



THE NEED FOR CHANGE

“Successful preparation for both postsecondary education and employment requires learning the same rigorous English and mathematics content and skills. No longer do students planning to go to work after high school need a different and less rigorous curriculum than those planning to go to college.”
(Achieve, Inc., 2004)

To ensure that Georgia’s students graduate college and work ready the State Board of Education has taken the bold step of adopting rigorous new graduation requirements for all students. The state’s new “Graduation Rule.” Approved goes into effect for incoming ninth-graders in 2008.

The new requirements were originally drafted by a “graduation rule committee,” comprised of representatives from local school districts, the Georgia Department of Education, The University System of Georgia and the Department of Technical and Adult Education, as well as members of the business community. Numerous vetting sessions were held around the state and feedback was used to make revisions throughout the process.

The new rule establishes the state’s minimum academic requirements for earning a high school diploma. Local systems may enact additional requirements that go above and beyond the requirements in the state rule.

A hallmark of the new rule is the elimination of tiered diploma requirements. Under the tiered rule there were different expectations for different groups of students, depending on whether they were going to college or into the work world. The new rule has one common set of requirements for all students and specifies certain courses that all students must take – making rigorous content an expectation for all, not just some. The elimination of the tiers also helps to blur the lines that separated “college prep” from “career tech.” Under the new rule, more students will have an opportunity to see the choices that are available, not just in academic or career-oriented courses but also in Advanced Placement, dual enrollment, joint enrollment, and classes for industry certification. More students should be able to take a variety of courses based on their areas of interest. If students are actively involved in selecting courses they want, more will get “hooked” and more will graduate.

Requirements in the new graduation rule are aligned with the Georgia Performance Standards (GPS) for math, science, social studies and English language arts. Electives provide multiple opportunities for students to continue taking advanced coursework, academic support classes, or special interest courses, depending on the individual’s needs and goals. More students with disabilities will have the opportunity to earn a regular education diploma, thus enabling them to be employed or go on to postsecondary education.

The new graduation requirements, along with new state curriculum standards and assessments, will help ensure that more students finish school ready to thrive in the new knowledge-based, high-tech 21st century economy.