

Discussion of Graduation Requirements Policy and Possible Revisions for Consideration

April 4, 2011

Current Board Policy Language

- AUSD Board Policy 6146.1 defines AUSD high school graduation requirements while naming goals for college preparation and/or career readiness.
- The Board of Education desires to prepare all students to obtain a diploma of high school graduation to enable them to take advantage of opportunities for post-secondary education and/or employment.

Raising Expectations to Match Today's Standards

- To meet the ends of best preparing AUSD students for access to today's competitive public state colleges, AUSD staff recommends adoption of explicit policy language to reflect that aim:

The Board of Education supports AUSD's vision of providing a rigorous academic program for all students. In that regard, the Board is committed to ensuring that the AUSD high school curriculum aligns with student fulfillment of the UC "a-g" standards of course completion required for admission to selective state public universities. Thus, it is the Board's intent to ensure that all AUSD high school students are ensured access to UC "a-g" coursework.

Minimum Requirements for AUSD Graduation

- 4 years of English
- 2 years of mathematics (note: this aligns with the state requirement but is a year less than UC “a-g” requirement)
- 2 courses in science (one biological, one physical)
- 3 courses in social studies (including U.S. history, world history, one semester of American government and one semester of economics)

AUSD Minimum Requirements (continued)

- AUSD secondary administrators and Education Services staff met frequently to recommend other changes for consideration, including the following revision:

Current language:

Two courses in visual or performing arts, foreign language or technology

New language:

One course in visual or performing arts and one course in a world language

AUSD Minimum Requirements (continued)

- 2 years in physical education, unless exempted or satisfied through alternative means in accordance with California Education Code
- An ongoing question thus exists: Shall AUSD allow its students to satisfy PE requirements through interscholastic team participation or other means?

AUSD Minimum Requirements (continued)

- One semester course in Current Life Issues to satisfy state requirement in health education.
- A question also remains now as at least one California district has dropped this requirement. As other districts allow students to satisfy PE through alternative means, shall AUSD also do so for its Current Life Issues requirement?

Normal Course Load

- Current policy dictates that a normal course load shall be six courses per semester.
- It bears note that California Education Code allows juniors or seniors to take five courses per semester if they are enrolled in college or ROP coursework or participating in work experience.
- Allowing high school 11th and 12th graders flexibility in this manner could help provide them options in pursuit of concurrent college enrollment and/or work-based learning experiences, thus facilitating AUSD college and career readiness preparation.

Considerations For Other Policy Recommendations

- AUSD secondary school administrators have consulted faculty representatives to recommend the following:
 1. AUSD's graduation requirement of a 1.75 minimum GPA should be dropped, and no minimum GPA should be required.
 2. AUSD's graduation requirement of completion of a senior portfolio should be dropped also: the practice is no longer supported as particularly meaningful or reasonably practical in current implementation. It bears note the senior project requirement was dropped in recent years for similar reasons.
 3. AUSD graduation requirements could now be dropped from 230 to 210 required credits, thus providing options for students while still exceeding minimum state requirements.

AUSD Minimum Requirements (continued)

- 20 hours of community service
- Passing grades of “D” or higher are required for credit
- Passage of both sections (English Language Arts and mathematics) of the California High School Exit Exam

AUSD Minimum Requirements (continued)

- The working group of AUSD secondary administrators also recommended a policy revision requiring all students pass the CAHSEE to graduate and participate in commencement ceremonies, unless exempted and allowed instead to earn an AUSD Certificate of Completion because their Special Education Individual Education Plan (IEP) team determines their particular disability prohibits completion of AUSD Diploma of Graduation requirements.
- Previously an AUSD Certificate of Achievement allowed General Education students to graduate without CAHSEE passage.

Next Steps

- Our goal is to work with teachers and community stakeholders over the spring and fall of 2011 to vet and refine policy recommendations in order to present to the Board for final decision in December 2011.
- Ultimately our aim is to provide students with a course of study best suited to preparation for college and career readiness.

Conclusion

- Tonight staff has presented the Board with potential policy recommendations going forward to revise AUSD graduation requirements in order to align with AUSD's vision and mission.
- These policy recommendations would update AUSD graduation requirements to both provide students greater options and save AUSD limited resources.
- The purpose of this presentation is to gauge the values of the Board in order to best inform crucial policy decisions.