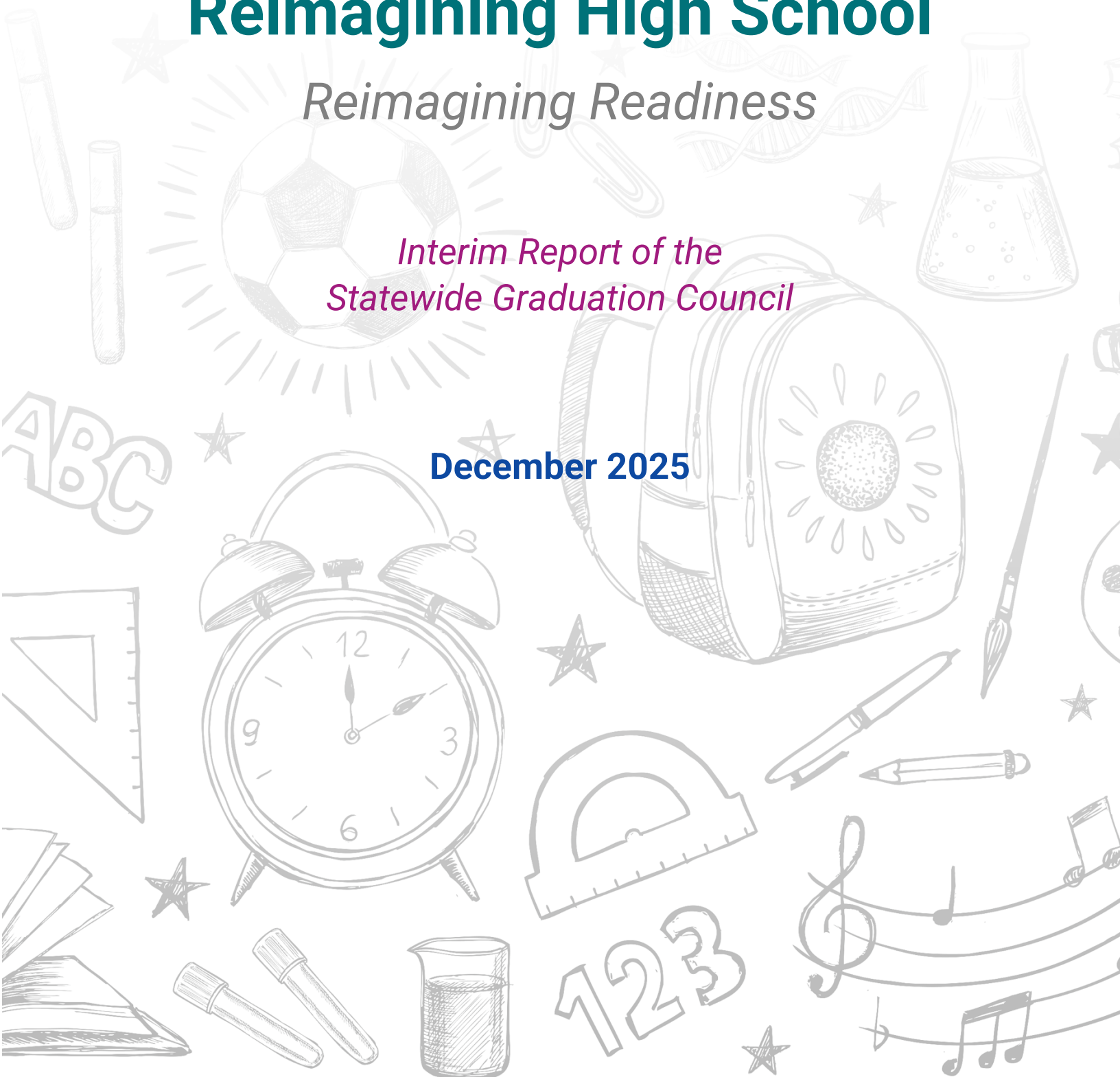


TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	4
Executive Letter from Co-Chairs	4
Overview of Executive Order 639 and its Objectives	5
Purpose of the Statewide Graduation Council and the Interim Report.....	6
Summary of Recommendations	6
Overview of Stakeholder Engagement Efforts	8
Overview of Local and National Graduation Requirements Research.....	9
BACKGROUND & CONTEXT	10
Rationale for a Statewide Graduation Requirement	10
Conceptual Framework & Guiding Questions	10
VISION OF A MASSACHUSETTS GRADUATE	12
Defining What it Means to be a Massachusetts Graduate.....	12
Desired Competencies and Skills	12
RECOMMENDATIONS AND RATIONALE.....	13
Program of Study	15
Hybrid Model for Assessing Mastery	24
End-Of-Course Assessments	24
Capstones and Portfolios.....	26
MyCAP (My Career and Academic Plan)	29
FAFSA or MASFA	31
Financial Literacy	33
Seals of Distinction	35
Conclusion.....	37
NEXT STEPS	37
Timeline and Process for Finalizing Recommendations.....	37
APPENDICES.....	38
Appendix A: Methodology	39
Appendix B: Assessment of Local Graduation Requirements	40
Appendix C: National Landscape of Graduation Requirements.....	58

Appendix D: Statewide Graduation Council Membership..... 66

Appendix E: Statewide Survey 68

Appendix F: MassCore Alignment with Higher Education..... 94

Appendix G: Summary Report of Listening Session Feedback..... 96

Appendix H: References for Nationwide Landscape Analysis 101

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

EXECUTIVE LETTER FROM CO-CHAIRS

Dear Governor Healey and Legislative Colleagues:

With the passage of Ballot Question 2 in November 2024, Massachusetts has an opportunity to update what it means to graduate from a public high school in Massachusetts prepared for today's workforce and postsecondary education opportunities. Through [Executive Order 639](#), Governor Healey established the K-12 Statewide Graduation Council to lead a bold, collaborative effort to take on this work. As secretary of education and commissioner of elementary and secondary education, we have the great honor of co-chairing this effort.

We are leading with urgency to deliver recommendations for a rigorous, uniform, and equitable graduation requirement that reflects our shared commitment to preparing all students—across zip codes, identities, and backgrounds—for college, career, and civic life.

Since the creation of this Council, we have listened to students, families, educators, employers, and community leaders tell us about their vision for a Massachusetts diploma. With a diverse group, we conducted extensive stakeholder engagement, compiled research, and developed the [Vision of a Massachusetts Graduate](#)—which outlines the knowledge, skills, and dispositions every graduate should possess. This report also presents initial recommendations for a new statewide graduation requirement grounded in the values of equity, opportunity, and self-determination for students.

We remain committed to a collaborative and inclusive process. The Council will continue to seek input from communities across the state as we refine our recommendations and work toward a final report in June 2026. Our aim is to develop a graduation framework that honors the diversity of our students and schools, supports innovation, upholds Massachusetts' legacy as a national leader in education, and keeps all postsecondary doors open for our graduates.

We are grateful for the partnership and dedication of all Council members and the stakeholders who have contributed to this important work. Together, we are laying the foundation for a structure that prepares every student for success.

With respect for the continued work ahead,

Dr. Patrick Tutwiler
Secretary of Education

Pedro Martinez
DESE Commissioner

OVERVIEW OF EXECUTIVE ORDER 639 AND ITS OBJECTIVES

In Governor Maura Healey's 2025 State of the Commonwealth Address, the governor announced that she was directing a K-12 Statewide Graduation Council that would include teachers, colleges, employers, and students to develop recommendations for a permanent, high standard high school graduation requirement. This Council followed the voters' decision in November 2024 to move away from MCAS as the graduation requirement.

"We'll evolve to a new Massachusetts model for high school excellence that best serves our children. And we'll match high standards with great opportunities – like the Early College and job training programs that give students a leg up on their next step."

- Governor Healey in her State of the Commonwealth Address

Following her Address, on January 17, 2025, Governor Healey signed Executive Order No. 639, formally establishing the K-12 Statewide Graduation Council (Council) to advise the Governor and Legislature on the development of a rigorous, uniform, and equitable high school graduation requirement for Massachusetts. The order reflects the administration's commitment to ensuring that all students receive a high-quality education that prepares them for college, career, and civic life.

This Council and work build on the Healey-Driscoll Administration's "Reimagining High School Initiative," which aims to make certain that Massachusetts students are prepared for college or careers when they graduate high school. Through this, the administration has expanded access to career-connected educational opportunities, including through Career Technical Education programs, Early College, Innovation Career Pathways, and My Career and Academic Plan (MyCAP).

The K-12 Statewide Graduation Council is composed of a broad and diverse group of stakeholders, including state education leaders, legislators, union representatives, educators, students, parents, higher education officials, and members of the business and nonprofit communities. Key objectives outlined in the order include:

- "Engage in regional listening sessions to gather feedback from across the state directly from various stakeholders including students, families, educators, administrators, school support staff, higher education experts, the business community, and the general public;
- Conduct a literature review of research and best practices in other states and countries;

- Conduct an assessment of local graduation requirements across the state to determine the current levels of variation; and
- Consider key questions such as what Massachusetts students should know and be able to do before they graduate, including through potential course requirements and/or examinations, and how students should demonstrate their achievements in ways that accurately reflect their skills and knowledge.”¹

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

PURPOSE OF THE STATEWIDE GRADUATION COUNCIL AND THE INTERIM REPORT

Co-chaired by Secretary of Education Patrick Tutwiler and Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education Pedro Martinez, the Council has been charged with “studying and making recommendations on a new statewide graduation requirement, including but not limited to the role of assessment, the potential for differentiated pathways... and the completion of additional experiences that demonstrate civic, college, and career readiness.”² Through stakeholder input, research, and policy review, the Council advises the co-chairs on recommended updates to graduation requirements that reflect the diverse needs and aspirations of students across the state.

This interim report serves to provide a progress update on the Statewide Graduation Council’s work. It summarizes the Council’s stakeholder engagement activities, research, and initial recommendations. The final report is to be submitted in June 2026 and will present the Council co-chairs’ comprehensive recommendations for a new statewide graduation requirement, informed by continued stakeholder engagement, additional research, and further refinement of the initial recommendations, with an aim to support equitable and meaningful outcomes for all Massachusetts students.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

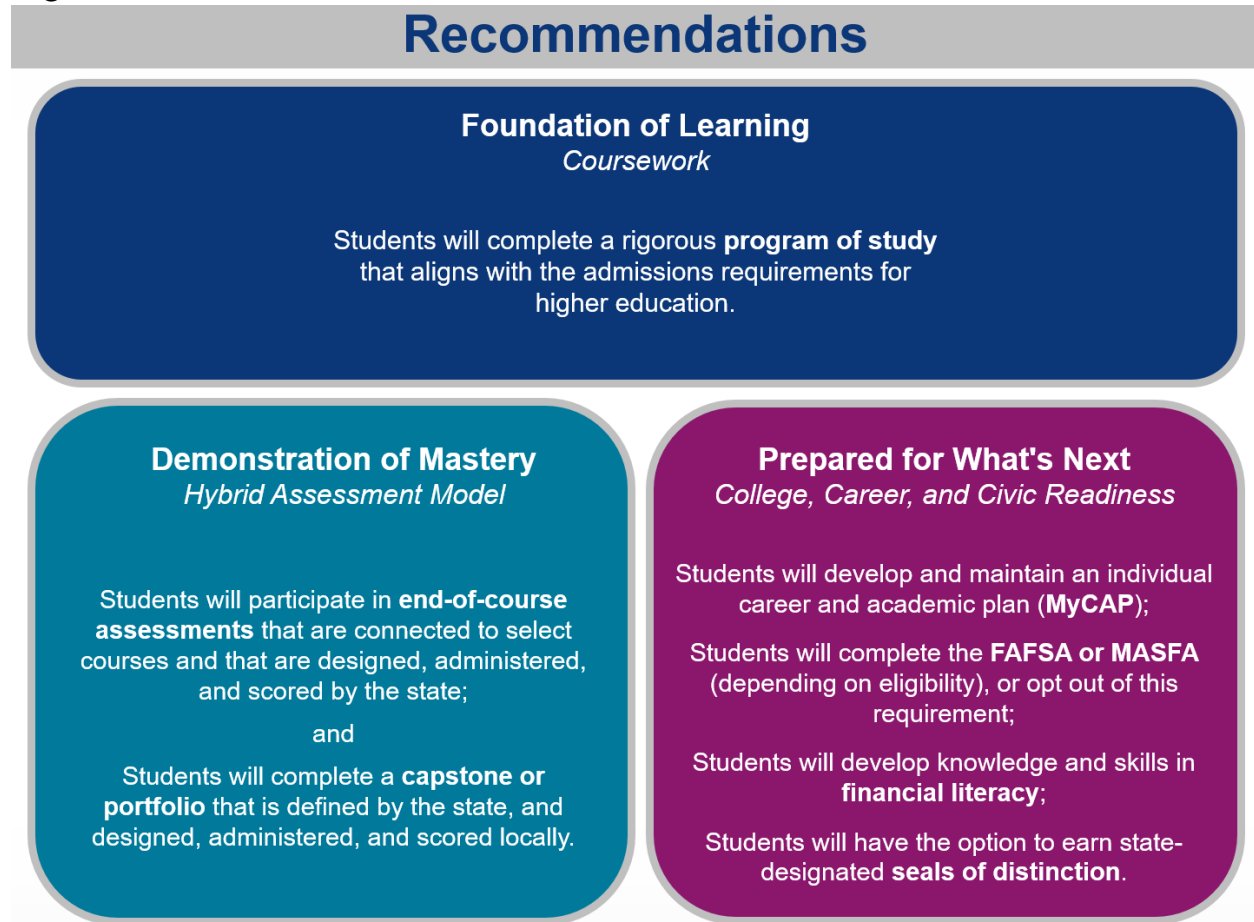
The Council co-chairs present the following set of initial recommendations for a new graduation requirement, which seek to support all Massachusetts students in acquiring, demonstrating, and applying the knowledge and skills that will lead to success in college, career, and civic life. The recommendations will continue to be built out in the months ahead and additional stakeholder engagement activities will be conducted before drafting and submitting a final report in June 2026 that provides a detailed outline for how to implement the recommendations. Further context, including the

¹ Healey, Maura. “No. 639: Establishing a K-12 Statewide Graduation Council.” Mass.gov. Published January 17, 2025. Retrieved October 3, 2025. <https://www.mass.gov/executive-orders/no-639-establishing-a-k-12-statewide-graduation-council>

² Healey, Maura. “No. 639: Establishing a K-12 Statewide Graduation Council.” Mass.gov. Published January 17, 2025. Retrieved October 3, 2025. <https://www.mass.gov/executive-orders/no-639-establishing-a-k-12-statewide-graduation-council>

rationale for these recommendations and the key implementation considerations to be assessed and refined, is included in the *Recommendations and Rationale* section of this report.

Figure 1: Recommendations



These seven elements (program of study, end-of-course assessments, capstones or portfolios, MyCAP, FAFSA/MASFA, financial literacy, and seals of distinction) are intentionally designed to form a cohesive and comprehensive framework that supports student success in college, career, and civic life. The rigorous program of study helps students build a strong academic foundation, while end-of-course assessments offer a consistent measure of academic achievement and help maintain high expectations across all districts. Capstones and portfolios provide deeper opportunities for students to demonstrate mastery of content, show their creativity, and develop real-world problem-solving skills.

Complementing these academic components, MyCAP empowers students to set goals, reflect on their progress, and personalize their educational journey, fostering agency and future planning. Completing FAFSA or MASFA helps raise awareness for families

about accessing financial resources for postsecondary education, addressing barriers to college entry. Financial literacy education equips students with essential life skills for managing personal finances, supporting long-term stability and independence. Finally, the option to earn state-designated seals of distinction empowers students to pursue and be recognized for their passions and achievements, promoting self-motivation and excellence. Together, these seven elements create a balanced system that values academic rigor, practical skills, personalized planning, and equitable outcomes for all students, no matter what their chosen path is after high school.

OVERVIEW OF STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT EFFORTS

Ongoing feedback has been collected from Council members via the monthly Council meetings that began in March 2025, and the Council has also sought input from their respective constituent groups throughout the process. Additionally, the following stakeholder engagement activities have been conducted statewide:

- **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.
- **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.
- **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 district and 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 state.
- **Advisory Groups.** Two advisory groups have been convened to provide additional perspective from Special Education and English Learner advocacy groups. Each advisory group has had two sessions to share direct input with the Council co-chairs.

For a more detailed overview of stakeholder engagement activities see *Appendix A: Methodology*.

OVERVIEW OF LOCAL AND NATIONAL GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS RESEARCH

As stated in Executive Order No. 639, the Council has been tasked with assessing and researching graduation requirements both within and beyond Massachusetts.³ Accordingly, the Council conducted research to analyze trends in high school graduation requirements across local districts and across states nationwide, along with a review of best-practice literature related to high school graduation requirements, which have informed the recommendations. The results of these activities can be found in *Appendix B: Assessment of Local Graduation Requirements* and *Appendix C: National Landscape of Graduation Requirements*.

The assessment of local graduation requirements (*Appendix B: Assessment of Local Graduation Requirements*) provides a detailed summary of Massachusetts school districts' graduation requirements, drawing on a sample of 120 districts collected through survey completion and supplemental independent research. The assessment examines the elements and variations in local graduation policies, including required coursework, capstone projects, portfolios, community service, and alignment with the state's MassCore standards. The analysis also highlights innovative practices across district types and explores the integration of districts' Portrait of a Graduate competencies.⁴

The national landscape analysis of graduation requirements (*Appendix C: National Landscape of Graduation Requirements*) synthesizes research on the impact of graduation policies on postsecondary success, reviews national trends, and profiles emerging strategies such as flexible course requirements, mastery options, and multiple pathways. The analysis includes a comparative overview of graduation requirements across U.S. states. It emphasizes the importance of rigorous coursework, varied demonstrations of mastery, and readiness for college, career, and civic life.

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

⁴ A Portrait of a Graduate (or Vision of a Graduate) is a framework outlining the skills, competencies, and qualities a school, district, or state aims for its graduates to embody.

BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

RATIONALE FOR A STATEWIDE GRADUATION REQUIREMENT

A statewide graduation requirement is essential for advancing equity and excellence in Massachusetts. Without a uniform standard, students across the state may face significantly different expectations and opportunities depending on their district, which can reinforce existing disparities and gaps in student outcomes. Establishing a consistent, high bar for all students supports their access to the experiences and preparation needed to succeed in college, career, and civic life.

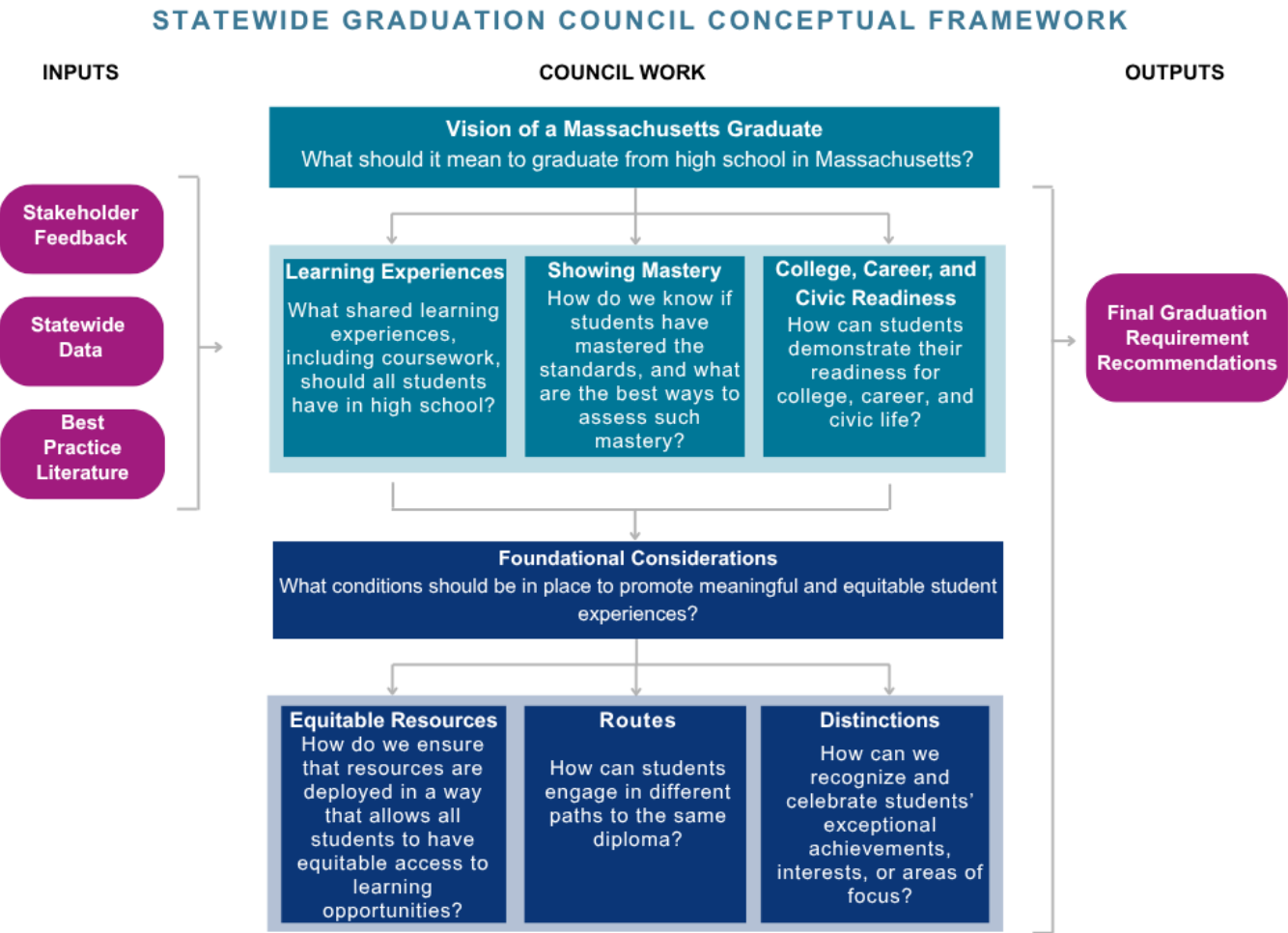
Additional benefits of a statewide graduation requirement include mobility, consistency, accountability, and transparency for students and families. When graduation standards are uniform across districts, families who relocate for work, housing, or other personal reasons are not set back by differing local requirements. This consistency supports smoother transitions for all learners. A clear statewide graduation requirement also promotes an understanding for students, families, educators, and administrators of what is expected of all for graduation. This shared understanding enables meaningful comparisons across districts and fosters a culture of continuous improvement.

Ultimately, a statewide graduation standard, and its associated benefits, help to build public trust and confidence, where a Massachusetts diploma reinforces the state's commitment to educational excellence while signaling to families, employers, and higher education institutions that graduates are well-prepared for future success.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK & GUIDING QUESTIONS

The conceptual framework (*Figure 2: Statewide Graduation Council Conceptual Framework*) was developed at the beginning of the Statewide Graduation Council process and went through multiple iterations to refine its structure and guiding questions. The framework has been used to help guide the scope and sequence of the monthly Council meetings, which began in *March (Appendix D: Statewide Graduation Council Membership)*. This framework has served as the foundation for the Council's work as the Council considers what it should mean to graduate from high school in Massachusetts. This work has involved a consideration of the *learning experiences*, *ways to show mastery*, and opportunities to demonstrate *college, career, and civic readiness* that should be included in the final graduation requirements. As the Council co-chairs have worked to develop a suite of recommendations that addresses each of these three elements, this interim report follows a similar structure in identifying specific recommendations for learning experiences, showing mastery, and college, career, and civic readiness.

Figure 2: Statewide Graduation Council Conceptual Framework



VISION OF A MASSACHUSETTS GRADUATE

DEFINING WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A MASSACHUSETTS GRADUATE

In partnership with the Statewide Graduation Council, the Executive Office of Education and the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) released the Vision of a Massachusetts Graduate in September 2025. As part of the Council's work in supporting the development of recommendations for how all Massachusetts students can graduate with the skills necessary to succeed in college, career, and civic life, regardless of their background or location, they engaged a broad range of stakeholders to determine what it should mean to be a Massachusetts graduate.

This vision is the culmination of a robust statewide engagement process, incorporating perspectives from students, families, educators, and community members across Massachusetts, along with a review of locally developed district visions of a graduate.

Analysis of local district visions of a graduate revealed common emphasis on critical thinking, communication, creativity, and collaboration. The Vision of a Massachusetts Graduate incorporates these competencies, creating a shared and holistic statewide foundation for what it means to graduate in Massachusetts. It is designed to complement—not replace—the many robust and tailored visions that local districts have developed.

This Vision of a Massachusetts Graduate describes the state's aspirations for how a Massachusetts high school diploma can prepare every student to pursue their future goals. Grounded in rigorous academic preparation and enriched by real-world learning experiences, this vision supports students in discovering their interests and strengths, and empowers them to choose, design, and direct their own path.

DESIRED COMPETENCIES AND SKILLS

While stakeholders identified many competencies that graduates should possess by the time they graduate, six rose to the top as being especially important for *all students* across the Commonwealth. Together, these competencies aim to prepare Massachusetts graduates for success in college and career while equipping them with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to participate fully in civic life, including making informed choices, contributing to the common good, and strengthening equality, justice, and liberty in their communities, Massachusetts, and beyond.

These competencies are aligned with the mission to make a Massachusetts diploma not simply a credential, but a launchpad for students to become effective thinkers, valued contributors, and future leaders of their communities and beyond.

Figure 3: Vision of a Massachusetts Graduate

This vision underpins the recommendations, collectively supporting Massachusetts graduates in demonstrating these essential competencies as they progress toward their post-high school goals.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND RATIONALE

Through consideration of stakeholder input, an assessment of local graduation requirements across Massachusetts, and a review of existing research and best practices in other states and countries, the co-chairs of the Statewide Graduation Council have identified initial recommendations for graduation requirements that support Massachusetts students in graduating with all of the competencies defined in our Vision of a Massachusetts Graduate, preparing them to engage and succeed in college, career, and civic life.

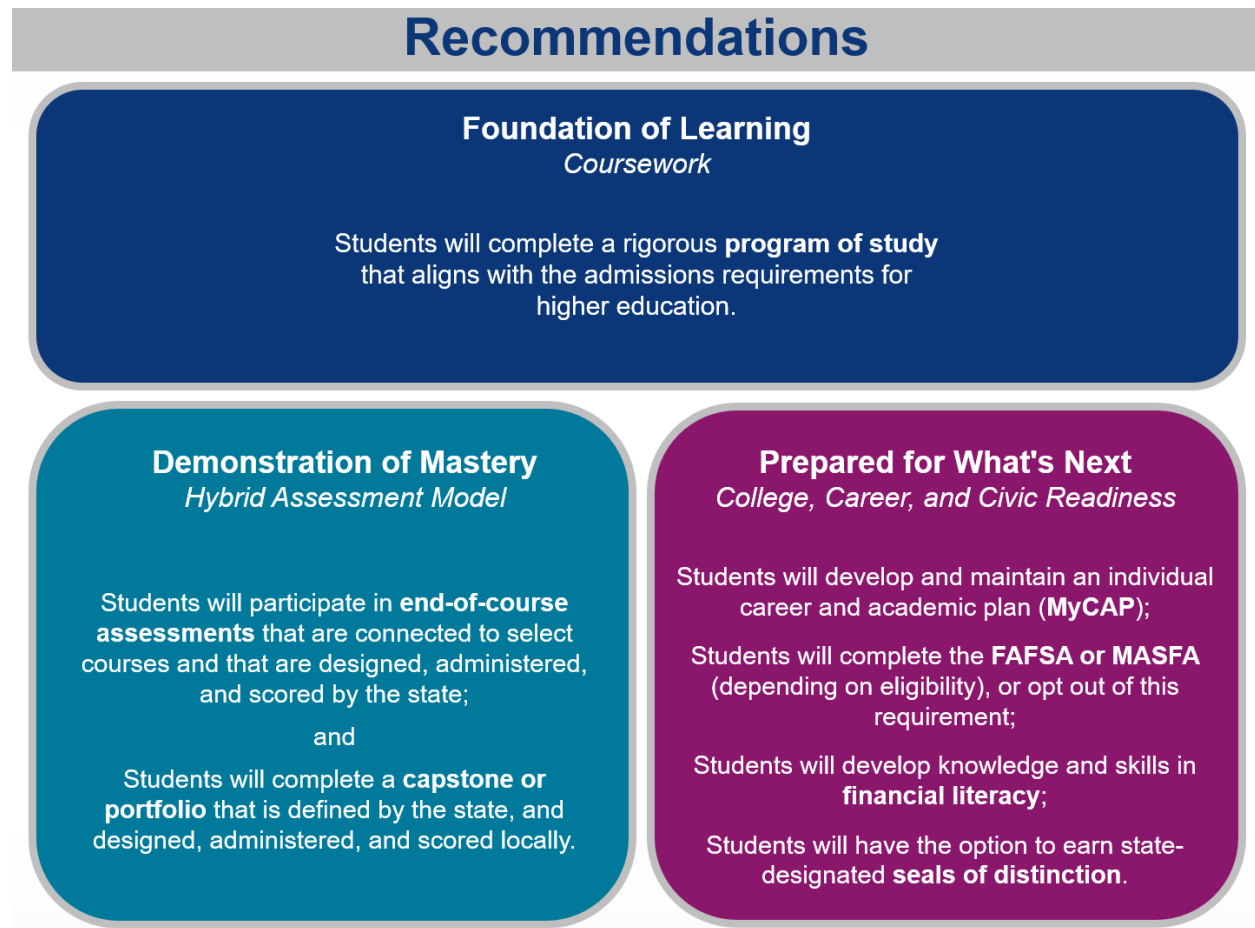
The following design principles were developed with the Statewide Graduation Council and guided the identification of initial recommendations:

Figure 4: 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.

Grounded in the guiding principles, the co-chairs of the Statewide Graduation Council established initial recommendations that address the questions identified in the conceptual framework. The recommendations function as a cohesive framework, with each recommendation serving as part of a set that supports the holistic Vision of a Massachusetts Graduate and honors the design principles.

Figure 5: Recommendations in Coursework, Mastery, and College, Career, and Civic Readiness



PROGRAM OF STUDY



Recommendation: Students will complete a rigorous program of study that aligns with the admissions requirements for higher education.

The program of study should prepare students for any aspirations they have for life after high school, including college, workforce, military, or other endeavors. By aligning students' academic journeys with the high standards of higher education admissions, we create a foundation where students graduate with all postsecondary doors open, including a path to college if that is what they aspire to.

Coursework and Postsecondary Outcomes

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.^{5,6,7,8} Engaging in more rigorous coursework is correlated with increased high-school graduation, post-secondary enrollment and persistence, and earnings.^{9,10,11} Furthermore, the specific sequence of high school coursework can predict college enrollment. Math coursework sequencing is especially linked to postsecondary success.^{12,13,14,15} 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.¹⁶

As it relates to Massachusetts specifically, the Annenberg Institute conducted an analysis of MassCore, the existing state-recommended program of study (*Figure 7: MassCore Framework*). This analysis indicates that MassCore completion is a strong predictor of postsecondary outcomes.¹⁷ 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.¹⁸

⁵ Allensworth, E. & Clark, K. "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>

⁶ Horn, L. & Carroll, C. "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>

⁷ Long, M.; Conger, D. & Iatarola, P. "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>

⁸ Rose, H. & Betts, J. "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%20The%20Effect%20of%20High%20School%20Courses%20on%20Earnings%20RESTAT%202005.pdf>

⁹ Horn, L. & Carroll, C. "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, M.; Conger, D. & Iatarola, P. "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, H. & Betts, J. "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%20The%20Effect%20of%20High%20School%20Courses%20on%20Earnings%20RESTAT%202005.pdf>

¹² Ogut, B.; Circi, R. & Yee, D. "Why Does High School Coursework Matter? The Case for Increasing Exposure to Advanced Courses." *American Institutes for Research*. Retrieved August 6, 2025.

¹³ Huffaker, E. "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

¹⁴ "The Building Blocks of Success. Higher-Level Math for All Students." *Achieve Policy Brief*. Published May 2008. Retrieved August 6, 2025. <https://www.achieve.org/files/BuildingBlocksofSuccess.pdf>

¹⁵ Finkelstein, N. & Fong, A. "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>

¹⁶ James, Jonathan. 2013. "The Surprising Impact of High School Math on Job Market Outcomes." *Federal Reserve Bank of Cleveland, Economic Commentary* 2013-14. Retrieved October 8, 2025. <https://doi.org/10.26509/frbc-ec-201314>

¹⁷ McDonough, A., & Papay, J. MassCore Completion Among High-School Graduates. January 2024.

¹⁸ Ibid.

Stakeholder Voices

In the statewide survey (Appendix E: Statewide Survey) 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, respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the following items at a rate of 70 percent or greater.¹⁹

- 4 years of English Language Arts
- 4 years of Math
- 3 years of History
- 3 years of lab-based Science
- 2 years of World Language
- 1 year of Arts
- Personal Finance
- Civics
- Health and Physical Education

National Landscape

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.^{20,21}

¹⁹ 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.

²⁰ Any reference to “states” includes the District of Columbia

²¹ The complete national landscape assessment of high school requirements and data sources for each of the 50 states are included in the Appendix.

Figure 6: State Course Requirements: English, Math, History or Social Science, Science

Subject Area	States Requiring	Years Required			Additional Requirement Details
		4 years required	3 years required	2 years required	
English	46	45	1		
Math	46	20	23	3	34 states specified which Math courses (such as Algebra I or Geometry) or content areas must be covered to meet the graduation requirement. Of these, 13 states required Algebra II (or an equivalent course).
History or Social Studies ²²	46	9	31	6	35 states specified courses required within the broader History or Social Studies requirement, such as U.S. History, Government, World History, Civics, Economics, and Geography.
Science	46	4	35	7	32 states articulated specific provisions regarding Science coursework. Of these: • 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. • 16 states had a requirement that students complete lab-based science courses.

²² States that required three and a half years of History or Social Studies (three states) are included as “3 years required;” states that required two and a half years of History or Social Studies (two states) are included as “2 years required.”

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

Eleven states required a Digital Literacy or Computer Science course for high school graduation.

Twenty-three states required a Financial Literacy or Personal Finance course for high school graduation.

MassCore as a Foundation

MassCore, the existing state-recommended program of study, can, with modifications, serve as a foundation for a statewide requirement regarding coursework.

Figure 7: MassCore Framework²³

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.		

Subject	Units	Notes
** 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 recommendations for World language requirements.		

MassCore in the Field

In the aggregate, a large majority of students already complete MassCore upon graduation. According to district-reported data, about 84 percent of students completed MassCore in 2024.²³ While there are some concerns regarding data quality with that figure, an analysis conducted by the Annenberg Institute found that when using transcripts and course codes as a proxy for MassCore completion, about 72 percent of students still seem to meet MassCore requirements, including 79 percent of students meeting the requirements of four units of Math and English Language Arts, and three units of Science and History/Social Science).²⁴

PCG conducted an analysis of graduation requirements in 120 Massachusetts districts (40 percent of all districts that serve high school students). This analysis found that 68 percent of districts' local graduation requirements match or exceed the course requirements of MassCore.²⁵

MassCore Alignment with Higher Education

MassCore is also a valuable credential because the MassCore components are (by design) tightly aligned with state college and university requirements in Massachusetts.

MassCore also exceeds the higher education requirements in some areas. For example, MassCore requires more History and Social Science coursework, as well as an Arts requirement that goes beyond the scope of the higher education framework. While admission to state colleges and universities depends on other factors (such as GPA), students who complete MassCore are well-positioned to matriculate. MassCore supports a high school diploma as a launchpad to higher education should a graduate wish to pursue it. A side-by-side comparison of MassCore requirements and Massachusetts state college and university requirements can be found in Education.

²³ MassCore Data Trends. E2C Data Hub Data Story. May 2025.

²⁴ McDonough, A., & Papay, J. MassCore Completion Among High-School Graduates. January 2024

²⁵ The detailed analysis of district graduation requirements is found in the Current State Analysis included in the Appendix.

Key Considerations

As the Graduation Council co-chairs look to finalize the recommendations, they will seek to address the following considerations:

- Expanded Flexibility.** As currently structured, MassCore consumes a substantial portion of a student's courseload, leaving little room for deviations or setbacks. The current MassCore framework requires students to complete 22 units of coursework, with some nuances: Physical Education is required by law but not in a certain prescribed unit of coursework, and some students can substitute a Career and Technical Education program for parts of the coursework requirements. Given that many schools have master schedules that afford students 24 units of coursework during the school day over their four years of high school, MassCore as it currently exists leaves little room for variation. Further, the high bar for coursework in certain subject areas (i.e., four years of Mathematics including Algebra II and a Math course during senior year) means that when a student fails a course in that sequence there is little space to make it up without impacting their ability to meet the other requirements. The Council will consider ways to modify or adapt the MassCore framework to provide more flexibility and/or individual pursuits without compromising its value as an on-ramp to four-year college. This may include narrowing the framework to directly align with the minimum four-year state admissions requirements and/or creating additional flexibility within subject areas, such as identifying a mechanism by which interdisciplinary courses can align with MassCore content area requirements.
- Alternatives for Certain Student Populations.** While the purpose of a statewide graduation requirement is to hold all students to the same high standard, there are some populations of students for whom MassCore may not be an appropriate program of study, such as students with severe disabilities, students in out of district placement, students in institutional settings, students who arrive late in their academic journey with limited or no English proficiency, or students who are overaged/under-credited. The Council, in alignment with the foundational considerations around equity, will explore ways to avail students in these populations of an alternative to MassCore that sets high standards and is yet appropriate for the student's circumstances.
- Integration of MassCore and Existing Learning Paths.** Massachusetts offers students many opportunities to gain hands on career-connected learning during their high school experience, including through Chapter 74 CTE programs, Innovation Career Pathways, Dual Enrollment, and Early College. Any coursework requirement will need to work with and alongside those types of programs, and

support students in taking full advantage of the programs and experiences that will promote their college and career success. Additionally, while the learning experiences included in this initial recommendation focus on coursework, the Council will continue to explore whether additional experiences (e.g., work-based learning) should be included in the graduation requirements.

- **Implementation Timelines and Waivers.** Though most districts have a high number of students meeting MassCore, only about two-thirds of districts currently require it for graduation.²⁶ In building out this recommendation, the Council will consider what staffing and resources districts may need to move the program of study from a recommendation to a requirement. As such, any MassCore graduation requirement would necessitate a thoughtful timeline for implementation developed in consultation with the field to promote districts' success. A MassCore requirement should also include a clear and limited waiver process for districts and schools in rare scenarios.

²⁶ The detailed analysis of district graduation requirements is found in the Current State Analysis included in the Appendix.

HYBRID MODEL FOR ASSESSING MASTERY

Whereas a rigorous program of study provides a foundation of learning, assessments serve to measure that learning, establishing a high standard for all students. It is recommended that the state adopt a hybrid model for assessing mastery where students participate in select end-of-course assessments and complete a capstone or portfolio. This hybrid model creates a universal standard across the state through end-of-course assessments, and opportunities for students to engage in personalized demonstrations of learning through capstones or portfolios.

END-OF-COURSE ASSESSMENTS



Recommendation: Students will participate in end-of-course assessments that are connected to select courses and that are designed, administered, and scored by the state.

As part of a comprehensive set of graduation requirements, end-of-course assessments will be one mechanism for promoting and assessing student mastery of key standards in a consistent manner across the state.

End-of-course assessments (EOC assessments) are administered at the conclusion of specific high school courses, often in core content areas like Algebra I, English Language Arts, Science, and Social Studies, evaluating mastery of the standards covered in the specific course. The recommendation for end-of-course assessments functions alongside the recommended program of study. Whereas the program of study leverages high-quality, statewide curriculum standards, EOC assessments in a select number of courses within that program of study support a common definition of mastery of standards across those courses. The uniformity of EOC assessments allows for dependable and reliable comparison of results across classrooms, schools, and districts, which is one key component for promoting equitable access and outcomes.

End-of-Course Assessments and Postsecondary Outcomes

Research on EOC assessments specifically has found that EOC assessments are generally positively correlated with high school graduation rates, with the impacts of Math and English Language Arts EOC assessments being statistically significant.²⁷

Additionally, administering a greater number of EOC assessments generally correlates with higher graduation rates.²⁸

National Landscape

End-of-course assessments have gained attention as an alternative to exit exams, as EOC assessments are designed to be more directly connected to student learning with the assessment occurring at the end of a specific course.²⁹ Seven states have incorporated end-of-course assessments into their graduation requirements.³⁰

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. 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 pursuits.

Key Considerations for EOC assessments

As the Graduation Council co-chairs look to finalize the recommendations, they will seek to address the following considerations:

- **Determination of EOC assessments.** The Council will explore what specific courses should have an EOC tied to them, focusing on core academic subjects that are aligned with college and career readiness and that are relevant for all students. This will include examining how EOC requirements work for students in a variety of high school programs of study, including, for example, CTE programs and Early College programs.
- **Role of EOC assessments in Graduation.** The Council will explore the weight and role of EOC assessments as one component of a comprehensive system that validates a student's readiness to graduate. It is not the intention for any student to be denied a diploma exclusively because of EOC assessments.

²⁷ Tyner, Adam and Matthew Larsen. End-of-Course Exams and Student Outcomes. Washington, DC: Thomas B. Fordham Institute (August 27, 2019). Retrieved from <https://fordhaminstitute.org/sites/default/files/publication/pdfs/20190827-end-course-exams-and-student-outcomes.pdf>.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ The detailed analysis of district graduation requirements is found in the Current State Analysis included in the Appendix.

- ***Equitable Paths for Assessing Mastery.*** It is critical that graduation requirements be accessible and equitable for all students, including students with disabilities, English learners, and newcomers. To this end, the Council will examine appropriate accommodations, supports, and alternative formats for EOC assessments.
- ***Assessment Landscape.*** To adopt EOC assessments, Massachusetts will need to consider how the new EOC assessments will fit into the existing assessment landscape. The state will need to identify the unique, valuable data provided by EOC assessments and by any other assessment and verify that the entire testing system is coherent, efficient, and directly supports educational goals. The intent of the recommendation is for students to take EOC assessments in lieu of the standard high school MCAS assessments, though importantly, this change would require a process to obtain federal approval. Of note, this recommendation would not pertain to the MCAS-Alt, which would still be available for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities.

CAPSTONES AND PORTFOLIOS



Recommendation: Students will complete a capstone or portfolio that is defined by the state, and designed, administered, and scored locally.

As part of a comprehensive set of graduation requirements, capstones and portfolios will be one mechanism for promoting and assessing student mastery of key standards while allowing customized opportunities for deeper demonstration of students' knowledge and skills.

Capstones are cumulative projects, often completed in 12th grade. Capstone projects can be specific to one subject or interdisciplinary, and usually include research, a written assignment, and a final presentation. **Portfolios** are a collection of students' best work that demonstrates mastery in one content area or across content areas. Portfolios often include students' reflections on their work.

Capstones/Portfolios and Postsecondary Outcomes

While there is limited research on the impact of capstones on postsecondary success, some studies suggest that engaging in a portfolio is associated with:

- Increased sense of responsibility over academic progress³¹
- Increased opportunity for student reflection³²

Preliminary evidence based on a consortium of high schools that integrate portfolios, capstones, and other similar project-based assessments suggests that these types of assessments may promote student achievement in high school and beyond.³³

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.

National Landscape

Six states have incorporated capstones, portfolios, or similar cumulative projects into their graduation requirements. Examples include:

- In Idaho, students must complete a Future Readiness Project (which can be a portfolio) to graduate.
- In Rhode Island, students must complete at least one performance-based diploma assessment (which can be a portfolio or capstone) to graduate.
- Colorado and Kansas both provide students with a menu of options for demonstrating mastery, which include a district capstone (Colorado) and a senior project (Kansas).

Current Examples in Massachusetts

In a review of 120 sampled districts in Massachusetts, 19 districts require a portfolio and/or capstone project. Of these, eight are charter schools and four are regional vocational technical schools. The portfolio or capstone is typically completed through courses such as AP Capstone, English, Social Studies, Civics, CTE Pathway, or Digital Literacy. Districts implement portfolio and capstones in a variety of ways, including, for example, through a digital portfolio and senior capstone (Melrose Public Schools); senior project (Cape Cod Regional Technical High School); or a portfolio and defense (Prospect Hill Academy Charter School).

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

³¹ Fine, M., & Pryiomka, K. (2020). *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*. Palo Alto, CA: Learning Policy Institute.

³² Wei, R.C., LaFors, J., Jackson, O. & Pecheone R. L. "Redesigning Teaching and Learning: A New Approach to High School Graduation by Portfolio." *Academia*. Presented 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

³³ Fine, M., & Pryiomka, K. (2020). *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*. Palo Alto, CA: Learning Policy Institute.

demonstrate their learning. Educators noted that giving students options to demonstrate mastery supports differentiation and equity, enabling all students to showcase their strengths.

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, while 72 percent agreed with Capstone Projects.

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.

Key Considerations for Capstone and Portfolios

As the Graduation Council co-chairs look to finalize the recommendations, they will seek to address the following considerations:

- ***Role of Capstones and Portfolios in Graduation.*** The Council will continue to explore clear definitions of capstones and portfolios with the goal of establishing a process where students across the Commonwealth are held to the same high academic standard, while allowing districts the flexibility to customize the design and application of capstones and portfolios locally.
- ***Supporting Implementation and Ensuring Equitable Access.*** Capstones and portfolios are inherently flexible and can be adapted to meet student needs, making them accessible to all learners. The Council will explore what resources are needed to see that every school has the resources necessary to fully and equitably support students in these experiences, including through professional development, exemplars, and training on best practices.

MYCAP (MY CAREER AND ACADEMIC PLAN)



Recommendation: Students will develop and maintain an individual career and academic plan (MyCAP).

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

An individual career and academic plan (also referred to as an individual learning plan or personal career and academic plan) is:

- An ongoing process that provides students with personalized career development opportunities focused on developing their self-exploration, career exploration, and career planning and management skills.
- A portfolio consisting of an individual student's:
 - Course taking and postsecondary plans aligned to career goals
 - Documentation of the college and career readiness skills they have developed³⁴

Massachusetts' individual career and academic plan is MyCAP. MyCAP is a framework in which students:

- Develop and continuously iterate on their individual plan
- Engage in a scope and sequence of activities across three domains – Personal/Social, Academic, Career – that support their plan
- Create a career and academic portfolio

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, and some Work-Based Learning programs. When implementing MyCAP, districts have the opportunity to design customized programming that aligns with the state's MyCAP framework.

Over the past two school years (2023-2024 and 2024-2025), 134 Massachusetts districts (approximately 40 percent of all districts with either or both a middle and high school) have engaged in MyCAP professional development experiences provided by DESE.

³⁴ National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth. "Promoting Quality Individualized Learning Plans Throughout the Lifespan." Institute for Educational Leadership. Published 2023. Retrieved from <https://careertech.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/Promoting-Quality-Individualized-Learning-Plans-Throughout-the-Lifespan-Guide-2.0.pdf>.

Individual Career and Academic Plans 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, and counselors to develop and revise individual college and career plans, they are more likely to:

- Graduate from high school³⁵
- Submit a FAFSA³⁶
- Apply to college³⁷
- Enroll in college³⁸

National Landscape

Many states have programming for students to develop individualized career and academic plans during their high school tenure or earlier and 16 states specifically require that students complete a college and career plan to graduate from high school.³⁹

Stakeholder Voices

The following themes emerged in statewide listening sessions, indicating a desire for the personalized, future-focused work that students engage in through MyCAP.

- **Student Agency and Personalized Learning.** Participants emphasized a desire for a more student-centered approach to education, advocating for personalized learning and student agency. This included offering students choices in their learning pathways, designing curriculum around 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) and financial literacy.

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.

³⁵ 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 6th, 2025.

<https://open.bu.edu/server/api/core/bitstreams/b7e49272-868d-4ffb-9ed0-7450a9c5fbda/content>

³⁶ Gibney T., & Rauner, M. "Education and Career Planning in High School: A National Study of School and Student Characteristics and College-Going Behaviors." Institute of Education Sciences. Published November 2021. Retrieved August 6th, 2025.

<https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED615855.pdf>

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ See Appendix for data sources used in National Landscape analysis.

Key Considerations for MyCAP

As the Graduation Council co-chairs look to finalize the recommendations, they will seek to address the following considerations:

- **Clarity and Consistency of Process and Requirements.** To facilitate a consistent and clear MyCAP requirement across the Commonwealth, clarity is needed around what is required of districts and what components are required in each student's MyCAP. This includes specifying when the plan is initially developed, how often the plan should be updated, and what elements it should contain, such as career exploration activities, academic course selections, and postsecondary goals.
- **Diversity of Paths.** The MyCAP requirement should explicitly support and validate a wide range of student goals and support students in keeping all college and career doors open. The framework should be flexible enough to help students explore and plan for four-year colleges, two-year colleges, trade schools, military service, and direct entry into the workforce, and to support students in adjusting their plans as their postsecondary goals evolve. This flexibility allows the MyCAP requirement to be relevant and valuable for every student, regardless of their aspirations.
- **Supporting Implementation and Monitoring.** The Council will explore what additional resources districts may need, building off the grant funding, professional development, and technical assistance DESE currently provides.

FAFSA OR MASFA



Recommendation: Students will complete the FAFSA, with an option to complete the MASFA instead, or to opt out of the requirement.

Completing a FAFSA or MASFA will help students keep all postsecondary doors open, positioning students to access financial aid for higher education for which they are eligible.

FAFSA and Postsecondary Outcomes

The FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) is required for students to access federal aid, including grants, loans, and work-study funds, to support their postsecondary studies. FAFSA completion is strongly associated with positive

postsecondary outcomes; students who complete the FAFSA by the end of senior year are 84 percent more likely to enroll in college.⁴⁰

Currently, disparities exist in FAFSA or MASFA (Massachusetts Application for State Financial Aid) completion across student demographics. In Massachusetts in 2024, 51 percent of all high school seniors completed the FAFSA or MASFA, compared to:

- 35 percent of students who are low-income
- 33 percent of Hispanic/Latino students
- 44 percent of Black/African-American students

These differences observed in FAFSA/MASFA completion rates for student groups correlate with differences in immediate college-going rates.⁴¹

National Landscape

In recent years, a growing number of states have adopted policies related to student completion of the FAFSA. Fourteen states have had, currently have, or are in the process of implementing universal FAFSA policies.⁴² Louisiana and Texas were early adopters of universal FAFSA policies, and saw increases of 11 percent and 14 percent respectively in FAFSA completion rates for high school seniors in the cycles following policy implementation.⁴³ 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 with the class of 2027), New Jersey (starting with the class of 2025), and New York (starting with the class of 2025).⁴⁴

Key Considerations for FAFSA/MASFA

As the Graduation Council co-chairs look to finalize the recommendations, they will seek to address the following considerations:

- **Opt-Out.** Some students and families are unable to or will choose not to complete the FAFSA/MASFA for myriad reasons, including, for example, immigration status or hesitation to provide financial information. This is why the Council recommends a low barrier opt-out process that will be standardized across the state and allow parents or students to opt out without needing to disclose sensitive personal circumstances or reasons.

⁴⁰ "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>

⁴¹ "Increasing FAFSA and MASFA Completion," Massachusetts Department of Higher Education. Published February 2025. Retrieved September 19, 2025. https://www.mass.edu/bhe/lib/documents/BHE/BHE%2025-33a_FAFSA%20Completion%20Report%202025_Final.pdf

⁴² 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>

⁴³ "Universal FAFSA Completion with Supports." National College Attainment Network. Retrieved August 14, 2025. <https://www.ncan.org/page/UniversalFAFSA>

⁴⁴ See Appendix for data sources used in National Landscape analysis.

- **Supporting Implementation.** A FAFSA requirement necessitates increased communication and information to students and families. To promote implementation, additional support will need to be offered, which may include capacity-building support to districts and schools and/or statewide support to families and students.

FINANCIAL LITERACY



Recommendation: Students will develop knowledge and skills in financial literacy.

Students will graduate high school with financial literacy knowledge and skills to make the personal and professional decisions that align with their goals and promote their sustainable financial success.

Financial Literacy and Postsecondary Outcomes

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

- Have higher credit scores⁴⁵
- Pay credit card bills on time (fewer delinquencies)⁴⁶
- Avoid credit default⁴⁷
- Carry less debt⁴⁸
- Have less personal bankruptcies⁴⁹

National Landscape

Many states have begun to include financial literacy as a high school graduation requirement in recent years. Currently, 30 states require students to complete coursework or demonstrate mastery in financial literacy to graduate high school.⁵⁰

⁴⁵ Urban, C., Schmeiser, M., Collins, J.M., & Brown, A. "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>

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Brown, M., van der Klaauw, W., Wen, J., & Zafar, B. "Financial Education and the Debt Behavior of the Young." Federal Reserve Bank of New York Staff Report no. 624. Published September 2013. Retrieved September 16, 2025.

<https://www.econstor.eu/bitstream/10419/93586/1/771626673.pdf>

⁴⁹ Baulkaran, V. "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>

⁵⁰ See Appendix for data sources used in National Landscape analysis.

While most of these states require a standalone financial literacy or personal finance course, some states, such as Alabama and Rhode Island, incorporate financial literacy concepts into other courses or require students to demonstrate mastery of financial literacy concepts through an assessment.

Stakeholder Voices

In the statewide survey 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 Personal Finance. Across all roles, 93 percent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that students should complete Personal Finance coursework. This item had the highest level of agreement on coursework and learning experiences, followed closely by English Language Arts and Civics.

In the statewide listening sessions, within discussions about curriculum relevance and about real-world skills, participants frequently emphasized the importance of teaching students core financial literacy skills and knowledge such as personal budgeting, setting up bank and credit card accounts, understanding bills and interest, and paying taxes.

Key Considerations for Financial Literacy

As the Graduation Council co-chairs look to further develop the recommendations, they will seek to address the following considerations:

- **Mechanism for Developing Financial Literacy:** There are multiple ways in which a graduation requirement could support students' development of financial literacy knowledge and skills. This includes financial literacy as a required standalone course, the integration of financial literacy concepts into existing courses, or a mechanism for students to gain financial literacy knowledge and skills through opportunities that may exist outside of a coursework requirement (e.g., through the MyCAP scope and sequence). The Council will explore the potential ways students may develop financial literacy to further inform a final recommendation.
- **Supporting Implementation and Monitoring:** The Council will explore what support districts may need, which will depend on the structure of the requirement, and may include, for example, professional development on incorporating financial literacy standards into existing curriculum and assessing student proficiency.
- **Continued Program Updates and Resources:** The Council will consider flexibility around this requirement as the financial landscape is constantly evolving. There will need to be a process to regularly update financial literacy standards and relevant resources to verify that the requirement adequately prepares students for college, career, and civic life.

SEALS OF DISTINCTION



Recommendation: Students will have the option to earn state-designated seals of distinction.

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.

Seals of distinction (also known as diploma seals or seals of endorsement) serve to recognize student achievement and are typically added to a student's diploma and/or transcript. They are awarded for meeting specific criteria beyond the standard graduation requirements.

National Landscape

Many states now offer various diploma seals or endorsements that are reflective of students' K-12 learning experiences and postsecondary aspirations.⁵¹ These distinctions create opportunities to acknowledge and celebrate individual students' achievements and areas of focus. While the names vary by state, **Error! Reference source not found.** reflects some common seals and endorsements.

Figure 8: Common Seals of Distinction and Endorsements

Seals of Distinction	Common Requirement(s)
Academic/Honors Seal	Earn a high GPA and/or complete a rigorous academic curriculum, such as Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB), Dual-Enrollment, or Early College courses.
Career and Technical Education (CTE) Seal	Complete a specific career pathway, often involving a certain number of CTE courses, work-based learning, and/or an industry-recognized credential or certification.
Seal of Biliteracy	Demonstrate proficiency in English and at least one other language.
Seal of Digital Literacy	Demonstrate a sophisticated understanding of technology, digital tools, and the responsible use of online resources.

⁵¹ See Appendix for data sources used in National Landscape analysis.

Civic Engagement Seal	Demonstrate knowledge of civics, often through coursework, community service, or passing an assessment.
-----------------------	---

Current State

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 or diploma of the graduating senior and is a statement of accomplishment for future employers and for college admissions.⁵² In 2024, 3,816 students earned the Seal; to date, more than 13,000 students have earned it.⁵³

Stakeholder Voices

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

Key Considerations for Seals of Distinction

As the Graduation Council co-chairs look to finalize the recommendations, they will seek to address the following considerations:

- **Seal Selection and Program Logistics.** To expand the state-granted seals of distinction, the Council will explore what specific academic, career, and/or civic accomplishments could be reflected through the seals, and for each, the criteria students would need to meet to earn the seal.
- **Equitable Access.** The Council aims to see that all students, regardless of their socioeconomic background or geographic location, have an opportunity to pursue and earn the seals. The Council will explore ways to monitor participation and achievement to ensure that seals do not inadvertently exclude specific student populations, as well as understand if districts need additional support to mitigate any disparities.

⁵² Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. "Massachusetts State Seal of Biliteracy." Last updated March 20, 2025. Retrieved September 17, 2025. <https://www.doe.mass.edu/scholarships/biliteracy/>
⁵³ Ibid.

CONCLUSION

The proposed recommendations work collectively to realize the vision of a Massachusetts graduate. The recommendations—from the strong academic foundation provided through the program of study and validated and applied through end-of-course assessments, capstones, and portfolios, to the self-direction and future-readiness cultivated through MyCAP, FAFSA/MASFA, financial literacy, and seals of distinction—help students to develop as thinkers, contributors, and leaders, prepared to thrive in the path of their choosing.

NEXT STEPS

TIMELINE AND PROCESS FOR FINALIZING RECOMMENDATIONS

The Statewide Graduation Council co-chairs aim to release final graduation requirement recommendations in June 2026. During the next several months, the Council will continue to engage students, families, educators, LEA leaders, advocacy groups, and other key stakeholders, to solicit further input to inform the final recommendations.

Appendices

The background of the page is a solid dark blue. On the right side, there is a complex, abstract pattern of light blue and white geometric shapes. This pattern includes various sizes of squares, some of which are outlined in white, and others that are filled with a lighter shade of blue. Thin white lines connect some of these squares, creating a network-like structure. The overall effect is a modern, minimalist design.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: METHODOLOGY

To support the Statewide Graduation Council co-chairs in developing the initial recommendations, PCG conducted analysis of public sentiment, best practices in supporting postsecondary outcomes, and the statewide, national, and international contexts of graduation requirements. PCG's analyses included:

- Statewide Survey
- Summary Report of Listening Session Feedback
- Survey of District Leaders
- Assessment of Local Graduation Requirements
- National Landscape Analysis of Graduation Requirements

As these analyses were critical in the development of the recommendations, these documents are included in their entirety below. PCG also conducted a best practices literature review; insights from that research are incorporated throughout the report.

APPENDIX B: ASSESSMENT OF LOCAL GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

PCG analyzed graduation requirements across Massachusetts school districts to provide a comprehensive comparative assessment.

Methodology

PCG analyzed a sample of 120 school districts (40 percent of all Massachusetts school districts serving high school students) to understand the current state of graduation requirements across the Commonwealth. The sample data sources included a survey of district leaders and independent research of publicly available district graduation policies.

District Leaders Survey. PCG distributed the survey to all district leaders serving high school students on May 22, asking about current local graduation requirements, including required coursework, community service, capstone projects, portfolios, seals of biliteracy and financial literacy, industry recognized credentials, and more. The survey was open for over 4 weeks, closing on Monday, June 23. The survey received 103 responses (34 percent of all Massachusetts school districts serving high school students) from school and district leaders across the Commonwealth, including five regional vocational schools (19 percent of all regional vocational technical schools) and ten charter schools (20 percent of all charters serving high school students).

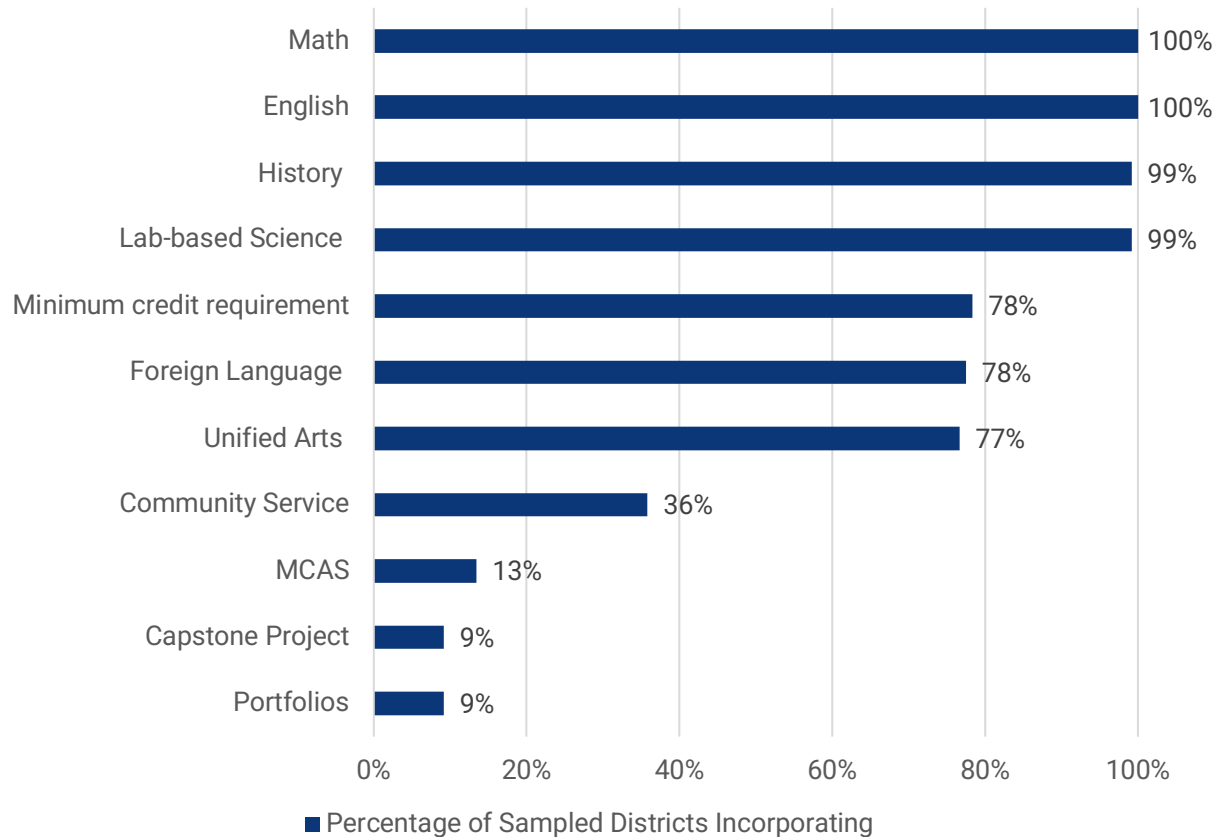
Independent Research. To establish a representative sample, PCG augmented the survey data with an analysis of the graduation requirements of 17 additional districts, including seven regional vocational schools and seven charter schools. For this analysis, PCG reviewed the local graduation requirements outlined in the student and family handbooks published on each district's website.

PCG compared the characteristics of sampled schools to all schools statewide to ensure that the sample was representative. These analyses, as well as the full list of schools sampled, can be found at the end of this Appendix.

Graduation Requirements

PCG analyzed the elements contained in sampled districts' local graduation requirements.

depicts different elements of local graduation requirements and the percentage of districts that have each element.

Figure 9: Elements of Local Graduation Requirements

In approximately half of sampled districts (51 percent), the local graduation requirement was **entirely based on the completion of coursework** in Math, English, History, and Science (at least one year).

- Thirteen percent of surveyed districts indicated that they have continued to use MCAS as part of their local graduation requirements despite MCAS no longer being part of the statewide requirement.
- Another 11 percent of surveyed districts indicated that while passing MCAS is not currently part of their local graduation requirements, they are considering incorporating it as a requirement in future years.

A smaller percentage of districts required students to complete either a portfolio or capstone project; **of the 21 districts that require either or both a portfolio or capstone project, eight are charter schools and four are regional vocational technical schools.**

Graduation Requirement Spotlights

The following are examples of how Massachusetts school districts implement innovative graduation requirements. The examples have been sourced from districts' handbooks and websites.

DOUGLAS PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Capstone; Content Area Endorsement

Requirement: Senior Capstone – 1/2 year, 1.25 credits. Students can complete the Senior Capstone through the Senior Project, Digital Literacy, or AP Capstone courses. Students will also complete an independent research paper and/or presentation on their topic of study.

Option: Douglas High School (DHS) Pathway (Content Area Endorsement). The DHS Pathways program is designed to provide structured courses of study for students who have a particular focus. The Pathway is similar to a college major, where certain courses and activities are required to earn the Pathway designation on their transcript and diploma. DHS Pathways can be earned as a basic Pathway or a Pathway with Distinction. The Pathway with Distinction includes more Honors and AP level courses.

Examples of Capstones by Pathways:

- **Global Competency Pathway:** The Senior Capstone will relate to a foreign country or international issue.
- **STEM Pathway:** The Senior Capstone will relate to a topic in the sciences, technology, or math.
- **Business Specialization Pathway:** Beyond Senior Project, Digital Literacy, and AP Capstone courses, Business Specialization students can also complete the Senior Capstone through DECA. The Senior Capstone will relate to one of the students' courses in business.
- **Criminal Justice Specialization Pathway:** The Senior Capstone will relate to a topic in Criminal Justice, Psychology, or Sociology.

CAPE COD REGIONAL TECHNICAL HIGH SCHOOL

Capstone

Requirement: One Credit in Senior Project

Description: Senior Project provides seniors the opportunity to demonstrate mastery of the technical, academic and social/employability skills they have acquired during their time at Cape Cod Regional Technical High School (Cape Cod Tech). This one credit course is supported throughout the year by Shop, English, and Social Studies teachers.

Senior Project includes the following graded elements:

- A hands-on product that is tangible or a service to the community
- A research paper using MLA format
- A presentation before a panel of judges

- A portfolio documenting their Senior Project efforts and skills

Seniors and their teachers meet as a group at least three times during the year. At these meetings, students receive guidance and direction in the development of their Senior Projects. Students must complete and pass each phase of Senior Project to successfully graduate from Cape Cod Tech. Research and technical skills development occurs throughout all four years at Cape Cod Tech.

PROSPECT HILL ACADEMY CHARTER SCHOOL Portfolio

Requirement: Students must complete a proficient portfolio and defense to graduate.

Description: The Graduate Portfolio is an opportunity for students to gather their best work from four academic domains (research, inquiry, creative expression, and analysis), as well as reflect on their social-emotional development, to demonstrate to themselves, their peers, their teachers, and their families that they are ready for college. In addition to completing this portfolio, all seniors will be required to present and defend their portfolio to a panel of evaluators.

Student portfolios are digital and must include the following elements:

- Four proficient (proficiency= 85 percent or higher grade on the assessment) portfolio projects in three different domains along with a written reflection for each assessment
- The junior year Personal Growth Project
- A thoughtful cover letter

To prepare for the graduate portfolio defense, students present one portfolio eligible assessment at a Grade-Level Exhibition Night to which parents and community members are invited. Students have many choices to make regarding the focus exhibition, and each project presented at an Exhibition Night is evaluated by the faculty as well as outside judges. Judges include subject-matter experts, Trustees of the Board, families, teachers, and select community members. Students are evaluated according to a rubric which incorporates content measures as well as presentation skills.

BLACKSTONE VALLEY REGIONAL TECHNICAL HIGH SCHOOL Portfolio; Industry-Recognized Credential

Requirement: Every student in grades 11 and 12 is required to submit a portfolio at the end of each year. Students must obtain OSHA 10 General Industry or OSHA Construction certification to graduate.

Description: The Student Portfolio Program at Blackstone Valley Regional Vocational Technical High School is an “Across-the-Curriculum” initiative that provides the opportunity, instruction, and provisions for every student to create a portfolio that demonstrates compelling evidence of the vocational, academic, and employability skills acquired throughout the high school career. Every student in grades 11 and 12 is required to submit a portfolio at the end of each year to be used as part of the evaluation of the student’s annual performance, and promotion/graduation status, as well as employment and/or postsecondary education readiness.

MELROSE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Capstone; Portfolio; Community Service; Work-Based Learning

Requirements: Digital Portfolio; The “-isms” Project; Civic Action Project; Senior Capstone; Senior Internship Program; Community Service (12 hours each year).

Description: Each year, students will engage in an experience that will provide them with an opportunity to reflect on their progress toward achieving the skills, dispositions, traits, and knowledge necessary for future success as a 21st century citizen and learner. The experiences are summarized below.

9th Grade	<u>Digital Portfolio:</u> Students in Freshman Seminar will build and use a digital portfolio to drive goal setting, reflection, and assessment. With a focus on our Habits of Learning rubrics, students will evaluate learning targets and then create a plan to build and develop skills to help prepare them for high school. Students will also develop their learning profile.
10th Grade	<u>The “-isms” Project:</u> Students in English 2 Honors will research a group that has been traditionally marginalized in our society. Using their digital portfolio as a platform, students will create a plan for inquiry and engage in the research process. Students will read fiction and nonfiction, attend a panel discussion, write a synthesis paper incorporating their ideas and findings, and propose ways to encourage changes that increase global understanding.
11th Grade	<u>Civic Action Project:</u> Students in Leaders in Civic Action will investigate a non-partisan, student-led civics action project. Using their digital portfolio as a platform, students will design civic action projects to analyze complex issues including social justice topics; consider differing points of view; make and support claims using valid evidence; engage in civil discussions with others; and investigate issues that impact our school and community. This will foster leaders that are

	responsible, proactive, and informed global citizens who are empathetic, curious, open-minded with a growth mindset, and who take ownership of their impact on others and the world.
12th Grade	<u>Senior Capstone</u>: To gain final credit, a Senior must successfully complete and receive a passing grade on a Senior Capstone Project under the direction of his or her English 4 teacher. The project, which will help determine students' mastery of 21st century learning skills, consists of multiple components that students will complete throughout the school year and share using their digital portfolio. With the support of their English teacher, other staff members, the subject mentor and the administration, students will be guided through the process of conducting research, coordinating and implementing fieldwork, creating a product, and delivering a culminating panel presentation. <u>Senior Internship Program</u>: In order to provide extended learning opportunities to all students, Seniors will spend Q4 exploring and researching a career opportunity via the Senior Internship Program.

Community Service is required of all students to graduate. Twelve hours are required for each year a student attends Melrose High School. Of these required service hours, a total of 30 hours of content-specific community service are required for students participating in the GEM (Global Education in Melrose) and/or STEM pathways.

MassCore Completion

Districts' local graduation requirements were compared to the standards established in MassCore, the state's recommended high school program of study (*Figure 10: MassCore Framework*).⁵⁴

Figure 10: MassCore Framework

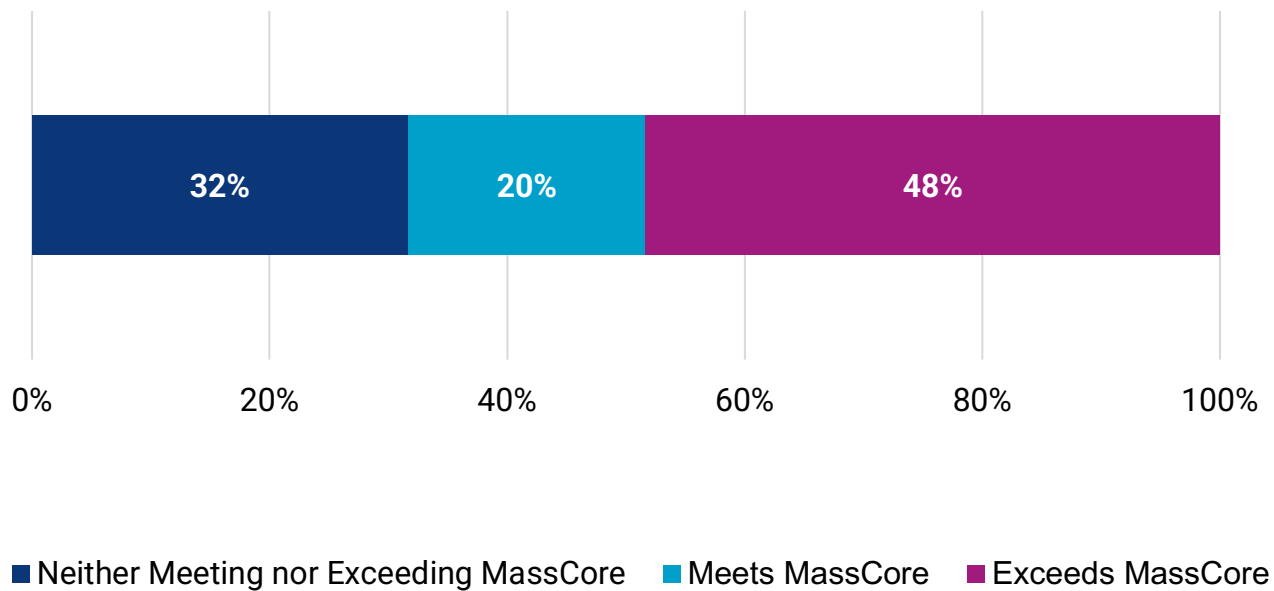
Subject	Units	Notes
English Language Arts	4 Units	

⁵⁴ Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. (2018, October 1). *MassCore Framework: Massachusetts High School Program of Studies*. Commonwealth of Massachusetts. <https://www.doe.mass.edu/ccte/courses-learning/masscore/default.html>

Subject	Units	Notes
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 recommendations for World language requirements.		

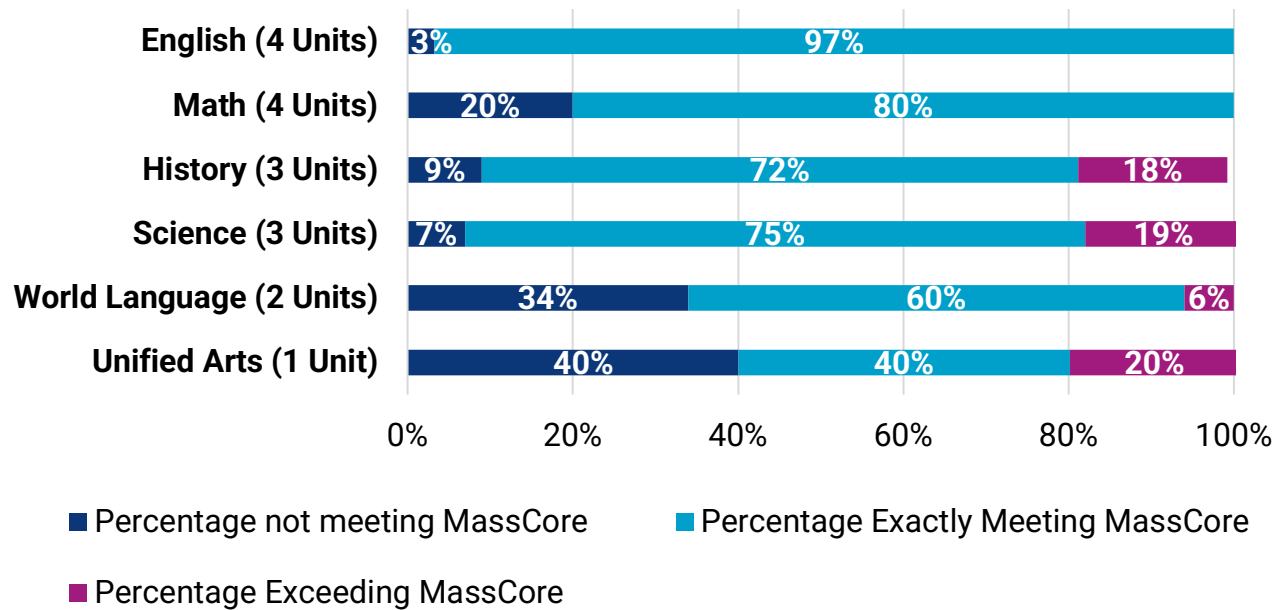
Sixty-eight percent of sampled districts' local graduation requirements **matched or exceeded the course requirements of MassCore** (*Figure 11: District Leader Survey*). Nearly half exceeded MassCore requirements.

Figure 11: District Leader Survey – Local Requirements Compared to MassCore



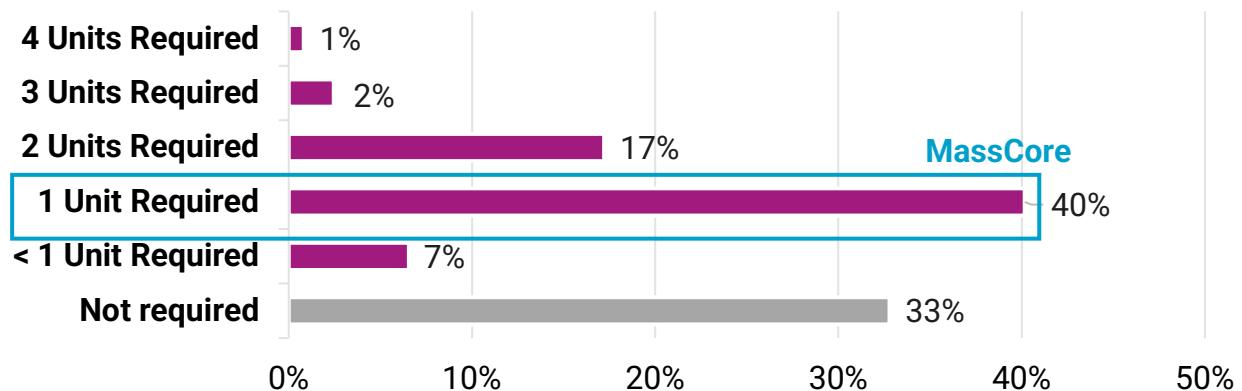
Of the 32 percent of districts whose graduation requirements neither matched nor exceeded MassCore, the most frequent MassCore standards that they did not meet were Unified Arts, World Language, and four years of Math (*Figure 12: Alignment Between District Coursework Requirements and MassCore*).

Figure 12: Alignment Between District Coursework Requirements and MassCore

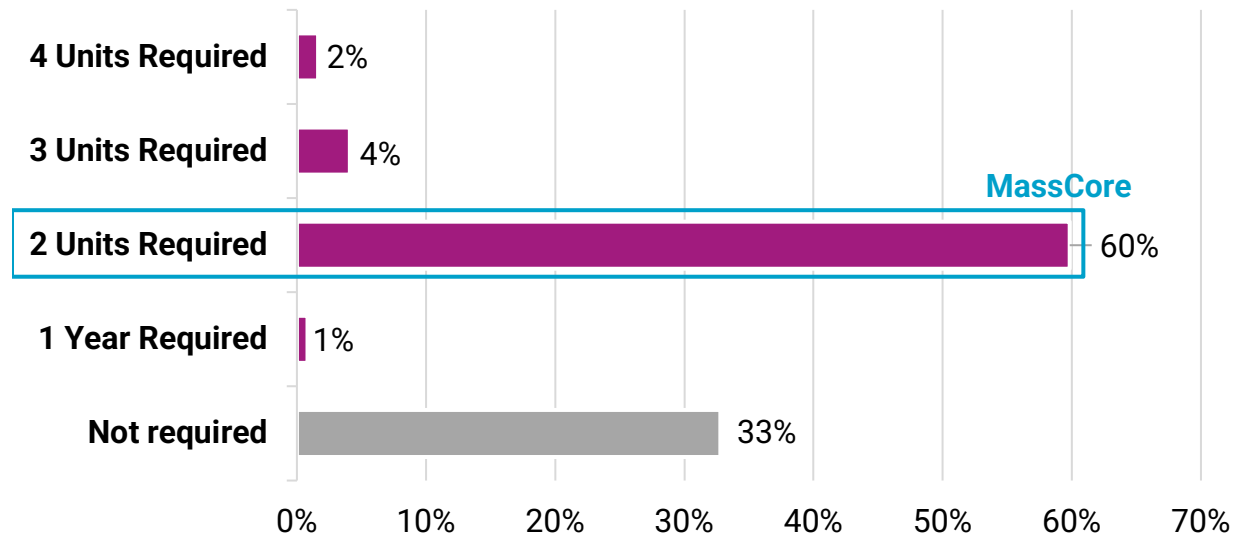
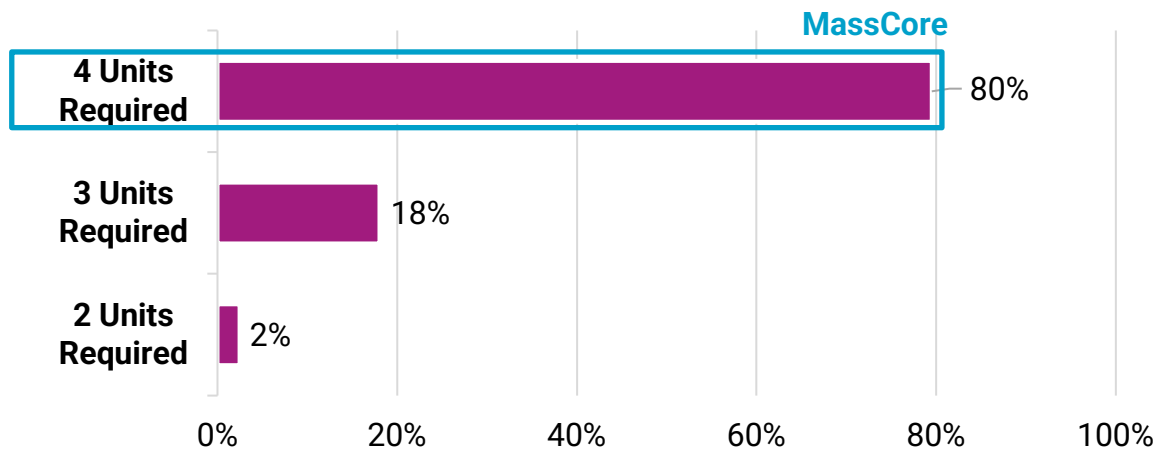


The number of required units in Unified Arts, Foreign Language, and Math varied across the sampled districts.⁵⁵

Figure 13: Unified Arts Required Units



⁵⁵ For the purposes of this analysis, all credit and year requirements were converted to units, where one year is equivalent to a unit.

Figure 14: World Language Required**Figure 15: Math Required Units**

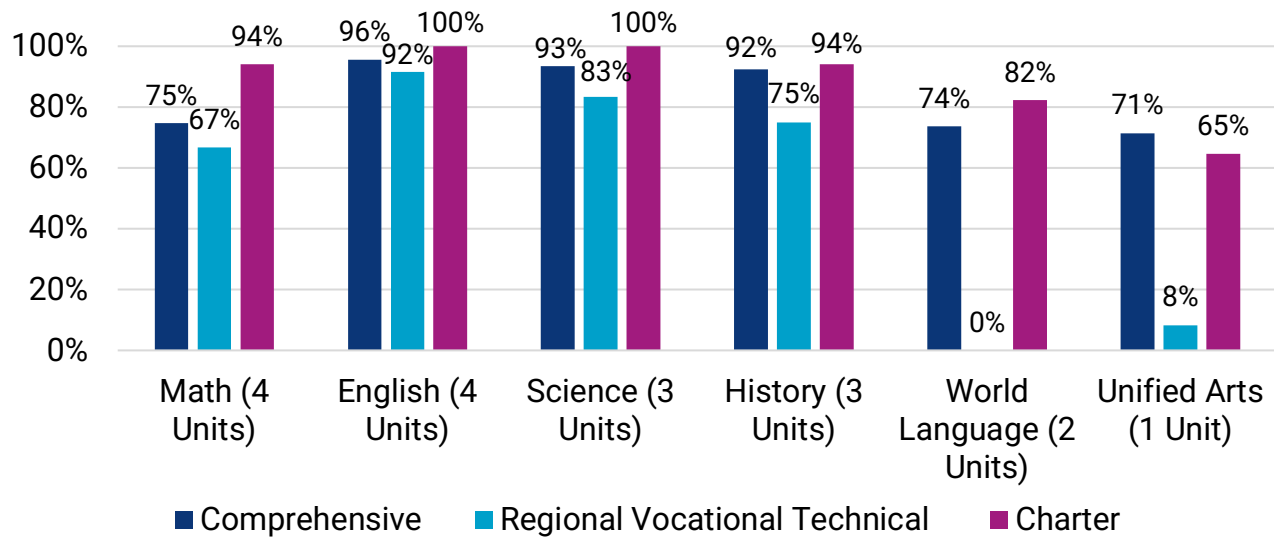
Districts described not requiring these courses due to:

- **Flexibility of course load.** Desire to provide a variety of elective options and flexibility for students.
- **Scheduling.** Block scheduling and vocational programming schedules limit the number of core courses that align with MassCore.
- **Funding and Resources.** Limited funding for full-time equivalents (FTEs) to support arts and world language courses.

MassCore and District Characteristics

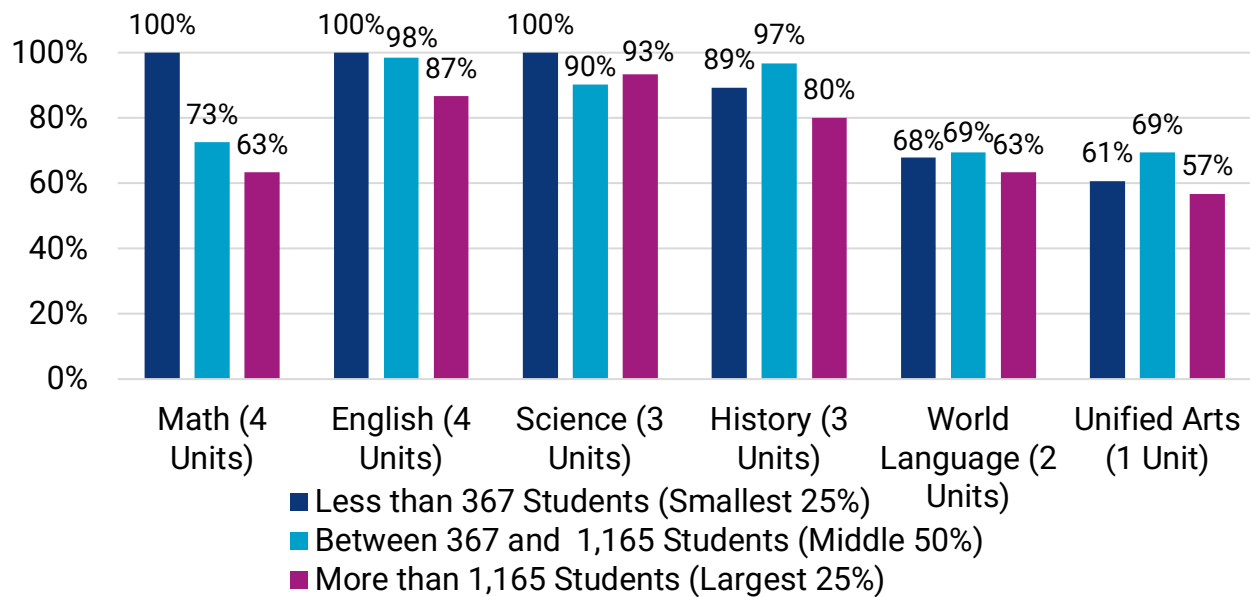
PCG analyzed coursework requirements segmented by district type (comprehensive, charter, and regional vocational technical schools), size of high school population, and per pupil expenditures to examine where variance may exist in alignment with MassCore requirements.

Figure 16: Percentage of Districts Meeting or Exceeding MassCore by Subject and District Type



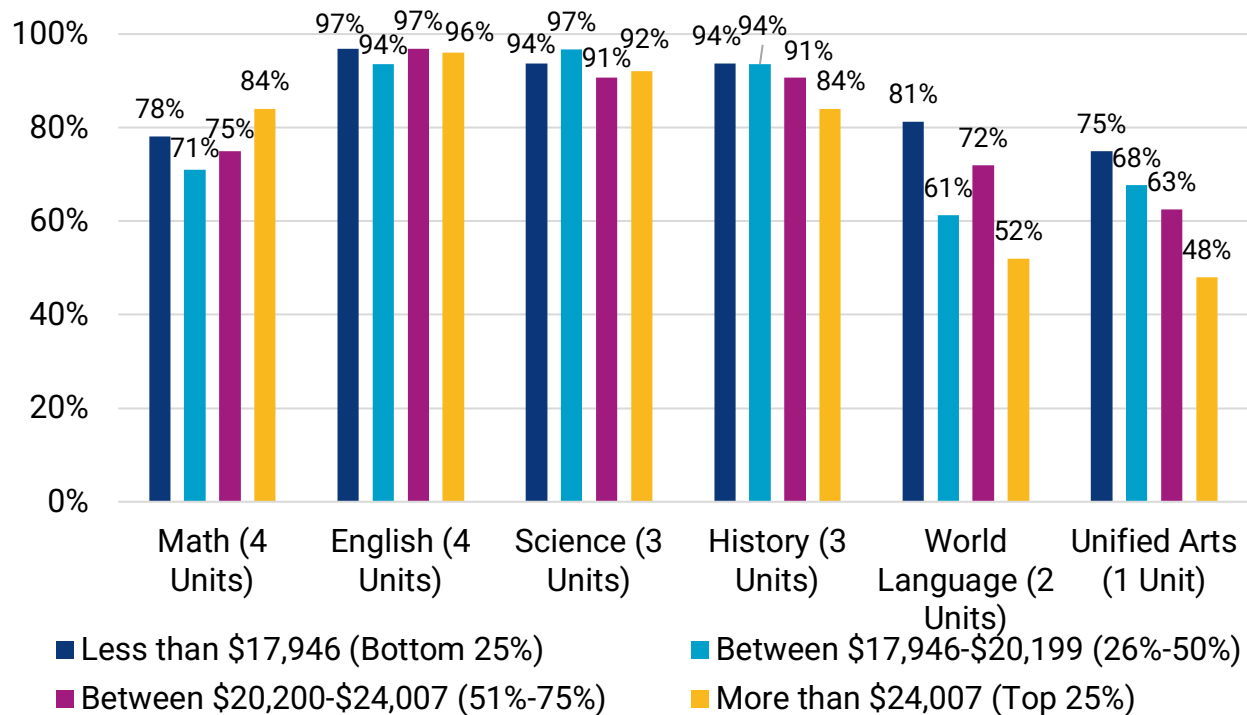
Across district types, charters were the most likely to meet or exceed MassCore standards in every subject except for Unified Arts. Regional vocational technical schools were the least likely to meet MassCore standards for every subject. Currently, students enrolled in state-approved Career and Technical Education programs have the option of opting out of the World Language and Unified Arts requirements and still fulfilling MassCore.

Figure 17: Percentage of Districts Meeting or Exceeding MassCore by Subject and District Size



- Across nearly all subjects, the largest 25 percent of districts in terms of 9-12 student enrollment (more than 1,165 students) were the least likely to meet MassCore standards compared to smaller districts
- The smallest 25 percent of districts (less than 367 students) were most likely to meet MassCore standards in Math, English, and Science.

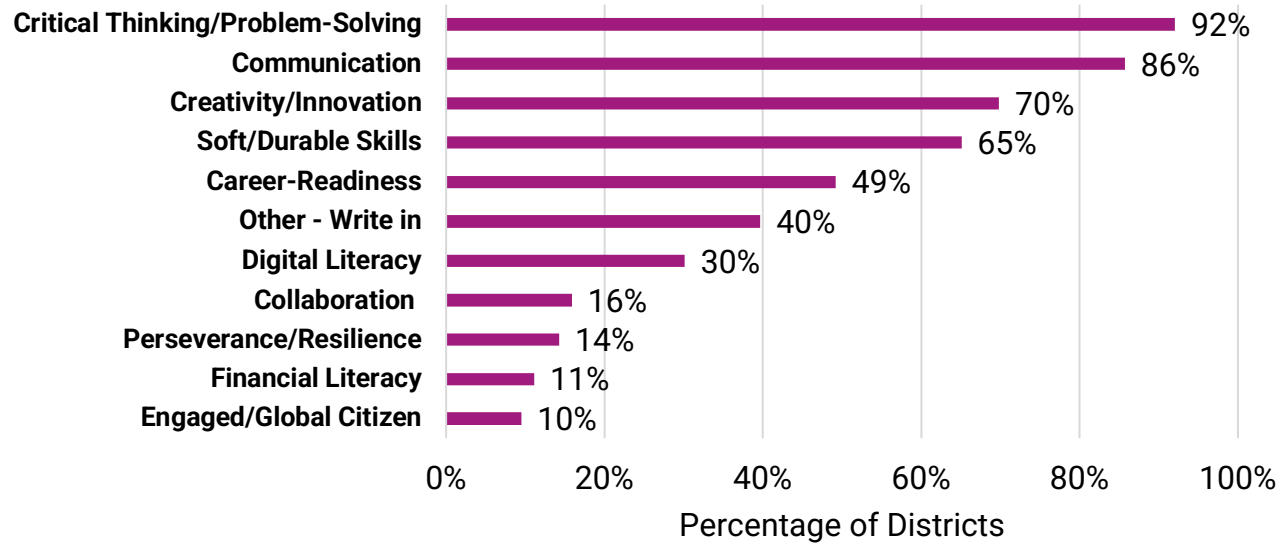
Figure 18: Percentage of Districts Meeting or Exceeding MassCore by Subject and Per Pupil Expenditure



- The top 25 percent of districts by per pupil expenditure (more than \$24,007 per pupil) were *most likely* to meet MassCore standards for Math as well as *least likely* to meet MassCore standards for World Language and Unified Arts.
- Given that MassCore completion varies significantly by district type, PCG also analyzed the percentage of comprehensive school districts meeting or exceeding MassCore standards. When excluding charters and regional vocational technical schools, the top 25 percent of districts by per pupil expenditure were most likely to meet MassCore standards for Math (100 percent) and World Language (83 percent), and third most likely to meet MassCore Standards for Unified Arts (67 percent).

Portrait of a Graduate/Vision of a Learner

The survey also asked district leaders to identify keys skills and competencies defined in their Portrait of a Graduate (PoG) or Vision of Learner (VoL). Of surveyed districts, **62 percent reported having either a PoG or a VoL**. The most common elements of districts PoG or VoL were critical thinking/problem solving, communication, and creativity/innovation (*Figure 19: Elements of Portrait of a Graduate/Vision of a Learner*).

Figure 19: Elements of Portrait of a Graduate/Vision of a Learner

Of districts with either a PoG or VoL, **87 percent either agreed or strongly agreed** that their local graduation requirements were directly related to their PoG or VoL. When asked about the **challenges they experience in ensuring all students develop the skills and competencies described in their Portrait of a Graduate or similar documents**, district leaders identified the following:

Integration into the high school program. Many districts are in the early stages of implementing their Portrait of a Graduate, making it difficult to fully integrate these competencies into the curriculum and graduation requirements. District leaders named a need for clear benchmarks and alignment with existing assessments and coursework.

Measurement. Leaders noted a lack of standardized assessments to measure the competencies described in the Portrait of a Graduate. Specifically, they mentioned difficulty in measuring qualitative data around "soft skills" such as collaboration, critical thinking, and adaptability. Developing reliable rubrics and performance-based assessments is a need for districts.

Alignment with Grading Framework and Graduation Requirements. District leaders expressed that existing grading systems prioritize content knowledge and traditional academic performance, creating a disconnect with the competencies emphasized in the Portrait of a Graduate. They noted that misalignment between graduation requirements and Portrait of a Graduate competencies can lead to lack of buy-in from students, staff, and the community.

Resources and Support. Leaders articulated a need for funding and staffing to support the implementation and assessment processes. They noted that professional development, coaching, and time are necessary for effective

curriculum revision and integration. Leaders also stated a need for more state guidance and support to align the Portrait of a Graduate with broader educational standards and requirements.

Equity and Accessibility. Leaders shared challenges in ensuring that diverse learner profiles, including English language learners and students with disabilities, can access and demonstrate the required competencies. District leaders noted that more needs to be done to address the needs of students from varying backgrounds and literacy levels.

Stakeholder Engagement: Leaders identified a need to make the Portrait of a Graduate feel relevant and actionable to students, staff, and the community, noting a desire to engage more educators and students in defining and measuring these skills and competencies.

Sample of Districts

The following charts represent districts that responded to the survey and the sample of districts analyzed through additional research. PCG analyzed 120 districts total—103 districts responded to the survey and PCG analyzed 17 through additional research.

Figure 20: Districts Responding to Survey

Surveyed Districts	
Abington Public Schools	Lexington Public Schools
Acton Boxborough Regional School District	Longmeadow Public Schools
Agawam Public Schools	Lunenburg Public Schools
Ashland Public Schools	Lynnfield Public Schools
Athol Royalston Regional School District	Map Academy Charter School
Attleboro Public Schools	Martha's Vineyard Charter School
Auburn Public Schools	Mashpee Public Schools
Avon Public Schools	Maynard Public Schools
Barnstable Public Schools	Medfield Public Schools
Bedford Public Schools	Medway Public Schools
Belmont Public Schools	Mendon-Upton Regional School District

Surveyed Districts	
Berkshire Arts and Technology Charter Public	Monomoy Regional School District
Boston Public Schools	Montachusett Regional Vocational Technical
Bourne Public Schools	Nashoba Regional School District
Bridgewater-Raynham Public Schools	Needham Public Schools
Burlington Public Schools	Neighborhood House Charter School
Canton Public Schools	North Andover Public Schools
Carver Public Schools	North Middlesex Public Schools
Central Berkshire Regional School District	North Reading Public Schools
Chelsea Public Schools	Northampton Public Schools
City on a Hill Charter School	Norton Public School District
Clinton Public Schools	Norwell Public Schools
Community Charter School of Cambridge	Old Colony Regional Vocational Technical
Danvers Public Schools	Old Rochester Regional High School
Dartmouth Public Schools	Pentucket Regional
Douglas High School	Pioneer Charter School of Science II
Easthampton Public Schools	Pioneer Valley Regional School District
Easton Public Schools	Pittsfield Public Schools
Everett Public Schools	Quabbin Regional School District
Fairhaven Public Schools	Reading Public Schools
Fitchburg Public Schools	Rockland Public Schools
Foxborough Public Schools	Seekonk Public Schools
Framingham Public Schools	Silver Lake Regional School District
Franklin Public Schools	Somerset Berkley Regional School District
Foxboro Regional Charter School	South Shore Charter Public School

Surveyed Districts	
Frontier Regional School	Southern Worcester County Regional Vocational School District
Gateway Regional School	Spencer-East Brookfield Regional School District
Global Learning Charter	Stoneham Public Schools
Greater New Bedford Vocational Technical High School	Tantasqua Public Schools
Greater Commonwealth Virtual School District	Taunton Public Schools
Greater Fall River Regional Vocational Technical	Watertown Public Schools
Greater Lowell Regional Vocational Technical	Wayland Public Schools
Hadley Public Schools	Webster School District
Hamilton-Wenham Regional	West Bridgewater Public Schools
Hampden Charter School of Science	Westborough Public Schools
Hampden-Wilbraham Regional School District	Westfield Public Schools
Hampshire Regional	Westford Public Schools
Hatfield Public Schools	Weston Public Schools
Haverhill Public Schools	Westwood Public Schools
Hingham Public Schools	Whitman-Hanson Regional School District
Ipswich Public Schools	Wilmington Public Schools
Leominster Public Schools	

Figure 21: Additional Sampled Districts for Independent Research

Sampled Districts	
Academy of the Pacific Rim Charter Public School	KIPP Academy Lynn Collegiate
Blackstone Valley Regional Vocational Technical	Lynn Public Schools
Blue Hills Regional Vocational Technical	Match Charter Public School
Boston Preparatory Charter School	Northampton-Smith Vocational Agricultural
Bristol County Agricultural	Phoenix Charter Academy Springfield
Brockton Public Schools	Prospect Hill Academy Charter School
Cape Cod Regional Vocational Technical	Springfield International Charter School
McCann Technical School	Worcester Public Schools
Greater Lawrence Technical School	

APPENDIX C: NATIONAL LANDSCAPE OF GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

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 H: References for Nationwide Landscape Analysis.

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 22: MassCore Course Requirements*) is highlighted when applicable.

Figure 22: 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.

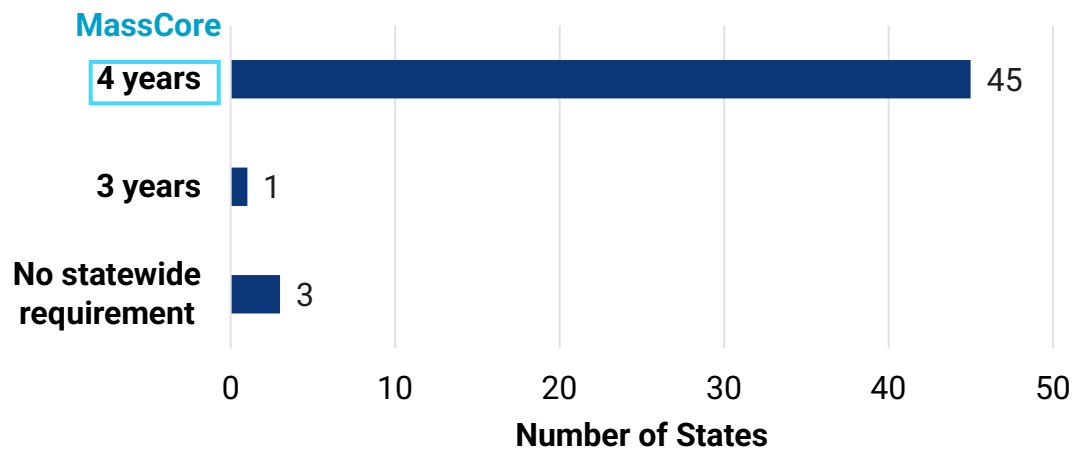
Note. Data retrieved from “MassCore Framework” by Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, (<https://www.doe.mass.edu/ccte/courses-learning/masscore/framework.docx>)

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).⁵⁶ Vermont, Colorado, 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 23: English Language Arts Course Requirements by State

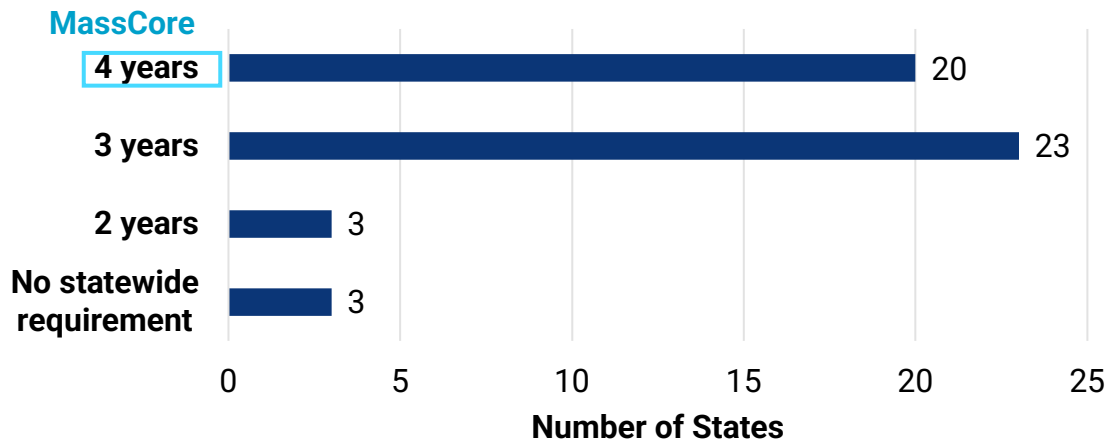


Note. Data retrieved from state agency websites. Connecticut has a Humanities requirement that may be inclusive of English Language Arts coursework but does not have a specific English Language Arts requirement; Connecticut has been excluded from this count.

As shown in *Figure 23: English Language Arts Course Requirements by State*, 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.

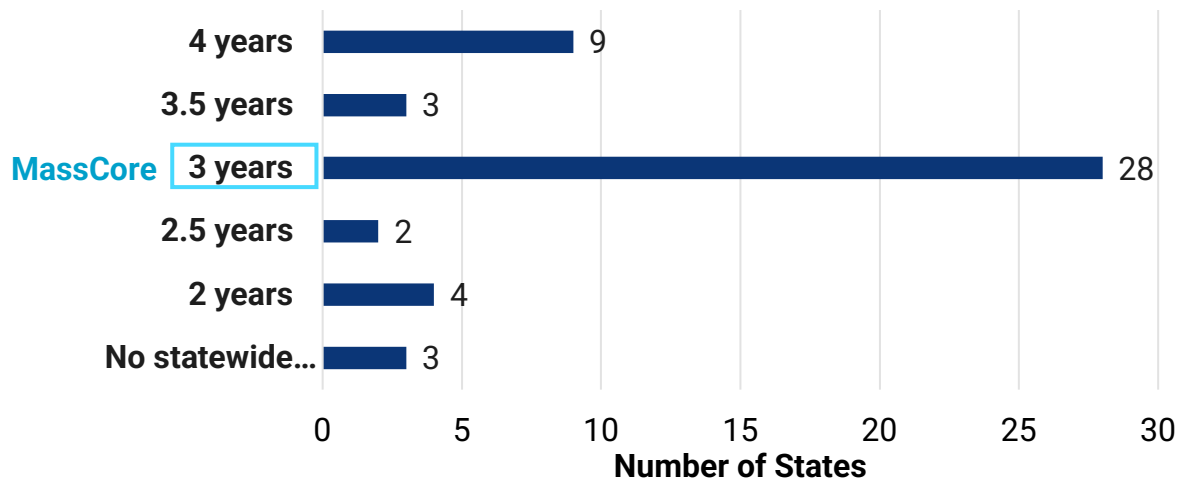
⁵⁶ "Required Public School Program of Study." *The Office of Legislative Research*. Published July 8, 2022. Retrieved August 18, 2025. <https://www.cga.ct.gov/2022/rpt/pdf/2022-R-0145.pdf>

Figure 24: 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.

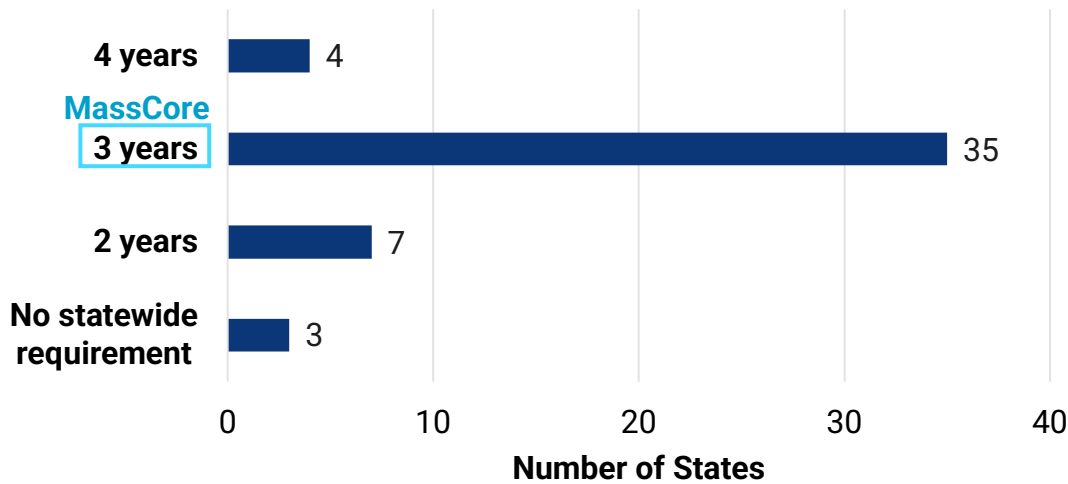
As shown in *Figure 24*, 43 states required three or four years of Mathematics. Thirty-four states specified which Math courses (such as Algebra I or Geometry) or content areas must be covered to meet the graduation requirement. **Thirteen states required Algebra II (or an equivalent course). Twenty states required four years of Mathematics**, which is the MassCore recommendation.

Figure 25: 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 25*, **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.

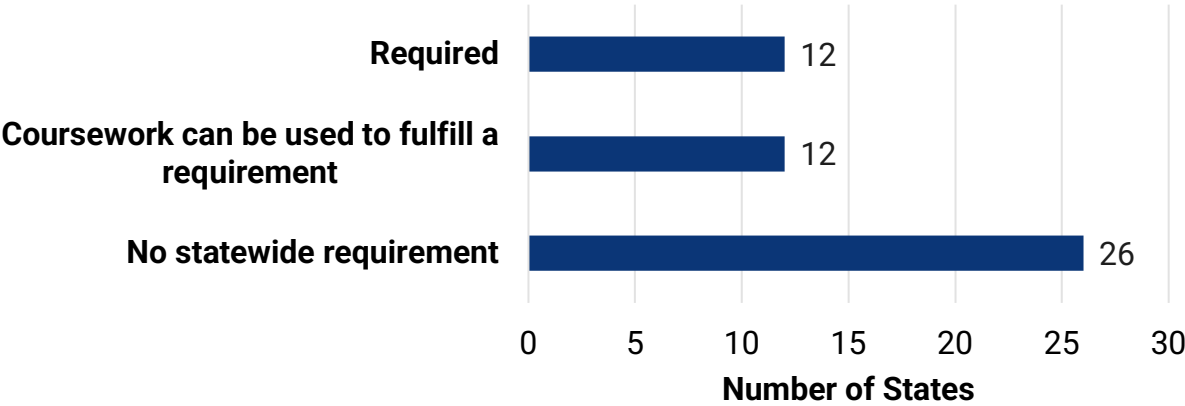
Figure 26: Science Course Requirements by State



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.

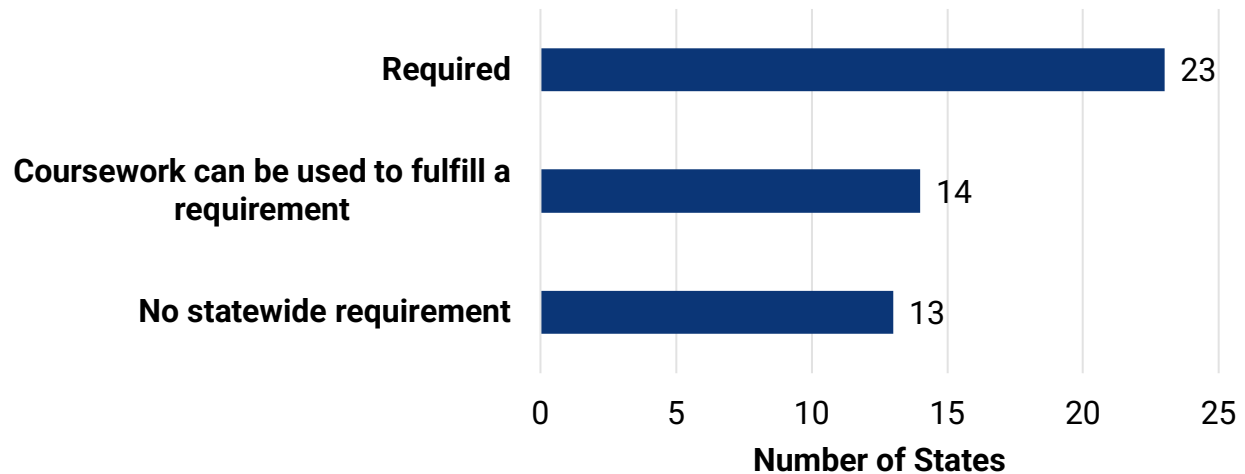
As highlighted in *Figure 26*, **35 states required students to complete three years of Science** to graduate high school, which matches MassCore’s guidelines. Thirty-two states articulated specific provisions regarding Science coursework. Of those 32 states, 25 states specified what Science coursework (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 27: World Language Course Requirements by State



Note. Data retrieved from state agency websites.

As shown in *Figure 27*, **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 28: Art Course Requirements by State

Note. Data retrieved from state agency websites.

As highlighted in Figure 28, **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.⁵⁷

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.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ "State Minimum High School Graduation Requirements." *California Department of Education*. Retrieved August 19, 2025.

<https://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/gs/hs/hsgrmin.asp>

⁵⁸ "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>

Figure 29: 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	

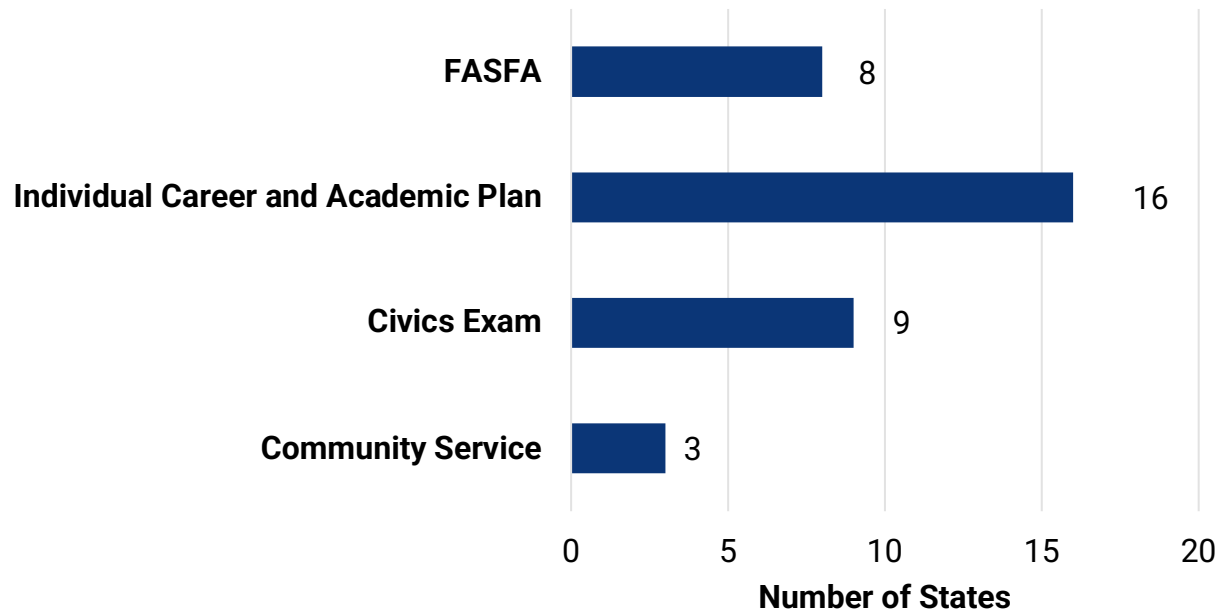
Note. Data retrieved from state agency websites. New York was excluded from this count as it is currently phasing out its assessment requirement.

As shown *Figure 29*, **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.⁵⁹ New York was excluded from this analysis as the state is currently phasing out its assessment requirement.

College, Career, and Civic Readiness

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

⁵⁹ "Academic Advisements: Students Entering Grade 9 in 2023-2024 and Thereafter." *Florida Department of Education*. Retrieved July 21, 2025. <https://www.fldoe.org/core/fileparse.php/7764/urlt/aa flyer-2324thereafter.pdf>

Figure 30: College, Career, and Civic Readiness Requirements

Note. Data retrieved from state agency websites.

As shown *Figure 30*, **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 FASFA** (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 D: STATEWIDE GRADUATION COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP

The Council consisted of the following members:

- **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
- **Byron Guadalupe**, Holyoke High School Student
- **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
- **Jim 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
- **Pedro Martinez**, DESE Commissioner
- **Representative Alice Peisch**, House Speaker Appointee

- **Simo Ouazzani**, Brockton High School Educator, Massachusetts Association of Teachers of Speakers of Other Languages
- **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 has been meeting monthly since March 2025:

- 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

APPENDIX E: 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: Chinese, English, Haitian Creole, Portuguese, Spanish, and Vietnamese.

The statewide survey received 6,615 response. The roles and demographics of respondents are detailed in Figure 31 through Figure 35.

Figure 31: Statewide Survey Respondents by Role and Demographics

		Number of Respondents	Percent of Respondents
Role ⁶⁰	Student	393	6%
	Graduate	305	5%
	Parent/Caregiver	2,361	36%
	School-based Staff	3,129	47%
	District Staff	461	7%
	Partner ⁶¹	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 ⁶²	798	12% (34% of parent/caregiver respondents)
	Students with Disabilities ⁶³	101	2% (14% of student and graduate respondents)
Race/Ethnicity ⁶⁴	American Indian or Alaska Native	11	0.2%

⁶⁰ Respondents had the option to select multiple roles.

⁶¹ The role of "Partner" included advocates, researchers, and respondents affiliated with community-based organizations.

⁶² Respondents who selected the role of "Parent/Caregiver" were asked the question, "Are you a parent/caregiver of a child with a disability?"

⁶³ Respondents who selected the role of "Student" or "Graduate" were asked the question, "Do you have a disability?"

⁶⁴ 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 32: Respondents by Role

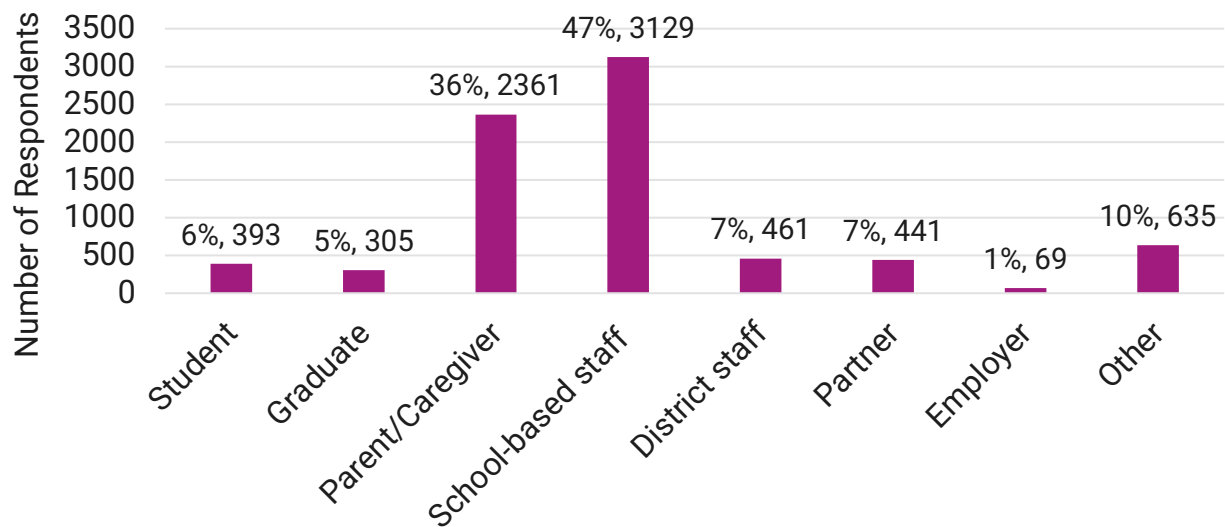


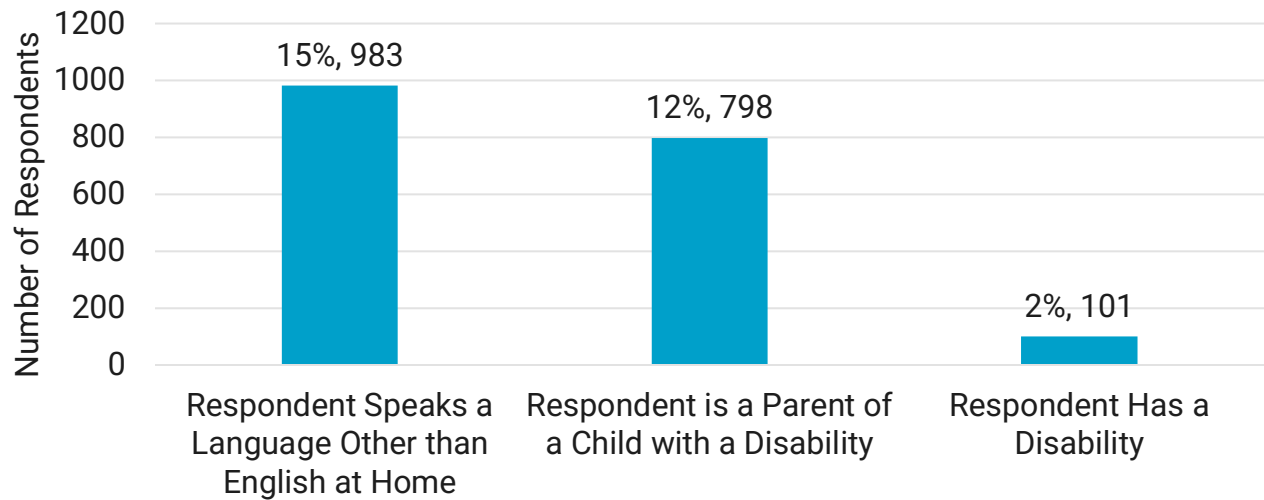
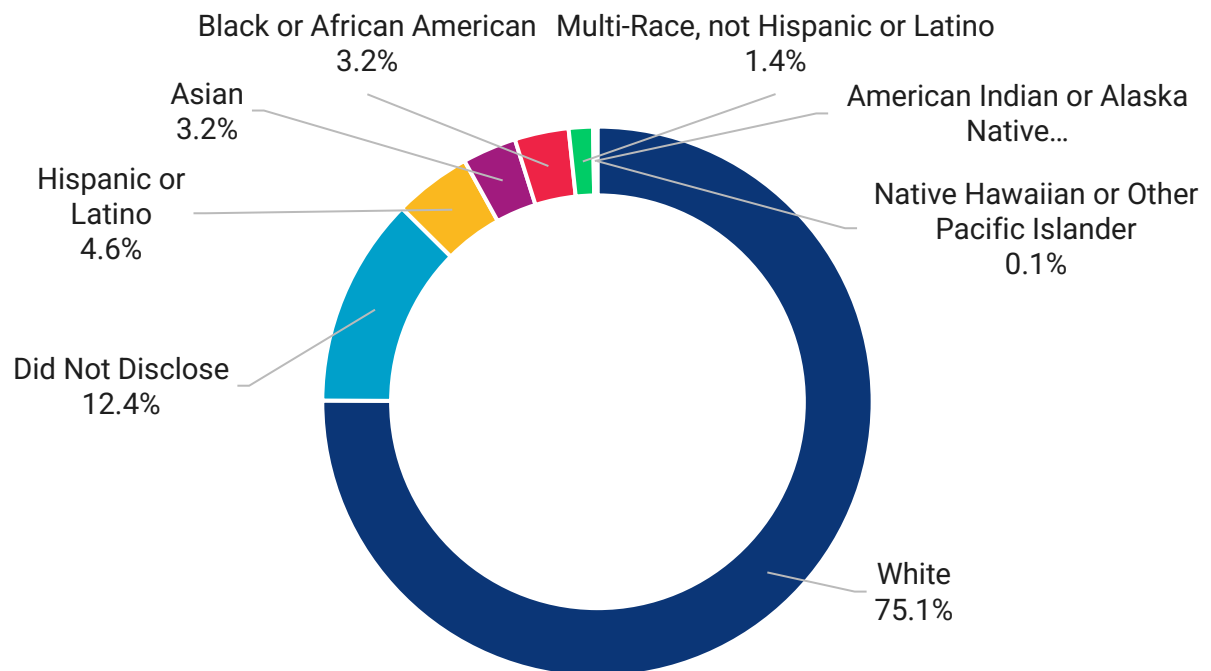
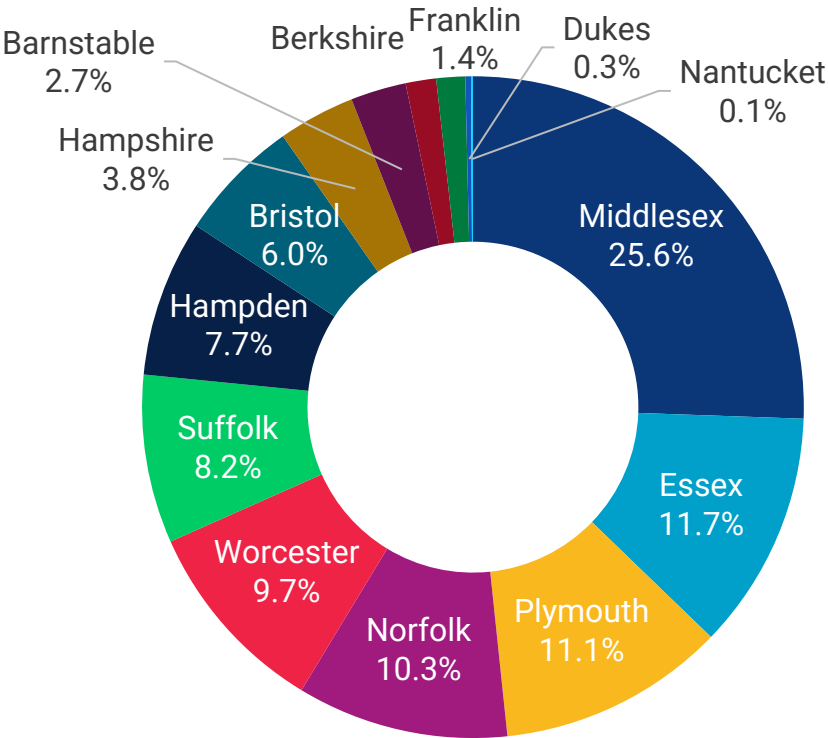
Figure 33: Respondents by Demographic**Figure 34: Respondents by Race/Ethnicity**

Figure 35: 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 36: What Should Students Know and Be Able To Do?

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 37: What Should Students Know and Be Able To Do?

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 38: What Should Students Know and Be Able To Do?

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 39: What Should Students Know and Be Able To Do? (Percent of Respondents Who Selected as One of Top Three)

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 40: What Should Students Know and Be Able To Do? (Percent of Respondents Who Selected as One of Top Three)

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 41: What Should Students Know and Be Able To Do? (Percent of Respondents Who Selected as One of Top Three)

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 42: What Coursework and Learning Experiences Should All Students Complete for College, Career, and Civic Life?

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 43: What Coursework and Learning Experiences Should All Students Complete for College, Career, and Civic Life?

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 44: What Coursework and Learning Experiences Should All Students Complete for College, Career, and Civic Life?

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 45: How Should Students Demonstrate Their Learning and College, Career, and Civic Readiness?

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 46: How Should Students Demonstrate Their Learning and College, Career, and Civic Readiness?

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 47: How Should Students Demonstrate Their Learning and College, Career, and Civic Readiness?

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

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 F: MASSCORE ALIGNMENT WITH HIGHER EDUCATION

Error! Reference source not found. 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 48: 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 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.
History & Social Science	3 units, including U.S. History and World History	2 courses, including U.S. History

Course	MassCore	Minimum 4-Year State Admissions Standards
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 G: 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 49: Listening Session Dates and Attendees

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

Alabama

- "Alabama High School Graduation Requirements 2028 and Beyond Option A." *Alabama State Department of Education*. Published February 14, 2025. Retrieved July 18, 2025. https://www.alabamaachieves.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/INSTRUCSER_GradRegs_20250214_AHSG-Requirements-2028-and-Beyond-Option-A_V1.0.pdf
- "Alabama High School Graduation Requirements 2028 and Beyond Option B." *Alabama State Department of Education*. Published February 18, 2025. Retrieved July 18, 2025. https://www.alabamaachieves.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/INSTRUCSER_GradRegs_20250218_AHSG-Requirements-2028-and-Beyond-Option-B_V1.0.pdf
- "College and Career Readiness Indicators." *Alabama State Department of Education*. Published March 4, 2024. Retrieved July 18, 2025. https://www.alabamaachieves.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/INSTRUCSER_GradRegs_20240304_College-and-Career-Readiness-Indicators_V1.0.pdf
- "Alabama High School Graduation Requirements Additional Guidance." *Alabama State Department of Education*. Published March 21, 2024. Retrieved July 18, 2025. https://www.alabamaachieves.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/GR_20240321_Alabama-High-School-Graduation-Requirements-Additional-Guidance_V1.0.pdf

Alaska

- "High School Graduation Requirements." *Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education*. Published April 2015. Retrieved July 18, 2025. https://acpe.alaska.gov/Portals/0/OTHER/Pubs/K2C_HS_Graduation_Requirements.pdf

Arizona

- "High School Graduation Information." *Arizona Department of Education*. Retrieved July 18, 2025. <https://www.azed.gov/standards-practices/high-school-graduation-information>
- "R7-2-302 Minimum Course of Study HS." *Arizona Department of Education*. Published July 2018. Retrieved July 18, 2025. <https://www.azed.gov/sites/default/files/2018/07/R7-2-302%20Minimum%20Course%20of%20Study%20HS.pdf?id=5b5249ae1dcb250d144f2c49>

Arkansas

- "Arkansas Graduation Requirements." *Arkansas Department of Education*. Published April 4, 2024. Retrieved July 24, 2025. https://dese.ade.arkansas.gov/Files/AR_Graduation_Requirements_4.4.24_LS.pdf
- "Arkansas Required High School Courses." *Arkansas Department of Education*. Published April 4, 2024. Retrieved July 24, 2025. <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1AP9jKclduiD2Hd7nMeN-z9xuCENJhhRD/view>

California

- "State Minimum High School Graduation Requirements." *California Department of Education*. Retrieved July 24, 2025. <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/gq/hs/hsgmin.asp>

Colorado

- "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>

Connecticut

- "Required Public School Program of Study." *Connecticut General Assembly Office of Legislative Research*. Published July 8, 2022. Retrieved July 21, 2025. <https://www.cga.ct.gov/2022/rpt/pdf/2022-R-0145.pdf>

Delaware

- "500 Curriculum and Instruction. 505 High School Graduation Requirements and Diplomas." *State of Delaware*. Published September 1, 2021. Retrieved July 21, 2025. <https://regulations.delaware.gov/AdminCode/title14/500/505.shtml>

District of Columbia

- "Graduation Excellent." *District of Columbia Public Schools*. Retrieved July 21, 2025. <https://dcps.dc.gov/graduation>

Florida

- "Academic Advisements: Students Entering Grade 9 in 2023-2024 and Thereafter." *Florida Department of Education*. Retrieved July 21, 2025. <https://www.fldoe.org/core/fileparse.php/7764/urlt/aa flyer-2324thereafter.pdf>

Georgia

- "Georgia Graduation Requirements." *Georgia Student Finance Commission*. Retrieved July 21, 2025. <https://www.gafutures.org/college-planning/college-decision-guide/graduation-requirements/>

Hawaii

- "Graduation Requirements." *Hawaii State Department of Education*. Published July 2023. Retrieved July 21, 2025. <https://hawaiipublicschools.org/academics/graduation-requirements/>

Idaho

- "Idaho High School Graduation Requirements." *Idaho State Department of Education*. Published May 3, 2023. Retrieved July 21, 2025. <https://www.sde.idaho.gov/topics/hs-grad-req/files/general/High-School-Graduation-Minimum-Requirements.pdf>

Illinois

- "Illinois graduation requirements 105 ILCS 5/27-22, 27-22.05, 27-22.10." *Illinois State Board of Education*. Published March 2025. Retrieved July 22, 2025. https://www.isbe.net/Documents/grad_require.pdf

Indiana

- "Diploma Requirements." *Indiana Department of Education*. Retrieved July 22, 2025. <https://www.in.gov/doe/students/graduation-pathways/diploma-requirements/>

Iowa

- "High School Education Program and Graduation Requirements." *Iowa Department of Education*. Published March 25, 2025. Retrieved July 22, 2025. <https://educate.iowa.gov/media/5467/download?inline>

Kansas

- "Graduation Requirements Fact Sheet - Class of 2028 and beyond." *Kansas State Department of Education*. Published July 17, 2024. Retrieved July 24, 2025. <https://www.ksde.gov/Portals/0/CSAS/CSAS%20Home/Graduation%20and%20Schools%20of%20Choice/Graduation%20Requirements%20Fact%20Sheet%20-%20Class%20of%202028%20and%20beyond%20July%202024.pdf?ver=2024-07-17-121630-723>

Kentucky

- "High School Graduation Requirements." *Kentucky Department of Education*. Published July 22, 2025. Retrieved July 24, 2025. <https://www.education.ky.gov/curriculum/hsgradreq/Pages/default.aspx>

Louisiana

- "2024-2025 High School Planning Guidebook." *Louisiana Department of Education*. Published September 25, 2024. Retrieved July 24, 2025. https://doe.louisiana.gov/docs/default-source/courses/2024-2025-high-school-planning-guidebook.pdf?sfvrsn=77e107de_4

Maine

- "Diplomas." *Maine Department of Education*. Retrieved July 24, 2025. <https://www.maine.gov/doe/learning/diplomas>

Maryland

- "Credit Requirements for High School Graduation in Maryland for Students Who Entered 9th Grade in SY2021-2022 or Thereafter." *Maryland State Department of Education*. Retrieved July 24, 2025. https://marylandpublicschools.org/about/Documents/DSFSS/SSSP/SchoolCounseling/HSGradCreditRequirements_2021Thereafter.pdf

Michigan

- "Michigan Merit Curriculum." *Michigan Department of Education*. Retrieved July 24, 2025. <https://www.michigan.gov/mde/services/academic-standards/mmc>

Minnesota

- "Graduation Requirements." *Minnesota Department of Education*. Retrieved July 24, 2025. <https://education.mn.gov/mde/dse/gradreq/>

Mississippi

- "Mississippi Public School Accountability Standards 2024." *Mississippi Department of Education*. Published March 11, 2025. Retrieved July 24, 2025. https://mdek12.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2025/03/Mississippi-Public-School-Accountability-Standards_2024.pdf

Missouri

- "Graduation Handbook: A Toolkit for Implementing for Missouri's Graduation Requirements." *Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education*. Published September 2023. Retrieved July 24, 2025. <https://dese.mo.gov/media/pdf/graduation-requirements>

Montana

- "10.55.905 Graduation Requirements." *Montana Office of Public Instruction*. Published July 1, 2023. Retrieved July 24, 2025. <https://rules.mt.gov/browse/collections/aec52c46-128e-4279-9068-8af5d5432d74/policies/017da286-c260-468e-a8de-24a8e8a56cb8>

Nebraska

- "Regulations and Procedures for the Accreditation of Schools." *Nebraska Department of Education*. Retrieved July 24, 2025. <https://www.nebraska.gov/nesos/rules-and-regs/regtrack/proposals/0000000000001131.pdf>
- "Nebraska Revised Statute 79-729." *Nebraska Legislature*. Retrieved July 24, 2025. [https://nebraskalegislature.gov/laws/statutes.php?statute=79-729#:~:text=High%20school%20students%3B%20graduation%20requirements,a\)%20of%20this%20section%20if%20of%20this%20section%20if\):](https://nebraskalegislature.gov/laws/statutes.php?statute=79-729#:~:text=High%20school%20students%3B%20graduation%20requirements,a)%20of%20this%20section%20if%20of%20this%20section%20if):)

Nevada

- "Nevada High School Diplomas." *Nevada Department of Education*. Retrieved July 24, 2025. https://webapp-strapi-paas-prod-nde-001.azurewebsites.net/uploads/nevada_diploma_requirements_for_2025_and_beyond_79ae239395.pdf

New Hampshire

- "Chapter Ed 300 Administration Of Minimum Standards In Public Schools." *New Hampshire Department of Education*. Published June 2022. Retrieved July 24, 2025. <https://www.education.nh.gov/sites/g/files/ehbemt326/files/inline-documents/sonh/ed-306.27-standard-regulation.pdf>

New Jersey

- "New Jersey State Minimum Graduation Requirements by Content Area." *New Jersey Department of Education*. Retrieved July 24, 2025. <https://www.nj.gov/education/standards/docs/grad.pdf>
- "Graduation Assessment Requirements." *New Jersey Department of Education*. Retrieved July 28, 2025. <https://www.nj.gov/education/assessment/requirements/>

New Mexico

- "Graduation Requirements." *New Mexico Public Education Department*. Retrieved July 28, 2025. <https://web.ped.nm.gov/bureaus/college-and-career-readiness-bureau/graduation/>

New York

- "Graduation Requirements." *New York State Department of Education*. Retrieved July 28, 2025. <https://www.nysed.gov/standards-instruction/graduation-requirements>

North Carolina

- "High School Graduation Requirements." *North Carolina Department of Public Instruction*. Retrieved July 28, 2025. <https://www.dpi.nc.gov/districts-schools/high-school-graduation-requirements>

North Dakota

- "Choice Ready Graduation Requirements." *North Dakota Department of Public Instruction*. Retrieved July 28, 2025. <https://www.nd.gov/dpi/sites/www/files/documents/Division%20of%20SS%26I/ESSA/Choice%20Ready/Essential%20Skills/Choice%20Ready%20Graduation%20Requirements.pdf>

Ohio

- "Ohio's Graduation Requirements." *Ohio Department of Education and Workforce*. Published November 2024. Retrieved July 28, 2025. <https://education.ohio.gov/getattachment/Topics/Ohio-s-Graduation-Requirements/Ohio%E2%80%99s-Graduation-Requirements/DEW-Graduation-Requirements.pdf.aspx?lang=en-US>

Oklahoma

- "Multi-year State Graduation Requirements." *Oklahoma State Department of Education*. Published March 19, 2025. Retrieved July 28, 2025. <https://oklahoma.gov/education/services/student-development/graduation-resources/state-graduation-requirements.html>
- "2025 CORE Curriculum Graduation Requirements." *Oklahoma State Department of Education*. Retrieved July 28, 2025. <https://oklahoma.gov/content/dam/ok/en/osde/documents/services/assessments/assessment-guidance/academic-advisement/2025-Core-Curriculum-Grad-Requirements.pdf>

Oregon

- "Oregon Diploma." *Oregon Department of Education*. Retrieved July 28, 2025. <https://www.oregon.gov/ode/students-and-family/OregonDiploma/Pages/default.aspx>

- "Oregon's Newest Diploma Requirements." *Oregon Department of Education*. Published 2023. Retrieved July 28, 2025. <https://www.oregon.gov/ode/students-and-family/OregonDiploma/Documents/SB%203%20Overview.pdf>

Pennsylvania

- "High school graduation requirements." *Commonwealth of Pennsylvania*. Retrieved August 19, 2025. <https://www.pacodeandbulletin.gov/Display/pacode?file=/secure/pacode/data/022/chapter4/s4.24.html&d=reduce>
- "Statewide High School Graduation Requirements." *Pennsylvania Department of Education*. Updated May 2023. Retrieved July 28, 2025. <https://www.pa.gov/agencies/education/programs-and-services/instruction/elementary-and-secondary-education/assessment-and-accountability/graduation-requirements>

Rhode Island

- "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>

South Carolina

- "High School Courses and Requirements." *South Carolina Department of Education*. Retrieved July 28, 2025. <https://ed.sc.gov/districts-schools/state-accountability/high-school-courses-and-requirements/>

South Dakota

- "High School Graduation Requirements." *South Dakota Department of Education*. Published July 2018. Retrieved July 28, 2025. <https://doe.sd.gov/gradrequirements/>

Tennessee

- "Graduation Requirements." *Tennessee Department of Education*. Retrieved July 28, 2025. <https://www.tn.gov/education/families/graduation-requirements.html>

Texas

- "State Graduation Requirements." *Texas Education Agency*. Retrieved July 28, 2025. <https://tea.texas.gov/academics/graduation-information/state-graduation-requirements>
- "Graduation Toolkit." *Texas Education Agency*. Retrieved August 19, 2025. <https://tea.texas.gov/about-tea/news-and-multimedia/brochures/graduationtoolkit2020-english-website.pdf>
- "Rule 74.11 High School Graduation Requirements." *Texas Secretary of State*. Published August 1, 2022. Retrieved July 28, 2025. https://texas-sos.appianportalsgov.com/rules-and-meetings?Slocale=en_US&interface=VIEW_TAC_SUMMARY&queryAsDate=07%2F28%2F2025&recordId=209690

Utah

- "High School Requirements." *Utah State Board of Education*. Retrieved July 28, 2025. <https://www.schools.utah.gov/curr/graduationrequirements?mid=1014&tid=2>

Vermont

- "Proficiency-Based Graduation Requirements." *Vermont Agency of Education*. Retrieved July 28, 2025. <https://education.vermont.gov/student-learning/proficiency-based-learning/proficiency-based-graduation-requirements>
- "Proficiency-Based Graduation Requirements Quality Criteria." *Vermont Agency of Education*. Retrieved July 28, 2025. <https://education.vermont.gov/sites/aoe/files/documents/edu-proficiency-based-graduation-requirements-quality-criteria.pdf>

Virginia

- "Standard Diploma: Graduation Requirements." *Virginia Department of Education*. Retrieved July 28, 2025. <https://www.doe.virginia.gov/parents-students/for-students/graduation/diploma-options/standard-diploma-graduation-requirements>
- "Graduation." *Virginia Department of Education*. Retrieved July 28, 2025. <https://www.doe.virginia.gov/parents-students/for-students/graduation>

Washington

- "Graduation Requirements for the Class of 2024 (and beyond)." *Washington State Board of Education*. Retrieved July 22, 2025. <https://sbe.wa.gov/our-work/graduation-requirements/graduation-requirements-class-2024-and-beyond>

West Virginia

- "West Virginia Board of Education Graduation Requirements." West Virginia Board of Education. Published February 2022. Retrieved July 22, 2025. <https://wvde.us/sites/default/files/2022/03/Graduation-Requirements-FEB-2022-Report.pdf>

Wisconsin

- "Graduation Requirements." *Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction*. Retrieved July 22, 2025. <https://dpi.wi.gov/graduation/requirements>

Wyoming

- "Chapter 31 Wyoming Graduation Requirements." *Wyoming Department of Education*. Retrieved July 22, 2025. https://edu.wyoming.gov/downloads/accountability/Chapter31_CLEAN.pdf