



# Graduation Requirements Since 2004

Washington State Board of Education  
April 2024



# State Board of Education Authority for Graduation Requirements

- (1) The state board of education shall establish high school graduation requirements or equivalencies for students, except as provided in RCW [28A.230.122](#) [International Baccalaureate] and [28A.655.250](#) [Pathway Graduation Requirement] and except those equivalencies established by local high schools or school districts under RCW [28A.230.097](#) [Career and Technical Education Course Equivalencies]...
- (2)(a) In recognition of the statutory authority of the state board of education to establish and enforce minimum high school graduation requirements, the state board shall periodically reevaluate the graduation requirements and shall report such findings to the legislature in a timely manner as determined by the state board...
- (c) The state board shall forward any proposed changes to the high school graduation requirements to the education committees of the legislature for review..."

([RCW 28A.230.090](#) note: citations may change due to 2024 HB 2110)



# State Board of Education Authority for Assessment Scores

- (b)(i)(A) Identify the scores students must achieve in order to meet the standard on the statewide student assessment, and the SAT or the ACT if used to demonstrate career and college readiness under RCW [28A.655.250](#). The board shall also determine student scores that identify levels of student performance below and beyond the standard. The board shall set such performance standards and levels in consultation with the superintendent of public instruction and after consideration of any recommendations that may be developed by any advisory committees that may be established for this purpose;

([RCW 28A.305.130](#))



# Background on Graduation Requirements and the Assessment System 1993-2008

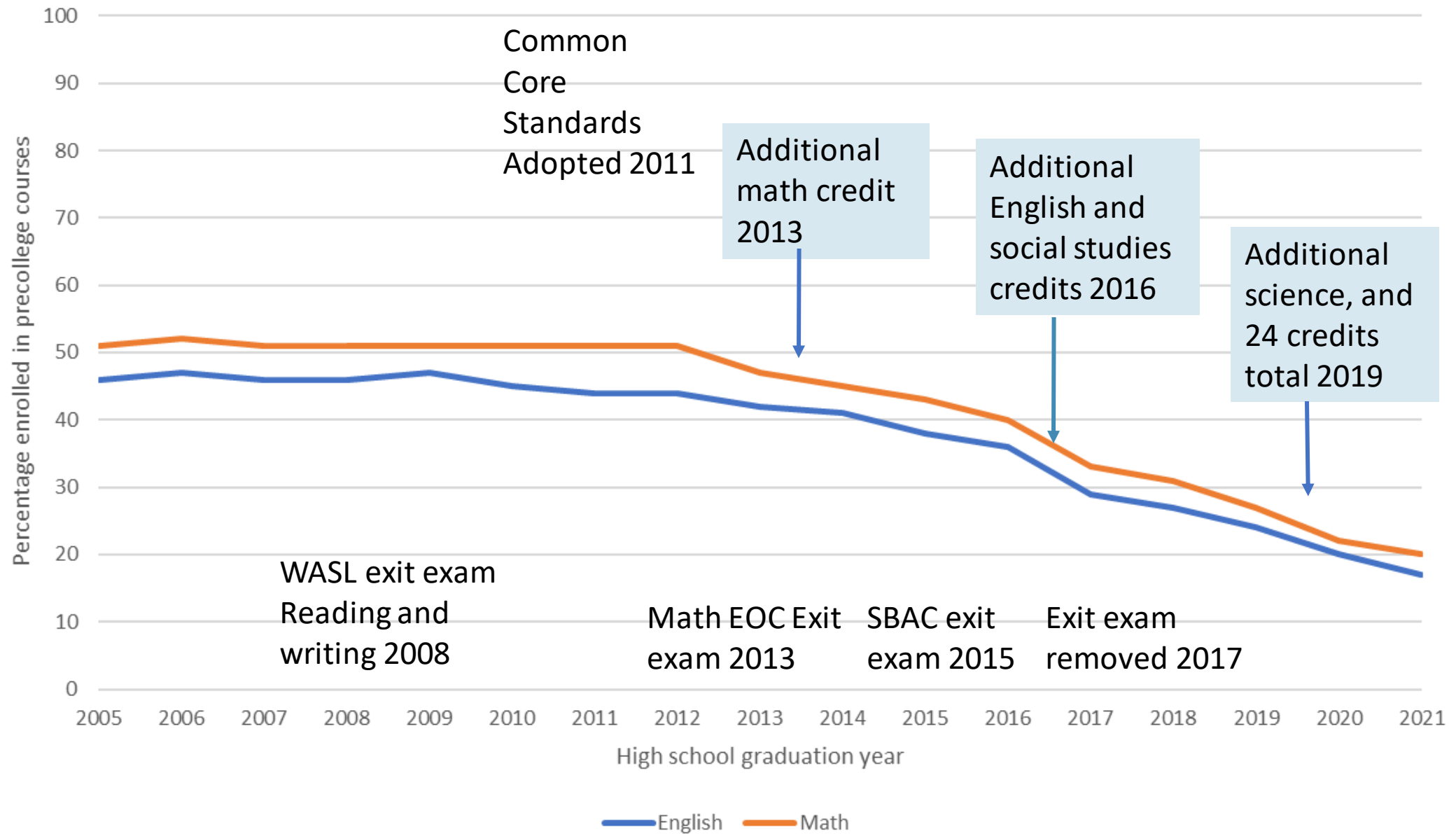
Year	Event
<b>1993-1999</b>	Development of state standards and state testing: Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL); students who passed their high school assessments received a Certificate of Mastery (later the Certificate of Academic Achievement, CAA); SBE was directed to set a timeline for assessments graduation requirements—the Class of 2008.
<b>1998-2001</b>	The Commission on Student Learning, followed by the Academic Achievement and Accountability (A+) Commission set achievement level scores on WASL tests.
<b>2001</b>	Federal No Child Left Behind Act was signed into law; the system of WASL tests was expanded to meet the federal requirements.
<b>2004</b>	The Legislature directed OSPI to develop assessment alternatives that were “comparable in rigor” to the WASL for students who were unsuccessful on the standardized test.
<b>2006</b>	The Legislature reconstituted SBE and directed the Board to revise the definition of the high school diploma.
<b>2008</b>	High school tests for graduation in Reading and writing; in math, students could pass the test or earn 2 credits of math after 10 <sup>th</sup> grade; SBE approved “Core-24,” High School and Beyond Plan and Culminating Project (eliminated in 2015) became requirements for this graduating class.



# Background on Graduation Requirements and the Assessment System 2008-2019

Year	Event
<b>2009-2010</b>	The Legislature directed a phased-in approach to the 24-credit requirements, subject to approval and funding by the Legislature; WASL became the Measurement of Student Progress in primary schools, High School Proficiency Exam in high school; <a href="#">SBE resolution</a> on requirements and credits.
<b>2011</b>	End-of-course (EOC) tests implemented in math; Common Core state standards adopted in Washington for English Language Arts and math.
<b>2013</b>	The Legislature approved funding to support implementing the 24-credit requirements (\$97 million added to the budget).
<b>2014</b>	The SBE approved a revised 24-credit framework ( <a href="#">2014 SBE resolution</a> ) and the Legislature approved it for Class of 2019; in 2014-2015 MSP, HSPE, EOCs were eliminated, and the Smarter Balanced Assessment (SBA) was administered.
<b>2017</b>	HSBP enhanced by Legislature (also in 2018, 2019, 2022, 2023); the high school SBA moved from 11 <sup>th</sup> grade to 10 <sup>th</sup> grade; Expedited Appeals of the assessment requirement established, Collections of Evidence eliminated, other approved options added.
<b>2019</b>	Assessment requirement (Certificate of Academic Achievement and Certificate of Individual Achievement) replaced with Pathway Graduation Requirement.

# Precollege Course Enrollment in Community and Technical Colleges (ERDC High School Graduate Outcomes)



# Credit and Subject Area Requirements

2004-2012	Current
3 English	<b>4</b> English
2 math	<b>3</b> math
2 science	<b>3</b> science
2.5 social studies	<b>3</b> social studies
2 health and fitness	.5 health and 1.5 physical education
1 CTE/occupational education	1 CTE/occupational education
1 arts	1 arts
5.5 electives	<b>4</b> electives + 3 personalized pathways-- arts, world language, or aligning to HSBP
19 total	<b>24</b> total (22 for individual students)

Mandatory courses, or their equivalent through mastery-based learning or crediting, are required in math and social studies. One social studies course, Civics, must be a stand-alone course.

# Timeline of Changes to Credit & Subject Area Requirements

## Class of 2013:

- One credit of math added
- Total credits increased to 20

## Class of 2019:

- One credit of science added
- 3 personalized pathway flexible credits added
- Total credits increased to 24

## Class of 2016:

- One credit of English added
- .5 credit of social studies added
- Decreased electives to 4 credits

## Class of 2024:

- .5 credit of Civics added as a stand-alone course
- .5 decrease in Contemporary World History--social studies remained 3 credits

# Considerations Concerning a 24-credit diploma During the Mid-2000's

- Aligning credit and subject area graduation requirements with baccalaureate admissions, as well as postsecondary education, training, and career expectations
  - A transcript study (BERC, 2008) done for the SBE showed unequal preparation in course-taking for postsecondary opportunities by racial and ethnic groups
- Establishing credit and subject area requirements commensurate with other states and a concern that Washington graduates were disadvantaged relative to other states' graduates
- Meaningful high school and preparation for postsecondary success
  - Studies showed that a third of seniors took less than a full high school course load
  - Half of entering community and technical college students took lower than college level courses in English or math

# Number of Required Credits Compared to Other States

Prior to 24-credit graduation requirements:

- "Washington State graduation requirements for English, science, and social studies are significantly lower than the majority of other states" ([SBE 2010 Board Resolution](#))

After 24-credit graduation requirements ([Graduation Requirements in Other States, SBE, 2021](#)):

- Washington state is comparable to most other states in the number of required credits in English, math, science, social studies, and world language.
- Required credits are more than most other states in Career and Technical Education, Physical Education and Health, Arts, and total credits.

# Scores on State Assessments and Graduation Alternatives

- Achievement level scores on standardized tests were often developed through a “bookmark” approach.
  - Test Items would be ordered according to level of difficulty creating an “ordered item book”; panels of teachers and other content experts would sort items by achievement level and identify the scores by “bookmarking” a location within the ordered item book.
- Scores were developed for each test and assessment alternative and were redone or updated when standards were revised or changed, or the test or test format changed.
- In general, scores on state tests were developed by OSPI and OSPI contractors and presented to SBE for consideration of approval.
- SBA achievement level scores were determined by the Smarter Balance Consortium and were approved by SBE for Washington in January 2015.
- The SBA **graduation score**, which the Legislature gave specific permission to SBE to identify as **different from a Level 3 score**, was approved by the Board in August 2015.

# Level Scores and Graduation Score

	Level 1/Level 2	Graduation Score	Level 2/Level 3	Level 3/Level 4
ELA Cut Scores	2491	2548	2577	2678
Math Cut Scores	2533	2595	2614	2697

- **Level 4** indicates that the student has exceeded grade level expectations on this test and are likely on track for success with higher grade level learning expectations. This score meets the state graduation pathways requirement.
- **Level 3** indicates that the student has met grade level expectations on this test and are likely on track for success with higher grade level learning expectations. This score meets the state graduation pathways requirement.
- **Level 2** indicates that the student has nearly met grade level expectations on this test. (**The graduation score is within Level 2.**)
- **Level 1** indicates that the student has not met grade level expectations on this test. This score does not meet the state graduation pathways requirement.

# Graduation Assessment Alternatives

## Certificate of Academic Achievement (Eliminated after Class of 2019)

- Collection of Evidence
  - Portfolio approach
  - State-developed questions, students had some choice among questions
  - State-level grading
- Grade Comparison
- SAT, ACT, and AP

## Certificate of Individual Achievement (Eliminated after Class of 2021)

- CIA Cut Score, formerly Basic/Level2
- Locally Determined Assessments
- Off-Grade Level Assessment









**SAT and ACT graduation scores were carried over to pathway options;** the ELA SAT and ACT scores were originally set in 2007; the math scores were set on the EOC tests in 2011. (AP pathway scores are now in statute, so are no longer set by SBE)

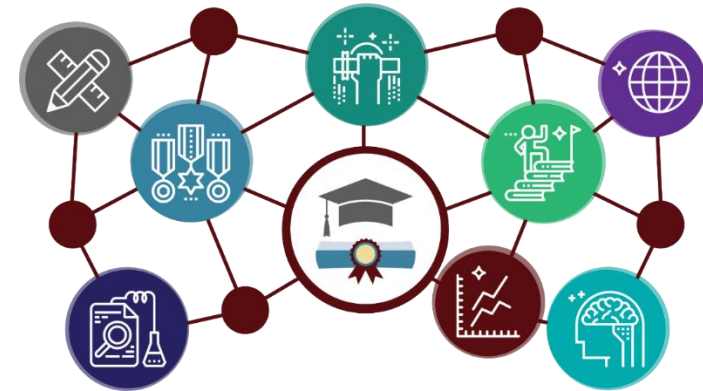
# Smarter Balance Graduation Scores

- The graduation score on the SBA was set according to a Board resolution (adopted January 8, 2015):
- The Board “Intends to set initial minimum scores for graduation on the high school SBAC that bridges past statewide performance on exit exams to the initial statewide performance of students on the SBAC assessments. This approach will begin the process of moving toward the more rigorous SBAC college- and career-ready level by **setting initial high school proficiency scores that would impact students in the next few years approximately equally to how students have been impacted by exit exams during the past few years.** These initial minimum scores would be re-evaluated over the following years, as new standards are implemented and as more students gain the skills necessary to be SBAC College and Career Ready.”

# Graduation Pathway Options

House Bill 1599 (2019) established graduation pathway options. House Bill 1308 (2023) added the performance-based pathway option.

-  State Assessment
-  Dual Credit
-  AP/IB/Cambridge
-  SAT/ACT College Entrance Exams
-  Transition Courses
-  Combinations
-  ASVAB (Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery)
-  Career and Technical Education Course Sequence



← **NEW Performance-based Pathway**

# Questions to Consider as Part of the Strategic Plan Initiative

- How should SBE approach updates to graduation scores for pathway options?
  - When should the graduation score on the Smarter Balance test be Level 3?
- How does the 24-credit framework and credits work with mastery-based learning? What tools, practices, and policies would better support mastery-based learning?
- Financial education and computer science were topics during this last Legislative session. How can additional content be incorporated into graduation requirements in a holistic way?

# Contact Information

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