



News release

October 29, 2018

Preparing students for the 24-credit graduation requirement.

Beginning with the class of 2021, students will be required to earn 24 credits to graduate instead of 22. District staff has been preparing for those increased graduation requirements for the past four years.

Why the change?

In the 2014 session, the Washington State Legislature passed Senate Bill 6552 that directed the State Board of Education to implement the 24-credit graduation requirement for the class of 2019 and beyond. Individual school districts were given the option to apply for a waiver to delay implementation of the new graduation requirements for up to two years, until the class of 2020 or 2021. To date, 94 of the state's 295 school districts applied for a waiver. Everett Public Schools applied for the waiver and the 24-credit graduation requirement is effective beginning with the class of 2021.

The waiver allowed Everett Public Schools to refine existing systems, so students have access to enough classes and to the right classes – and so there is enough room in their schedules to make up any credits they might have failed. Systems designed for 22-credit success were not adequate for 24-credit success, no matter how successful students are today.

When the law passed, Everett Public Schools formed a *24-Credit Steering Committee* to prepare. The committee developed a core set of strategies focused on making credit options more available to ninth- and tenth-grade students. The committee also explored high school schedules to unpack the significant challenge created by a six-period high school day. With six periods in a day in four years of high school, requiring 24 credits leaves no room for failure.

Superintendent Gary Cohn noted, "Students who are most challenged today in a system that does have room to learn and recover from failure will be even more challenged in a system built with no room to recover from a fail. Our job, especially with the higher credit requirements, is to guide and support our students."

"It's not enough to simply 'require' students to get the credits," explained Cohn, "we must make it possible for them to do so and challenge and encourage them to take advantage of that opportunity. Students also need to be taking the right credits. Requiring more world language, more science and more math is the right thing to do to prepare students for their futures. In Everett Public Schools, we've achieved a 95 percent five-year graduation rate by identifying and removing barriers to students' success, not by lowering performance standards."

The 24-credit requirement includes flexibility for students to follow career pathways and to be ready for a variety of college and career options after high school.

What has the district done to prepare?

Systems already in place:

- “Just in time” intervention and credit recovery options. When students enter “the danger zone” of failing or nearly failing a class, schools intervene, work with families and students and teachers to build support so students can get back on track or recover lost credit.
- Expanded summer school programs, credit recovery, and extended day classes. The district’s summer school program is the largest in the region.
- *Naviance* and *High School and Beyond* plans begin in sixth grade and continue all the way through graduation. *Naviance* is an academic and career goal-setting and tracking system students and parents can work on together.
- Four times more course equivalency options are available than were three years ago.
- More middle school courses in which students can earn high school credit are available, including advanced math and science, freshman English, introductory Spanish, and Washington State History.
- More opportunities are available for teachers to learn scaffolded instruction techniques to help students progress and build upon what they are learning.
- More classes to help non-English speaking students learn academic English language to succeed in those subjects.

District staff continues to research different high school schedules and models to further support students’ abilities to meet the new requirements.

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