STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION REPORT

AOE STATEWIDE GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS RECOMMENDATIONS

December 31, 2025

Issued by the Vermont Agency of Education

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Executive Summary

Section 9a of Act 73 requires the Agency of Education (AOE) to recommend statewide graduation requirements to the State Board of Education (SBE). Per section 8a1B the SBE must finalize decisions by July 1, 2027, and the new statewide graduation requirements will go into effect beginning in the 2027–2028 school year for the graduating class of 2031.

In accordance with Section 9a of Act 73, the Agency of Education (AOE) submits this report recommending statewide graduation requirements. These recommendations are the result of extensive research, analysis of current supervisory union/supervisory district (SU/SD) graduation requirements, and significant stakeholder engagement conducted throughout the fall of 2025.

The primary objective of these recommendations is to ensure all Vermont graduates are set up for success in college, career, and civic life by promoting equity and consistency of rigor across the state. The recommendations also aim to set the standard for excellence for graduates throughout Vermont, support vertical alignment and integration across the PreK-12 system, and align to the attributes of the Vermont Portrait of a Graduate.

Background

The purpose of this report is to present the Vermont Agency of Education's proposed set of statewide graduation requirements to the Vermont State Board of Education, as outlined in Act 73 section 9a. Additionally, this report describes the processes in which the Agency of Education engaged education leaders and content experts from across the state to arrive at these recommendations. Lastly, the report contains additional areas of inquiry for the State Board of Education to consider before making its decision, along with a plan for how the Agency will provide ongoing support and guidance throughout the State Board of Education's deliberation process.

Promoting Consistency of Rigor through Statewide Graduation Requirements

Importantly, the recommendations serve as a response to findings from the U.S. Department of Education, regarding uneven rigor across graduation requirements and flexible pathways in Vermont. Under section 8101(25) of the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act, each pathway for earning a regular high school diploma must be aligned with requirements for the standard diploma awarded to the preponderance of students in the state. The U.S. Department of Education conducted a monitoring visit to Vermont in 2024 and found uneven rigor across flexible pathways programs and graduation requirements in its evaluation of Vermont's graduation rate indicator. The specific finding from the U.S. Department of Education monitoring report stated, "A pathway that is clearly less rigorous than the pathway most students follow is not consistent with statutory requirements."

The U.S. Department of Education findings are best understood in the context of Vermont's policy framework. Per section 2120.8 of Vermont's Education Quality Standards (EQS), decisions are currently made locally when determining the criteria for earning a high school diploma. The following definitions from the EQS set the context for proficiency-based learning and the current graduation requirement expectations across the state:

> *"Proficiency-Based Learning"* refers to systems of instruction, assessment, grading and academic reporting that are based on students demonstrating mastery of the knowledge and skills they are expected to learn before they progress to the next level, get promoted to the next grade, or receive a diploma.

> *"Proficiency-Based Graduation Requirements"* are the locally determined set of content knowledge and skills aligned to state standards that, when supplemented with any additional locally developed requirements, have been determined to qualify a student for earning a high school diploma. The requirements shall be clear, shared learning expectations that empower students and provide opportunities for choice in learning experiences and accord multiple ways to demonstrate proficiency in knowledge and skills. In this system, "Proficiency-Based Graduation-Requirements" are supervisory union- or supervisory district-wide learning objectives used by educators and students to drive instruction and assess growth in new learning.

Leaving the criteria for earning a high school diploma up to interpretation by 52 different district governance units, some of which allow for variation across the districts within their Supervisory Union, naturally complicates Vermont's ability to align requirements for earning the standard diploma—and has contributed to the resulting inconsistency in rigor. While new statewide graduation requirements will replace and address the inconsistencies of existing, locally determined graduation requirements, proficiency-based learning as an instructional model can, and should, continue. This topic will be explored further later in the report.

Compliance with federal law is not the only concern: different expectations for instructional rigor leave the door open to differing standards for educational quality, complicating Vermont's constitutional guarantee of providing every student with a "substantially equal" education. Variations in implementation of locally determined Proficiency-Based Graduation Requirements and differences in how proficiency-based learning has been interpreted and operationalized has resulted in inconsistent expectations and uneven levels of rigor for students earning a Vermont high school diploma across SU/SDs.

The AOE's corrective action response to the U.S. Department of Education addressed the finding by committing to new statewide graduation requirements beginning in 2027. The approved action plan explained that "Local supervisory unions and districts will be

required to align their policies and practices to ensure that their students are provided the learning opportunities to demonstrate that they have met each of the graduation requirements regardless of the paths they have chosen to demonstrate proficiency." Additionally, the Agency upheld the state's commitment to Act 77 and flexible pathways, stating, "While the state will maintain its statutory commitments in 16 V.S.A. § 941 to providing multiple means of demonstrating proficiency in statewide graduation requirements (e.g., CTE, virtual learning, dual enrollment, Early College, internships, etc.), the newly enacted statutory language makes explicit that the graduation requirements themselves will be constant."

Graduation Requirements within the Broader Education System

Setting statewide graduation requirements enables Vermont to more fully achieve its promise to all students. The primary objective of the graduation requirements is to ensure all Vermont graduates are set up for success in college, career, and civic life by promoting equity and consistency of rigor across the state. The Agency recognizes that students have a variety of post-secondary goals, including entrepreneurship, enlistment, enrollment, and employment. The graduation requirements should ensure that students experience a well-rounded education, while also allowing for the flexibility to engage in deeper learning in their areas of interest. The requirements should also be designed to position students to choose from a variety of next steps when making decisions after graduating.
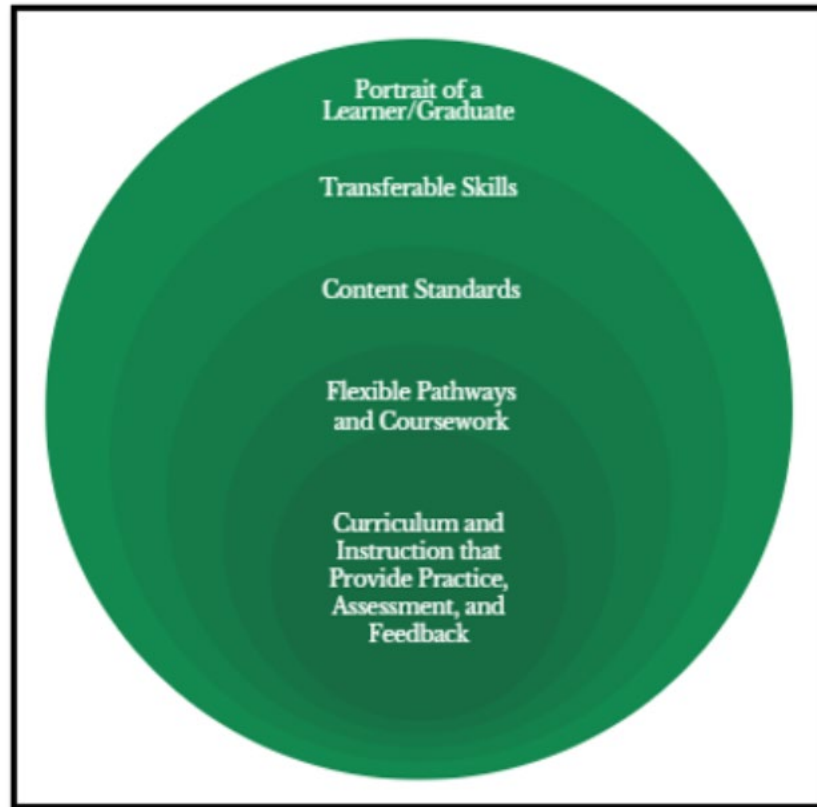
In Vermont, the components of the education system have been conceptualized according to the visual above. Using a backwards planning design, the outermost circle represents the full realization of the Portrait of a Learner/Graduate, which serves as a vision for Vermont graduates. Some SU/SDs have created their own local adaptations, which vary in the degree to which they differ from the attributes and indicators included in the [Vermont Portrait of a Graduate (2023)](). In order to achieve a portrait of a learner or graduate, best practices indicate that the following needs to be reflected in a high-functioning education system: transferable skills, content knowledge and skills, learning experiences through flexible pathways and coursework, high-quality curriculum, and evidence-based instructional practices.

Schools should develop students' transferable skills such as critical thinking, collaboration, and communication so that they can be accessed across content areas and outside of educational settings. These transferable skills are embedded within and across the state-approved student standards for each content area. Transferable skill and content area learning experiences are delivered to students through flexible pathways and coursework. At the most discrete level, students are provided with daily instruction grounded in high-quality curriculum that gives them the opportunity to practice, be assessed and receive feedback on their progress toward proficiency in learning.

These components have been defined as educational priorities in Vermont—though operationalized differently across the state and with varied outcomes. There are examples to build upon, where SU/SDs have leveraged collaborative working groups within their schools to attend to the coherence across each of the components in the system both in terms of design and implementation.

The SU/SDs that are exemplars in this work began with a clear vision for their Portrait of a Graduate and specific expectations for graduation informed by the State Board-approved student standards. From there, they evaluated and redesigned the learning experiences they provide as needed. Once this framework was established, they shifted their focus to understanding by design: aligning curriculum across content areas and strengthening instructional practices. Those interviewed from such SU/SDs stated that this was a multiyear endeavor and required difficult decisions about deprioritizing or discontinuing learning experiences that had historically been done in their schools in order to yield the necessary level of coherence.

For the systems that have already accounted for coherence across all of the components in the visual above, the AOE's proposed requirements will feel familiar. By being clear and tight on what the graduation requirements are statewide, all SU/SDs will be provided with the necessary framework to ensure more consistent implementation across the state.

Graduation Requirements as an Important First Step

There are additional benefits to statewide graduation requirements. The recommended statewide graduation requirements are designed to strengthen the implementation of Act 77 (Flexible Pathways) and Act 173 (services for students who require additional support), among other landmark education reforms. Regardless of the pathway a student follows toward graduation, the standards and expectations for proficiency must be consistent. This needs to be a major focus in the next phase of work when implementing the new graduation requirements. The National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) suggests the following considerations to direct this important phase:

- Ensuring a robust system of support within schools to meet the needs of all students on their trajectory

- Training in implementing a proficiency/competency-based learning system, including components such as instructional practices, promotion criteria, grading, etc.

- Develop a variety of assessments of learning to ensure valid and reliable evaluation for multiple pathway experiences

Consistency in what requirements students must satisfy will allow for more collaboration across SU/SDs regarding flexible pathways, personalized learning, and coursework available to students in order to graduate, in addition to what NASSP has outlined above. Statewide requirements will also eliminate the challenges students currently face if they

move from one SU/SD to another where the graduation requirements are different, which disproportionately presents an equity issue for students who face additional challenges such as housing insecurity. Statewide graduation requirements are also needed to overcome the common issue Career and Technical Education (CTE) centers face when receiving students from multiple sending schools with varying graduation requirements. Additionally, the proposed graduation requirements will require realignment of learning experiences in elementary and middle school to ensure students have both the foundational content and diverse early exposure needed to more deeply explore their interests in high school.

Statewide graduation requirements alone will not increase rigor or establish more consistency, but they are an important first step in elevating statewide academic expectations supported by the Agency's broader focus on increasing academic leadership and support. The AOE is positioned to support the implementation of statewide graduation requirements and will continue to support the State Board of Education through its decision-making process.

The next section of this report will provide an overview of the AOE's approach to making recommendations for the statewide graduation requirements and a summary of key findings from each phase.

Project Phases in the Recommendations Process

The Agency of Education (AOE) engaged in a four-phase process to develop the statewide graduation requirements recommendations, as outlined below:

1. **Phase 1: Research & Analysis (August–September 2025):** The Agency analyzed current SU/SD requirements and conducted a comparative analysis of other states.

2. **Phase 2: Stakeholder Engagement (October–November 2025):** The AOE engaged a diverse group of stakeholders to refine recommendation options.

3. **Phase 3: Reporting & Recommendations (November–December 2025):** The AOE synthesized the feedback and drafted this report.

4. **Phase 4: Ongoing Support (January 2026–June 2027):** The AOE will support the State Board of Education through their decision-making process.

The Agency kept the State Board of Education abreast of the planning progress along the way, including monthly updates and deeper participation in the November statewide planning retreat. The Agency's monthly State Board presentations were also shared widely through the Weekly Field Memo and Superintendents Updates to reflect learning and progress to the larger education community.

Phase 1: Research and Analysis

During the research and analysis phase of compiling information and rationale for the proposed graduation requirements, Curriculum & Instruction, Special Education, and Career Technical Education staff at the AOE conducted extensive scans of current conditions and requirements both locally and nationally. Research explored current graduation and diploma requirements, typical credits within and across subject areas, pathways to diploma acquisition, graduation rates, connections to entrance requirements at institutes of higher education, approaches to recognizing successful completion of career technical education program of study in meeting graduation requirements, and considerations for special student populations including those with disabilities. Initial findings and trends are described below.

Current State in Vermont Supervisory Unions and Districts

Research indicated significant inconsistency in current local requirements. For example, science requirements currently range from 3 to 4.5 credits, and total credit requirements range from 16.5 to 28.5 credits across the state.

Current SU/SD Graduation Requirements

Content Area	Number of Credits
English Language Arts	4-5 credits
Mathematics	3-4 credits
Social Studies/Global Citizenship	3-4 credits
Science	3-4.5 credits
Arts	1-2 credits
World Language	0-2 credits
Financial Literacy	0-1 credit
Health	.5-1 credit
Physical Education	.5-2 credits
Electives	0-10 credits
Total Credits	**16.5-28.5 credits**

Across supervisory unions and supervisory districts (SU/SDs) within the state, not only is there inconsistency in the number of content-specific requirements, but there is also inconsistency in whether their current Proficiency-Based Graduation Requirements address transferable skills, content standards or both. Currently, four-year graduation rates range from 59% to 98% and six-year graduation rate ranges from 54% to 96% but, given the variation in local requirements, it is difficult to identify what may be leading to the range of outcomes in graduation rates or the degree to which SU/SD graduation rates are comparable.

Across the state, credit for Career Technical Education (CTE) program learning is generally negotiated by CTE centers on a program by program and high school by high school basis, leading to inconsistencies not only from school to school, but also from student to student. In many cases, students within the same CTE program at the same center receive different amounts and types of credit towards graduation. Even in clear-cut cases of student learning, some sending schools do not recognize the learning except as elective credit. For example, a student in a CTE Health Sciences program taking a college course through Vermont State University in Anatomy and Physiology in many cases does not receive science credit for successful completion of the course. In addition, some sending schools do not allow grades from CTE coursework to be calculated into a student's GPA, creating a disincentive for participation in CTE. The high variability is inequitable for students and creates barriers to access to CTE education.

National Trends

The Education Commission of the States' 2023 50-State Comparison of graduation requirements identified the following themes:

- At least 46 states and the District of Columbia identify minimum credit requirements to earn a standard diploma.

- At least 44 states and the District of Columbia permit students to substitute specific courses, assessments or other experiences for existing credit requirements.

- At least 34 states require students to complete specific assessments as a graduation requirement.

- At least 21 states have identified multiple diploma options or pathways to graduation in state policy.

Admission Requirements to Institutes of Higher Education

While not all recipients of Vermont diplomas will go on to institutes of higher education, the table below details the current entrance requirements at several local institutes of higher education. Appendix A includes additional details for each institution's entrance requirements.

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College	ELA	Math	Science	Social Studies	World Languages
Champlain College	4 credits	3 credits	3 credits	3 credits	2 credits
St. Michael's College	4 credits	3-4 credits	3-4 credits	3-4 credits	2-3 credits
University of Vermont	4 credits	3 credits	3 credits	3 credits	2 credits
Vermont State University	4 credits	3 credits	2-3 credits	3-4 credits	N/A

The AOE completed initial research and analysis by the end of September 2025 and prepared 2-3 composite models of possible graduation requirements for stakeholders to respond to during Phase 2.

Phase 2: Stakeholder Engagement

During the stakeholder input and feedback phase, AOE staff engaged with stakeholder groups to glean reactions to iterative models for graduation requirements. Throughout the months of October and November, the AOE met with various stakeholder groups, including the Vermont Curriculum Leaders Association, Vermont Principals Association, Vermont Superintendents Association, Vermont National Educators Association, Vermont School Counselors Association, Vermont Association of Career and Technical Directors, Vermont School Counselors Association, and others. Whenever possible, the Agency sought to join stakeholders in preexisting meeting spaces rather than requesting additional time to attend meetings convened related to the topic of graduation requirements. Below is a table of the stakeholder engagement conducted:

Stakeholder	Engagement	Date
Teachers of the Year (educators)	Virtual meeting	October 2
SEAP (Special Education Advisory Panel)	In person meeting	October 7
VT Music Educators Association (educators)	In person - breakout at conference	October 10
VPA (principals)	In person - Executive Council meeting	October 17

Stakeholder	Engagement	Date
Special Education Leadership	In person at conference	October 20
CTE School Counseling Coordinators	In person at conference	October 22
Vermont Mathematics Improvement Collaborative Coalition (educators)	In person at conference	October 24
VT-NEA (educators)	In person - at their board meeting	November 1
VTSCA (school counselors)	In person at conference	November 3
Statewide Planning Retreat	In person at conference	November 4
VTCLA (curriculum directors)	Virtual meeting	November 7
Superintendents	Monthly virtual meetings, weekly Supt Updates emails	October and November
VACTED (CTE)	In person meeting	November 20
VCSEA (special education)	In person meeting	November 21

AOE staff analyzed feedback from various stakeholder groups and made revisions to the example models throughout Phase 2, as well as maintained records regarding the implications and considerations for future development and implementation of the final requirements. In general, these iterations reflected quantitative shifts in credits, exploration of interdisciplinary and elective options, and considerations to adhere to the depth and breadth of State Board-adopted student standards.

Throughout the stakeholder engagement process there have been questions about various aspects of a proficiency-based education system. The AOE continues to support proficiency-based learning, as defined in EQS, alongside a focus on supporting coordinated curriculum, plus an added emphasis on the instructional core (the interaction

between student, teacher, and content),[1] regardless of what the final determinations about the statewide graduation requirements are. Locally defined, proficiency-based graduation requirements will be replaced with statewide graduation requirements as part of Act 73. Further evaluation is needed to determine what the state will mandate, support, and assess for innovation, including guidance for grading.

Overview of Survey Feedback on Statewide Graduation Requirements

The AOE's statewide Strategic Planning Retreat in early November provided the opportunity for gathering significant input, with over 100 participants engaged in a day-long, three-part track focusing on graduation requirements. Participants represented about a third of all total participants in the event. This track included an overview of the work to date, a panel with example models of content standards for graduation credits and sample student profiles mapped onto graduation requirements (see Appendix D), and a flexible pathways requirement proposal. Participants at the retreat represented a variety of roles including superintendents, principals, CTE directors, curriculum leaders, special education directors, teachers, parents, students, legislators, State Board members, and independent/therapeutic school leaders.

To conclude Phase 2 of planning, the Agency distributed a survey (see Appendix B) to participants at the planning retreat and widely to other stakeholders who may not have attended the retreat. Specifically, the survey sought input on a preferred model for graduation recommendations, invited feedback on the approach to graduation requirements, weighed the benefits and challenges of state-level versus local decisions on transferable skills, and a proposal for flexible pathways requirements. In total, 382 individuals completed the survey, representing a variety of stakeholders across the state. Respondents who did not indicate their role and are not included in the disaggregated data below.

Stakeholder Group	Respondents
CTE (directors, superintendents, teachers, counselors)	21
Curriculum Directors/Coordinators	26
Parents/Caregivers/Community Members	12
Principals/Asst Principals	27

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[1] City, Elizabeth A., Elmore, R., Fiarman, S., & Teitel, L. (2009). *Instructional rounds in education*. Harvard Educational Publishing Group.

Stakeholder Group	Respondents
School Counselors	41
Special Education (directors, coordinators, teachers, counselors)	13
Superintendents	9
Teachers	197
Other (e.g., nurse, admin assistant, flexible pathways coordinator, director of technology)	32

In addition to soliciting further feedback on the two models presented during in-person engagement sessions, the survey invited respondents to build their own model of statewide graduation requirements. Of the 293 survey respondents who chose to build their own model, over 70% of them included the following content areas and corresponding average number of credits in their models:

- Math (3 credits)
- ELA (4 credits)
- Social Studies (3 credits)
- Science (3 credits)
- Arts (1.5 credits)
- World Languages (1 credits)
- Financial Literacy (0.5 credits)
- PE/Health (2.5 credits)
- Electives (4 credits)

On average, respondents included a total of 24 credits in their models. Many respondents also included input on the requirement of specific topics or coursework, and these trends are reflected below:

Math: Algebra I and Geometry are required in almost every response that specifies math courses and are widely viewed as the minimum foundational content for graduation. The debate is often about what comes after these, with suggestions including Algebra II, Statistics, and Financial Literacy as advanced or elective options.

Social Studies/Global Citizenship including Ethnic Studies: U.S. History and World History are almost universally requested alongside Civics/Government. Global History, World Geography, and Multicultural/Ethnic Studies were also requested specifically.

Science: There was a consensus on requiring exposure to the three core NGSS strands: Life Science (Biology), Earth Science, and Physical Science (Chemistry/Physics).

Physical Education/Health: Requests for health to be increased to a full credit, and robust content on Personal Fitness, Comprehensive Sex Education, and Mental Health/Social-Emotional Learning

Other: Some additional specific requirements were requested for Introduction to Technology, Computer Science, and Engineering classes, plus research and data courses like data/media literacy and research skills.

Survey results indicate that 120 respondents believe the state should define requirements for transferable skills and 207 respondents suggesting these should be determined at the local level. A philosophical and practical division exists over who should determine the requirements and how they should be assessed:

Trend	Argument/Request	Key Rationale
Local Control	Keep transferable skills locally defined, locally assessed, and locally calibrated. Do not dictate these requirements at the state level.	Transferable skills are the foundation of the local Portrait of a Graduate; state standardization risks reducing them to a "compliance checklist" and undermines community values/vision.
State Consistency	Standardize for consistency across districts to close the equity gap and ensure that a Vermont diploma represents the same essential transferable skills statewide.	Local variation leads to "vastly differing standards/language/etc." and makes it difficult for students who transfer high schools.

There is a strong preference for embedding transferable skills directly into content-based coursework rather than treating them as isolated, separate requirements.

- **Embedded in Content**: Many respondents insist that transferable skills be integrated into content (like Algebra or CTE courses) to make them more measurable, real, relevant, and engaging.

- **Shared Ownership**: Skills should be "linked to content and mapped out across content" so that all teachers share in the ownership and instruction.

- **Avoid Separate Bureaucracy**: Concerns were raised that treating them as a discrete requirement adds an "unnecessary layer of bureaucracy" that is "milquetoast and onerous."

Regarding the Flexible Pathways requirement proposal, survey responses fell fairly neatly into three roughly evenly-sized categories: 34% responded positively to the proposal (i.e., they approved of the concept but may have wanted some implementation changes), 34% responded negatively (i.e., they had concerns about both concept and implementation), and 32% did not engage with the questions. In the feedback that was provided, three clear themes emerged around what gave the respondents pause.

- Disparate local resources and opportunities between schools result in inequitable access to flexible pathways. Respondents expressed concern that a policy requiring participation in one of a specific pre-defined list of flexible pathway types could disadvantage students in schools if one or more of those pathway types were not offered.

- Ensuring consistent quality and rigor across significantly different educational experiences, especially those housed outside the school, creates complexities for school leaders.

- For schools that do not currently offer the flexible pathway types required by the proposal, this requirement would necessitate schools adding positions to oversee and assess those new options, creating additional budgetary and staffing implications.

Finally, survey respondents were invited to share feedback on potential challenges or concerns with implementing statewide graduation requirements. There were concerns about finding high-quality certified educators or licensed teachers qualified to teach interdisciplinary courses and specific subject areas such as World Languages. Additional challenges noted included financial and budgetary constraints, curricular design implications, alignment to current models, and scheduling, equity and access concerns for diverse learners and CTE students. They also reported anticipation of resistance to change from loss of local control and increased expectations of both teachers and students and expressed a need for ongoing change management support and communication.

Phase 3: Reporting & Recommendations

In Phase 3, the AOE spent time reviewing and synthesizing initial research on requirements within and outside of the state and reviewing the stakeholder feedback to refine policy options and draft a comprehensive report. AOE staff collaborated to draft the report for the State Board of Education, including details of the process, final

recommendations, rationale for recommendations, and further considerations for the State Board as they proceed with decision-making. The Agency has included its recommendations and rationale in the following section.

Recommendations & Rationale

State Board-adopted Education Quality Standards (EQS) indicate that "a student meets the requirements for graduation when the student demonstrates proficiency in the learning content outlined in Subsection 2120.6 (Curriculum Content Areas) and completes any other requirements specified by the board of the school district attended by the student." Further, it is emphasized that "for students eligible for special education services under IDEA or protected by Section 504 of the federal Rehabilitation Act, the student shall meet the same graduation requirements as typical peers in an accommodated or modified manner." This expectation also applies to English Language Learners. The Agency's final recommendations include the decision to award one diploma to all students, rather than an alternate diploma or certification of completion option.

As noted in section 2120.7 of the EQS, each school district shall implement a written curriculum developed pursuant to Subsection 2120.6 (Curriculum Content Areas) that is designed to enable all students to achieve the graduation requirements. Additionally, in section 2120.1 the EQS highlight that educators shall promote personalization and high expectations so that each student may successfully engage with the curriculum delivered and meet graduation requirements. The Agency's final credit and subject matter recommendations represent the culmination of learning experiences that include ongoing exposure to subject matter and quality curriculum and instruction throughout students' educational careers.

Recommendation: Use credits as the unit of measure

The Agency recommends quantifying the requirements as "credits," but not with the Carnegie unit implication of a specified amount of seat time. Rather, the Agency recommends aligning to the existing guidance in EQS – 2120.8 Local Graduation Requirements which states, "Schools may or may not use credits for the purposes of demonstrating that a student has met the graduation requirements. When used, credits must specify the proficiencies demonstrated in order to attain a credit and shall not be based on time spent in learning." This aligns with the approach the majority of states use for their statewide graduation requirements within their proficiency-based learning systems, which is more commonly called competency-based education ([2025 State of CBE](#)).

The National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) notes that time spent learning a subject does not necessarily guarantee a student has mastered course content ([NAASP Competency-Based Education](#)). Therefore, in a time-based system,

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students may earn credit even though they have not met standards and expectations. In contrast, NASSP clearly defines the purpose and context of establishing a competency-based education system, which in Vermont is called proficiency-based learning, as one where students are expected to meet the standards and expectations as efficiently as possible, but time should be variable.

In alignment with proficiency-based learning approaches, the Agency recommends defining 1 credit as a set of essential, enduring skills and knowledge in a content area based on the typical coverage of standards included in a year-long course or equivalent learning experience. For example, an Algebra I math credit would have a set of standards expected to be covered to earn that credit. One student may be able to show proficiency in the standards covered for the Algebra I credit more quickly, while another may need additional time or support. Both would receive 1 credit for that learning experience.

This is to empower students and their caregivers when making decisions about how they will satisfy the graduation requirement by using a familiar and well-understood approach to the unit of measure for each requirement. Additionally, 38/43 (88%) of the SU/SDs inventoried already use "credits" as the unit of measure for their content-area graduation requirements under the current guidance within EQS.

The Agency recognizes this is a shift in the definition of the term "credit" for those who still think of credits as a set amount of seat time. However, from a change management perspective, the benefits of using a familiar term make it the most appropriate. Alternative units of measure like "proficiencies" have a broader array of understood definitions across the state that would make it more difficult to gain consensus around a definition than "credit" does.

Recommendation: Increase some content requirements while building in space for flexible pathways and deeper learning

Like most states, the Agency has identified a number of credits aligned to content area and related standards that reflect high expectations for each and every student to earn a high school diploma. Rather than mandating specific courses, assessments, or other experiences, the AOE is recommending credits by content area, though they may be satisfied through interdisciplinary learning experiences. For some content areas, the AOE is also recommending content-specific topic guidance (e.g., Life Sciences, Civics, Geometry) to provide clarity on what content is expected to be covered within the total required credits. The AOE's recommended statewide graduation requirements can be found below.

AOE's Graduation Requirements Recommendation (22.5 total credits)

Math (4 credits) – 1 Algebra I, 1 Geometry, 1 Statistics or Data Science (depending on student pathway), 1 elective math credit based on college/career pathway

ELA (4 credits) – 1 Introductory credit, 3 Specialized Mastery credits based on college/career pathway

Social Studies (3 credits) – 1 US History, 1 Civics/American Government, 1 World Studies

Science (3 credits) – 1 Physical Science, 1 Life Science, 1 Earth and Space Science, with required science and engineering practices (labs) in each

Arts (1.5 credits) – 1.5 elective credits in performing and/or visual arts of student's choice

World Languages (1 credit) – minimum of 1 World Language or ASL credit

Financial Literacy (0.5 credit) – minimum half credit of stand-alone Financial Literacy content

PE/Health (2.5 credits) – 1.5 Physical Education, 1 Health Education

Electives (3 credits) – electives in areas of student's choice

There was significant consensus based on the research the AOE conducted in Phase 1 and from the stakeholder engagement in Phase 2. These recommendations align with those from the survey feedback with the exception of three areas: 1) the total number of credits are 1.5 fewer to allow for greater flexibility and opportunities for deeper learning in students' areas of interest, 2) 1 fewer elective credit requirement for the same reasons, and 3) 1 additional credit of math to reflect national trends toward increased math requirements and the inclusion of statistics or data science learning.

The expectation of four years of sustained mathematical learning aligns with national recommendations (National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, Catalyzing Change 2018) and state-level recommendations from educators and members of the higher education community. Four credits of math reinforces continuity of learning, the inclusion of a data science or statistics requirement, and greater readiness for postsecondary options. In addition to sustained and progressive math learning every year of high school, national education organizations have explicitly called for data literacy and statistics to be core components of K-12 education. A [joint ASA–NCTM position statement](#) emphasized that statistical reasoning and data science are essential for informed decision-making, understanding uncertainty, and full participation in civic and economic life, and should be accessible to all students, not limited to advanced mathematics pathways (ASA & NCTM, 2019). These recommendations align with Vermont's future-ready goals by supporting multiple rigorous math pathways that emphasize quantitative reasoning, data literacy, and transferable skills for a multitude of successful post-secondary choices, rather than a single trajectory toward Calculus. Students who complete Algebra I in 8th grade would not have to retake it and instead would be expected to take an additional elective math credit to satisfy the required 4 math credits.

The recommendations for Math, Health, Art, Financial Literacy, and World Languages would be a change for the many of the SU/SDs, based on an inventory of the 47 Vermont high schools with publicly posted graduation requirements:

- 88% of SU/SDs would be increasing their Art requirements, though many already require 1 credit of art so there would only be a 0.5 increase

- 86% of SU/SDs would be increasing their Math requirements, see above for rationale

- 76% of SU/SDs would be increasing their Health requirements since most only require 0.5 credits currently

- 76% of SU/SDs would be increasing their standalone Financial Literacy requirements, though many already embed this content into other requirements

- 69% of SU/SDs do not currently have a World Language requirement. Vermont is one of only 12 states with neither a world language graduation requirement nor a requirement that world language courses be offered to students, despite EQS requiring that students engage in learning around global citizenship, which includes world languages.[2]

The AOE recommendations for graduation requirements will provide sufficient consistency across SU/SDs and include an increase in requirements in content areas that will ensure all Vermont graduates are set up for success in college and/or career and prepared to be actively engaged citizens. For example, an increase in Health and Financial Literacy across the state will better prepare graduates for their post-secondary lives and support the realization of the Vermont Portrait of a Graduate. Existing locally-required courses, such as Theory of Knowledge for IB programs, could count toward up to 1 elective credit if they don't otherwise align to the standards of the other content requirements.

Assuming a typical high school 8 block schedule and a student who shows proficiency in the standards of the required credits within a year's time over four years of high school: this student could earn up to 32 credits. The AOE's recommendation of 22.5 total credits supports flexible pathways, as outlined in Act 77, allows students to make decisions about deeper learning such as participation in CTE programs or satisfying additional requirements for entrance into institutions of higher education. This recommended number of total credits also provides sufficient room for students who need additional time to satisfy the credit requirements, though additional support should be provided to students who need it to help them progress as quickly as they can to allow them to engage with their interests more deeply.

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[2] Montee, M., Pineault, C., & Yang, F. (2025). State policy requirements for K–12 world language education. *Foreign Language Annals*, 58, 758–775.

In addition to the AOE's recommended graduation requirements, many institutions of higher education have additional entrance requirements. As described in the Phase 1 findings above, Vermont institutions include requirements such as Algebra II, 2 credits of the same World Language, and "a full course load of challenging academic subjects in the senior year." The Agency acknowledges not all students aspire to attend high education institutions and therefore have not aligned the statewide graduation requirements to these.

The AOE remains committed to the support of flexible educational opportunities for all students as laid out in 16 V.S.A. § 941. In alignment with that statute, the AOE will continue to encourage and support school districts in providing flexible opportunities for students to demonstrate post-secondary readiness. As appropriate, learning completed through flexible pathways can be counted for credit under the new graduation requirements, provided that the learning has been assessed by a teacher holding the appropriate credential. Students should be supported to make decisions about how they satisfy and, in some cases, exceed the statewide graduation requirements based on their post-secondary goals and interests both in terms of specific types of credits and coursework such as Algebra II for a college-bound student to satisfy the math elective credit included in the recommendations.

Per 16 V.S.A. § 941 the existing flexible pathways are:

- Applied or work-based learning opportunities, including career and career technical education and internships

- Virtual learning and blended learning

- Dual enrollment opportunities

- Early college programs

- Adult education and secondary credential opportunities

However, this list should not be viewed as exhaustive, with local districts retaining the authority to develop and credential new programs such as after-school or summer learning programs, capstone projects, or community-based learning programs.

Recommendation: Integrate transferable skills within content requirements

The AOE recommends that transferable skills be embedded within content rather than assessed as part of a separate graduation requirement. This approach aligns with stakeholder feedback that transferable skills are more measurable and relevant when connected to disciplinary content and also allows for locally determined ones to be identified and embedded. It also aligns with research about transferable skills and the role of the instructional core.

The National Research Council (NRC) report, Education for Life and Work: Developing Transferable Knowledge and Skills in the 21st Century (2012), provides a clear

framework for understanding how transferable skills—sometimes called "21st-century competencies"—are intrinsically linked to proficiency in academic content. The report notes that modern student standards, including the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Math, successfully provide a deeper conceptualization of content knowledge and skill by encompassing various facets of 21st-century competencies by fostering "deeper learning," which the NRC (2012) defines as "the process through which an individual becomes capable of taking what was learned in one situation and applying it to new situations (i.e., transfer)."

Furthermore, evidence suggests that instruction that promotes the transfer of these competencies must occur within each content area, requiring teaching practices and student engagement strategies that simultaneously develop content knowledge and skills (such as critical thinking and math reasoning and argumentation) alongside intrapersonal skills (like conscientiousness and self-reflection) and interpersonal skills (like teamwork and effective communication). Additionally, this is a more effective approach than separate transferable skills graduation requirements, which present challenges in terms of consistent and accurate assessment of proficiency.

By recognizing the existing presence of transferable skills in the student standards that the State Board has already approved, and by aligning the graduation requirements to credits that represent appropriate coverage of these content standards, Vermont can establish a statewide framework to create more consistent implementation across SU/SDs and to allow for greater focus on evidence-based practices in service of the instructional core for delivering support to all learners to achieve this outcome. This will ensure students develop the ability to utilize complex cognitive, intrapersonal, and interpersonal transferable skills with the content domain expertise necessary for success in post-secondary education, career, and civic life.

Recommendation: Prioritize content knowledge and skills for future-ready graduates

To ensure that Vermont's statewide graduation requirements successfully prepare students for a future where Artificial Intelligence (AI) is a common tool, the Agency of Education strongly recommends that the State Board reinforce the central role of deep, disciplinary content knowledge and skills within student standards. When generative AI users lack a robust existing knowledge base, they are reduced to passively accepting AI outputs as authoritative, using the technology as an oracle rather than a collaborative thinking partner, a phenomenon called "knowledge asymmetry."[3] A lack of content knowledge and skills would prevent the development of the independent judgment necessary for success when using AI in post-secondary and career environments.

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[3] Potkalitsky, N. 2025, November 13. The Knowledge Asymmetry Problem: Why Student Expertise Matters in AI Collaboration. *Educating AI.*

For a student to use AI effectively—to formulate sophisticated questions, recognize subtle oversimplifications, and evaluate the accuracy of information—they must first possess a complex framework of disciplinary expertise. Without it, the introduction of AI risks amplifying existing achievement gaps, as students who already have strong foundations gain a powerful tool for extending their expertise, while those without foundational knowledge rely on AI as a crutch, avoiding the hard work of building true understanding.

This informs the AOE's recommendation to prioritize the systematic, explicit development of core content and disciplinary expertise across all grade levels, which has informed our recommendations about the graduation requirements and should be supported through vertical alignment and integrations across the PreK-12 system. By emphasizing content mastery, Vermont will ensure that its graduates develop the intellectual habits of verification, critical questioning, and synthesis. This approach transforms AI from a potential dependency into a collaborative tool that genuinely extends a student's capability.

Ultimately, a future-ready education is one where graduates possess the deep disciplinary knowledge necessary to maintain critical distance, exercise their own judgment, and actively direct their learning and professional inquiries, ensuring they are truly prepared for a complex, technology-driven future.

Recommendation: CTE learning should, where appropriate, satisfy the content area graduation requirements

Due to the high variability of credit for CTE experiences, there was a clearly stated need from stakeholders for uniform credit attainment for CTE program of study completion that is required to be recognized by all sending high schools rather than only counting toward electives or creating an extensive additional set of requirements. The AOE recommends making technical corrections as needed to section 2383.3 of the State Board Rules to more fully recognize CTE learning as it aligns to content areas and sending high schools are able to award credit appropriately, while considering the larger reform efforts regarding CTE under review by the legislature.

State Board Rules currently state that one content credit must be provided upon program completion of specified CTE programs (SBR 2383.3). This does not reflect current federal Perkins V program quality and student outcomes requirements and the rigor of Vermont's CTE program content. As a result, some high schools use 16 VSA §1545's provision that "The school board of the high school from which the student wishes to graduate shall make a determination as to whether the credits shall be applied toward graduation requirements" to limit the credit they award for CTE learning. This is another area where local decision-making opens the door for inconsistency of rigor in graduation pathways and expectations across the state.

Vermont has established CTE Program Quality Minimum Requirements. Every state approved CTE program must include a combination of postsecondary industry

recognized credentials and/or dual enrollment credits. The data the AOE gathers each year on every CTE program and CTE center in the state positions the AOE to lead the content alignment work to determine which CTE learning experiences should satisfy content-specific graduation requirements. Future planning should consider requirements around middle school career exploration and support for counselors regarding career navigation. While not part of the graduation requirements, future conversations around k-12 alignment must include middle school and early high school preparation for CTE pathways.

Recommendation: Support all students toward receiving the same diploma through the graduation requirements

This recommendation ensures all students, including those with disabilities, are provided with the appropriate supports to satisfy the requirements and allows Vermont to remain a state that issues one diploma for all students. This also aligns to the approach historically taken in Vermont providing accessibility for all students to the Vermont diploma. In section 2120.8 of EQS it states, "For students eligible for special education services under IDEA or protected by Section 504 of the federal Rehabilitation Act, the student shall meet the same graduation requirements as typical peers in an accommodated or modified manner."

Future Decision Points and Support

Per Section 8a of Act 73, the State Board of Education must finalize its decisions about statewide graduation requirements by July 1, 2027. The Agency recognizes that this decision is interconnected with education transformation efforts mandated by Act 73 and approached these recommendations with the intention of ensuring all Vermont graduates are set up for success in college, career, and civic life by promoting equity and consistency of rigor across the state. The AOE recommends the State Board make their decision by the end of 2026 to allow SU/SDs sufficient time for adjustments to their budget, staffing, and schedules for when the graduation requirements begin to go into effect in SY2027-2028 for the class of 2031. Throughout this decision-making process, the AOE is poised to provide additional support to the State Board as part of Phase 4 – Ongoing Support to the State Board of Education.

Extensive research and stakeholder engagement has contributed to these recommendations. Additionally, careful attention was paid to ensure accessibility and consistent expectations for all student populations and pathways to graduation. The recommendations are the first step toward ensuring these goals are met. Many additional considerations, decisions, and support plans must be in place to provide for smooth transitions and successful implementation.

The implementation of statewide graduation requirements serves as a cornerstone of the Agency's vision to build the best public education system in the country—one that provides every Vermont student with both the "roots" of foundational academic mastery

and the "wings" of post-secondary opportunity. This initiative is deeply anchored in the Agency's strategic pillars, most notably Academic Excellence and College and Career Readiness. By establishing clear, rigorous expectations for graduation, the Agency ensures that a Vermont diploma is a meaningful credential that guarantees all learners, including those requiring Special Education and Differentiated Supports, are met with the high expectations and tailored resources necessary to thrive.

The Agency's New Academics Mission

To drive the Agency's vision forward, the Agency has defined a new Academics mission: *to cultivate an inclusive Vermont educational system from early education to adulthood that embraces the unique strengths of all learners and their caregivers, and fosters academic excellence, lifelong learning, well-being, and success.* Agency Academics staff will do so through four commitments to:

- Support districts, schools, and education programs in implementing rigorous, high-quality instruction and curricula that are responsive to the diverse strengths and needs of each and every learner, including students with disabilities and those who are historically marginalized.

- Facilitate a seamless continuum of learning from cradle to career, ensuring that each and every student has access to the learning resources and supports necessary to thrive in their post-secondary lives.

- Provide actionable, data-driven insights to districts, schools, education programs and community members to drive continuous improvement in student outcomes and program effectiveness through accountability and support.

- Champion equitable practices and policies that dismantle barriers to learning and foster a culture of high expectations, well-being, and belonging; where each and every student feels safe, supported, and challenged to reach their full potential, and where all families feel included, valued, and empowered to support their learners.

Ultimately, this alignment ensures that the Agency's leadership and oversight result in a student-centered, future-focused system that is accountable to the students and families of Vermont.

To fully operationalize the Academics mission as it relates to the statewide graduation requirements, the Agency will provide the State Board with ongoing technical support while engaging in further stakeholder engagement focused on student voice and supporting working groups for Career Technical Education and accessibility for all learners. These next steps are described below.

Further Stakeholder Engagement - Youth Voice

While the AOE was able to engage with myriad stakeholders throughout Phase 2, further engagement with key stakeholders would be beneficial in the decision-making process. Specifically, the Agency recommends additional engagement to bring more youth voice into the decision-making process. Through the [Listen & Learn tour](#) last year (pages 27-29 for Youth Engagement Sessions), the Student Policy Sprint Team, and in additional student-led events Agency staff has attended in the Fall of 2025, students have consistently asked to be provided opportunities for deeper learning. Student input has informed the approach to the recommendations, specifically by allowing for student choice in delving deeper into their area of interest through flexible pathways and specialized coursework. Additionally, AOE is partnering with a local organization at the start of 2026 to ensure that youth voice is meaningfully included in stakeholder feedback. Special emphasis will be placed on engaging students who may not currently be thriving in the system, so that their perspectives and experiences can inform more equitable and effective practices. The intention is to gather input from a broad and diverse range of Vermont students ensuring that the recommendations reflect the needs and aspirations of all learners. Focus group data will be compiled into a report, from which the AOE and SBE will have an opportunity to ensure student input into the final requirements.

Additional Areas of Inquiry

Additional areas of further inquiry include CTE, accessibility for all students, AOE support for the instructional core and 2120.7 - coordinated curriculum, and seals and endorsements to support deeper learning. The Agency recommends regular meetings with working groups to develop implementation plans and operationalize credit expectations, with direct connections to State Board-approved student standards.

Career Technical Education (CTE)

As Vermont works to make access to CTE more equitable for students around the state, establishing the alignment of CTE learning experiences to the graduation requirements is necessary. While the alignment for some academic credit/content is clear (e.g., Health Sciences programs that incorporate Vermont State University's Anatomy and Physiology course(s) receiving Life Science credit or a Visual Arts program that incorporates nine college credits in Dual Enrollment arts courses), for other CTE programs of study, work will need to be done to identify the academic standards included in the postsecondary credentials and CTE technical standards.

Recent work by CTE centers and the AOE sets the state up well to take this on. CTE programs offered at each of Vermont's 17 regional CTE centers must currently meet well-established [CTE program quality minimum requirements](#) that include postsecondary industry recognized credentials and/or dual enrollment college credits. CTE centers are required to annually report the college credits and postsecondary credentials students earn in each CTE program. The AOE requires improvement plans for any program that

may, in a given year, not meet those requirements. Vermont is well-positioned, therefore, to crosswalk the content of these credentials and credits to articulate the academic content they contain and compare that to the required standards to earn a credit in a given academic area. A student who earns given credential(s) or completes given dual enrollment course(s) would then have that learning recognized as meeting specified graduation requirements.

Accessibility for All Students

All students with disabilities should be able to meaningfully access the high school graduation requirements so Vermont remains a state that issues one diploma for all students. Each graduation requirement should be accessible for all students. In Vermont, there is and has been a lot of inconsistencies with regard to how high schools determine their graduation requirements as well as how to make those requirements accessible. The vision is that with the new statewide graduation requirements there will be an accessibility system built into each requirement so that access is consistent and equitable regardless of what Vermont public high school the student is attending. To achieve this, the AOE is creating a workgroup to develop the accessibility system for each statewide graduation requirement.

This group will include educators from the field as well as other state level experts on disability, proficiency and access. The workgroup's charge is to build the accessibility system for each requirement that can be utilized by all Vermont high schools. Where appropriate, the Core Content Connectors (CCCs) would be leveraged to provide specialized learning targets for students with significant cognitive disabilities and act as a "bridge" from grade-level standards to the needs of some students with IEPs, guiding instruction and assessment for these students

The workgroup will also create the system for how any modified graduation requirement is documented. The early thinking is that any modified graduation requirement would be documented in a student's Personalized Learning Plan and signed off by the school counselor or principal and the IEP team.

Additionally, there needs to be clear planning on how schools will support Multilingual English Learners towards meeting graduation requirements. Realistic and transparent Personalized Learning Plans must be leveraged and regularly revisited. All efforts should be made to align content and language proficiency standards (WIDA 2020) in instruction for the benefit of all students.

- All Pull-Out or Sheltered Instruction received by Multilingual English Learners should happen under the guidance of endorsed specialists and must count toward graduation credits.

- ESL courses should count for up to a prescribed number of ELA credits.

- World Language Credits should be waived by offering credit for proficiency in home languages through standardized processes.

- Multilingual English Learners should have equitable access to the Vermont Seal of Biliteracy and should be encouraged to attain the Seal.

AOE Next Steps

Supporting the implementation of the updated graduation requirements is a core component of the Agency of Education's broader change-management approach under Act 73. Rather than treating graduation requirements as a standalone compliance shift, the Agency's approach emphasizes aligned academic expectations, coherent instructional systems, and continuous improvement. In partnership with the State Board and informed by ongoing stakeholder engagement and working group input, the Agency is preparing a coordinated plan to provide the guidance, training, and support needed to implement change with fidelity and consistency, with a focus on content standards, instruction, assessment, and accountability. Areas of focus that have already been identified based on feedback gathered include:

- **Elevating Academic Expectations:** Clarifying how the revised graduation requirements align to rigorous, standards-based learning experiences, integrated transferable skills, and consistent proficiency expectations across content areas, with a focus on coordinated curriculum and the instructional core.

- **Training and Implementation Planning:** Designing professional learning and field guidance to support LEAs in anticipating scheduling, staffing, and instructional design decisions necessary to deliver high-quality coursework and learning experiences aligned to the new requirements.

- **Coursework and Learning Experience Quality:** Developing guidance to support LEAs in the design, selection, and oversight of coursework and learning experience pathways that reflect recommended standards coverage by content area, credit, and depth of rigor.

- **Equitable Student Support:** Preparing guidance on how personalized learning plans, inclusive instructional practices, and targeted supports can ensure all students are able to meet the single diploma requirements.

- **Assessment, Proficiency, and Credit Recovery:** Clarifying expectations and planning guidance for standards-aligned assessment, credit recovery, and extended learning opportunities for students who may require additional time or alternative pathways to demonstrate proficiency.

- **Evaluation and Continuous Improvement:** Establishing monitoring, feedback loops, and evaluation strategies to assess implementation quality and student outcomes, enabling data-informed adjustments over time.

Through this intentional planning and change-management process, the Agency is focused on raising the bar for academic quality while building system readiness to meet

it, ensuring that the implementation of Act 73's graduation requirements is coherent, equitable, and sustainable across Vermont's education system.

Appendix A. Vermont Institutions of Higher Education Entrance Requirements

Appendix A outlines detailed admission requirements for the University of Vermont (UVM), Saint Michael's College, Vermont State University, and Champlain College.

University of Vermont

At a minimum, candidates for all majors at UVM are expected to have met the following [requirements](#) prior to enrollment:

- 4 years of English

- 3 years of mathematics (algebra I, geometry, algebra II, or equivalent courses)

- 3 years of social science

- 3 years of natural or physical science, including a lab science

- 2 years of the same foreign language; (American Sign Language meets this requirement)

Most successful applicants exceed the minimum entrance requirements. Any exceptions to these requirements are made on a case-by-case basis.

Course work not completed at the high school level may be fulfilled by equivalent college-level academic work. In general, one semester of college work is considered the equivalent of one year of high school study.

St. Michael's College

Minimum [requirements](#) for St. Michael's College include:

- 4 years of English (students are encouraged to take English courses with a strong emphasis on writing and the reading of literature)

- 2-3 years of the same foreign language

- 3-4 years of theoretical mathematics

- 3-4 years of science, including at least two lab sciences

- 3-4 years of history and social sciences

Vermont State University

Academic Profile Requirements

Vermont State University prefers that candidates include the following college preparatory courses in their high school programs:

- 4 years of English
- 3 years of math
- 3-4 years of social science
- 2-3 years of laboratory science

Some academic programs require specific credentials or prerequisite courses completed prior to application and/or enrollment. These requirements are found in their Program Admission Requirements.

Champlain College

Champlain College admission requirements include the successful completion of a college preparatory curriculum, including:

- 4 years of reading/writing English
- 3 years of history/social sciences
- 3 years of mathematics (at least through Algebra II, and optionally Pre-Calculus, Calculus, or AP Calculus as juniors or seniors)
- 3 years of natural sciences, including two courses with lab components
- 2 years of a foreign language
- A full course load of challenging academic subjects in the senior year

Appendix B. Graduation Requirements Survey

2025 Vermont Statewide Graduation Requirements Input

Act 73 requires the Agency of Education to recommend statewide graduation requirements to the State Board of Education by January 1, 2026, in the form of a report. The State Board of Education then has until July 1, 2027, to finalize their decisions about the statewide graduation requirements, and the AOE will be available to provide ongoing support to them during this decision-making period.

The purpose of this survey is to gather input from a variety of stakeholders and your responses will help inform the recommendations the AOE makes in their December 2025 report. The survey will be open through Friday, November 14th, 2025. You may save and come back to the collection before submission by clicking save at the bottom of the collection and following the instructions in the pop-up anytime. Thank you for taking the time to submit your responses.

Enter your supervisory union/school district/CTE center/Independent School Name

Select your role

Did you attend the graduation requirement recommendations track at the Statewide Planning Retreat on November 4th?

- Yes

- No

1. **Create a table below this image to capture the second column (your model).** Consider the examples provided in model A and B proposals, by determining quantitative credits for each content area and total credits for graduation.

Content Area	Enter Your Preferred Number of Credits	Model A	Model B
Interdisciplinary Core electives			6 credits
Mathematics		4 credits	2 credits
English Language Arts		4 credits	2 credits
Social Studies/Global Citizenship		3 credits	2 credits
Science		3.5 credits	2.5 credits
Arts		1.5 credits	1 credit
World Language		2 credits	1 credit
Financial Literacy		.5 credits	.5 credits
Health		1 credit	.5 credits
Physical Education		1 credit	1.5 credits
Electives		3 credits	2 credits
Flexible Pathway Experience		.5 credits	.5 credits
Total Credits		24 credits	21.5 credits

*One credit is equal to one full year course or equivalent learning

My Statewide Graduation Requirements Model

Create rows to include all content areas and then apply your credit #

Additional Questions

2. Please specify certain courses you think should be required within any of the content areas (e.g. Algebra I, Civics, etc.)

3. What informed the model you built above (e.g. opportunities for students, accessibility, staffing, etc.)

4. What are some key challenges anticipated in implementing the model you built above? (staffing; communication; course/pathways design or revision; course/pathways approval; other)

5. Below, indicate the importance of each aspect of the approach to the proposed graduation requirements modeling:

Scale: 1 = less important, 3 = neutral, 5 = highly important

- Access to one Vermont diploma for all learners, including those with disabilities

- Standardizing the unit of measure for each content requirement (one credit represents a one year course or equivalent learning experience) so that students, caregivers, and educators are empowered to navigate the requirements

- Clarity of standards expectations to create increased access to flexible pathways

- Decisions about what to require at the state level versus what to remain at the local level

- Applicability across settings (CTE centers, regional high schools, independent schools)

- Allowing some graduation requirements to be satisfied in grades below 9th (e.g., 8th grade Algebra I would count toward the requirements)

- Flexibility for interdisciplinary instructional models

- Electives credits allowing for continuation of priority local requirements (e.g., Senior Seminar, local capstones)

- Opportunity to strengthen consistency and rigor of PreK-8 experiences

- Options for adding Seals (Such as Seal of Biliteracy)

6. In terms of operationalizing how credits translate into coursework/other pathways to learning, what considerations would you like to share?

   a. Additional feedback on the approach (e.g. What have we overlooked? What else should we include? What do you hope to see in the final recommendation to the Vermont State Board of Education?)

7. Transferable skills are already a required part of curricula per 2120.6 of the Education Quality Standards. Would you prefer that the state also determine graduation requirements for specific transferable skills or leave that to local decisions about curricula?

   a. If you would like the state to determine graduation requirements for specific transferable skills, what requests do you have for support to

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the field in standardizing the measurement of students' ability to satisfy the requirements?

Flexible Pathways Requirement Questions ([Proposal to Include Flexible Pathways in Recommended Statewide Graduation Requirements](#))

8. Do the proposed options for the Flexible Pathways Requirement (linked above) offer sufficient variety and equal likelihood of resulting in high-quality learning?   Yes/No

9. Are the proposed options for the Flexible Pathways Requirement scoped appropriately?   Yes/No

    a. If no, why not?

10. Are there any other options that should be included in the Flexible Pathways requirement?

11. What other feedback do you have about the Vermont statewide graduation requirements that we haven't asked you to share yet?

Appendix C. State Board-Approved Student Standards by Content Area

For ease of reference, we have included the student standards for each content area that have already been approved by the State Board of Education.

Content Area	Adopted Standards Link
Math	[Common Core State Standards - Math](#)
English Language Arts (ELA)	[Common Core State Standards - ELA](#)
Science	[Next Generation Science Standards](#) [International Society for Technology Education (ISTE) Standards for Student Learning](#)
Social Studies	[College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies State Standards](#)
Financial Literacy	[Jump$tart National Standards for Personal Finance Education](#)
World Languages	[World-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages](#)
Visual & Performing Arts	[National Arts Standards](#)

Content Area	Adopted Standards Link
Health & Physical Ed.	[SHAPE America's National Health Education Standards](#) [SHAPE America's National Physical Education Standards](#)
Ethnic Studies	Does not yet have State Board-approved standards

Appendix D. Example Student Profiles

While these examples are not exhaustive, we have intentionally selected a handful of student profiles (Career Tech, Flexible Pathway, 4-Year College Bound, and Additional Student Support) to provide "case studies" of how students could satisfy the proposed graduation requirements and aid in identifying additional considerations.

Career Tech Example

This student cares deeply about helping his community and wants to make a difference. He saw his father receive excellent care in the hospital when he recovered from a heart attack, which showed him what a difference the care and skills of medical staff can make for a whole family's experience in difficult times. He is really bright and anxious to get started on his path to working. He doesn't want to wait until college or later to get into a hospital and is excited about the Associates of Health Sciences option his counselor showed him at CCV. As an exploratory next step, this student participated in a Pre-Tech Exploratory program in 10th grade at a regional technical center and earned six and a half credits (e.g. [Stafford's Tech Exploratory](#)). He is on the soccer team and student council at his high school. He also volunteers with the adaptive soccer club during their summer camp programs.

Grade 9: 6.5 credits

- Math 1 credit – Algebra I

- ELA 1 credit – 9th Grade English (introductory ELA)

- Science 1 credit – 9th grade Physical Science

- Social Studies 1 credit – World Studies

- World Language 1 credit – Spanish 1

- Phys Ed .5 credit

- Health .5 credit

- Arts .5 credit – Intro to Theater

Grade 10: 6.5 credits

- Pre-Tech Exploratory program at CTE Center (8:25am-2:20pm daily)
    - o Math 1 credit – Applied Geometry
    - o ELA 1 credit – Sophomore English Reading & Writing
    - o Social Studies 1 credit – US History
    - o Science 1 credit – Earth and Space Science
    - o Art 1 credit – Visual Art
    - o Financial Literacy .5 credit
    - o Elective 1 credit – CTE Program

Grade 11: 6 credits

- Health Careers program at a CTE Center (e.g. Stafford's Health Careers)
    - o Math 1 credit – Medical Math
    - o ELA 1 credit – Medical Language
    - o Science 1 credit (Life Science) – Anatomy & Physiology I with lab (4 college credits, Fast Forward)
    - o Elective 2 credits – CTE program
        - ▪ Work-Based Learning – Job shadow at Rutland Regional Medical Center
        - ▪ Industry-Recognized Credentials: Basic Life Support, First Aid, Bloodborne and Airborne Pathogens
- At Sending High School
    - o Phys Ed - 1 credit

Grade 12: 6.5 credits

- Health Careers program at a CTE Center (e.g. Stafford's Health Careers)
    - o Math 1 credit – Statistics for Medical Careers
    - o ELA 1 credit – Technical Reading and Writing
    - o Science 1 credit – Anatomy & Physiology II with lab (4 college credits, Fast Forward)
    - o Social Studies 1 credit – Civics
    - o Health .5 credit
    - o Elective 2 credits – CTE program

- Work-Based Learning 1 credit – Co-op at Rutland Regional Medical Center
- Industry-Recognized Credentials: Stop the Bleed, LNA Certification

Total: 25.5 credits

Considerations for this student pathway:

1. World Language: Note that the student takes World Language in grade 9. Due to the student attending a full day CTE center in grades 11 and 12, and a full-day Pre-Tech Exploratory program in grade 10, 9th grade is the only year to easily fit this requirement into the student's schedule. When we think of a CTE student from a sending high school that sends to a full day CTE center, taking a World Language in grade 9 is an important scheduling element. Students could return to their sending school for this course as upperclassmen, so this is just a variable to be aware of. This level of prescriptiveness/inflexibility could cause challenges for scheduling overall for some students, or they could satisfy the requirement through virtual learning opportunities.

2. Physical Education and Visual/Performing Arts: Note that in order to meet the graduation requirement in PE and Arts, a student in a CTE program that does not align to those standards (to meet them within the CTE program), may need to return to their sending school in order to meet those credits. This can create barriers to attending CTE due to scheduling and transportation challenges. It is worth attending closely to scheduling considerations for such requirements at sending schools so that CTE participation is encouraged and feasible.

   a. Some possible solutions could include: considering scholastic sports participation or arts programming outside of the school day to count for these requirements, thinking about ways to offer electives in these areas within CTE centers (and how to provide appropriate staffing to do so), and likely other possibilities.

Flexible Pathways Example

This student's PLP played a major role in designing their flexible pathways toward graduation. While completing their Student Profile in grade 9, this student reflected on past learning experiences that informed her future plans. These included participating in Civics that Empowers All Students in grade 5 and being a legislative page at the State House in grade 8. These learning experiences sparked an interest in civic learning that informed the Goals and Actions Steps part of the PLP planning process. In grade 9, one short-term goal was to expand their civic learning opportunities through the Governor's Institute of Vermont (GIV)'s Global Issues and Youth Action program, though she recognized the need to apply for a scholarship in order to be able to access this opportunity. Not only did GIV allow for the exploration of civic opportunities, but it also

focused on specific ways to influence policy on issues like health care and the environment.

In grade 10, one short-term goal was to be on the Climate Change subcommittee of the Vermont State Youth Council (VSYC), a diverse group of Vermont youth responsible for annually advising the Governor and the Vermont General Assembly on the policies that impact young people. Her application was focused on environmental issues and she was accepted. Through the Reflection section of their PLP, she reflected on these experiences from the early part of their high school career and determined that she wanted to focus on the environment and climate activism, which informed her junior and senior year plans that would ultimately lead to the long-term goal of working at the United Nations on world environmental issues. She recognized that world language learning would need to be part of her PLP and considered online opportunities to supplement school offerings.

This student's grades 9-12 coursework included traditional courses to fulfill some graduation requirements and flexible pathways to fulfill other graduation requirements. Since she had taken advantage of several opportunities outside of the school day, she had more room in her schedule to take the world languages that would help her achieve her career goal of working at the United Nations. While not fulfilling all of the required standards of a Civics/American Government class needed for graduation, it was determined that both GIV and VSYC gave her opportunities to earn social studies elective credits.

In grades 11 and 12, this student took advantage of several standards-aligned VTVLC courses not available in their high school, but of long-term career interest, to earn graduation credit. These included an elective science credits through Agriscience 1, an ELA elective credit through Public Speaking, and a world language credit through Spanish III. Finally, neither VTVLC nor her school offered AP Earth and Environmental Science, so she decided to take a dual enrollment course through UVM her senior year.

* Reflect Flexible Pathways opportunities

Grade 9: 6 credits

- Math 1 credit – Algebra I

- ELA 1 credit – 9th Grade English (introductory ELA)

- Science 1 credit – 9th grade Physical Science

- Social Studies 1 credit – World Studies

- World Language 1 credit – Spanish II (student took Spanish I in middle grades)

- Phys Ed 1 credit

Grade 10: 6 credits

- Math 1 credit – Geometry

- ELA 1 credit – World Literature course

- Science 1 credit - Life Science

- Social Studies 1 credit – Civics

- Health .5 credit

- Financial Literacy .5 credit

- Visual Arts 1 credit

Grade 11: 6 credits

- Math 1 credit – Data Science

- ELA 1 credit – Technical Reading and Writing

- *Life Science 1 credit – [Agriscience 1](#) through VTVLC

- *Social Studies 1 credit – elective credits earned through GIV and VSYC

- Arts .5 credit – Theater Arts

- Health .5 credit

- *World Languages 1 credit – Spanish III through VTVLC

Grade 12: 5.5 credits

- Math 1 credit – dual enrollment Statistics course (3 college credits)

- *ELA 1 credit – .5 Presentation through Public Speaking from VTVLC and .5 Research through independent research project

- Social Studies 1 credit – AP US History

- Science 1 credit – dual enrollment in Earth and Environmental Science (3 college credits)

- *Career Exploration Learning 1 elective credit - Internship

- Phys Ed - .5 Credit

Total: 23.5 credits

Considerations for this student profile: Flexible pathway learning can be counted for credit under the new graduation requirements, provided that the learning has been assessed by a teacher holding the appropriate credential. This student's .5 ELA credit for research in her independent project would require the oversight and approval of an ELA teacher to be awarded credit, and their GIV and VSYC experiences would only be

awarded credit based on the appropriate oversight and approval by a Social Studies teacher at their school in order to count toward an elective credit. Her internship and additional World Language course count toward her total number of required elective credits.

4-Year College Bound Example

Building on the personalized learning plan (PLP) that they began developing in middle school, this student revealed a strong interest in science and data analysis. These insights informed the student's decision to pursue a science-focused college/career pathway and, with support from their guidance counselor and advisory teacher, they planned out the best course schedule to satisfy college entrance requirements and prepare them for the continuation of post-secondary STEM education.

Because of their early exposure and intentional planning through their PLP, the student knew they wanted to pursue more specialized STEM-related, higher-level coursework. This included choosing to enroll into AP courses, dual-enrollment opportunities, and participation in relevant afterschool clubs or extracurricular activities and academics.

Grade 9: 6 credits

- Math 1 credit – Accelerated Geometry
- ELA 1 credit – 9th Grade English (introductory ELA)
- Science 1 credit – Earth and Environmental Studies
- Social Studies 1 credit – World Studies
- World Language 1 credit – Spanish 1
- Health .5 credit
- Performing Arts .5 credit

Grade 10: 6.5 credits

- Math 1 credit – Algebra II (student completed Algebra I in 8th grade)
- ELA 1 credit – Honors American Studies (ELA course, interdisciplinary)
- Life Science 1 credit – Advanced Biology
- Social Studies 1 credit – Honors American Studies (US History, interdisciplinary)
- World Language 1 credit – Spanish 2
- Visual Arts - 1 credit
- PE .5 credit

Grade 11: 6.5 credits

- Math 1 credit – Pre-Calculus

- ELA 1 credit – AP Literature

- Science 1 credit – AP Chemistry

- Science 1 credit – dual-enrollment Human Growth & Development (3 college credits)

- Social Studies 1 credit – Civics

- Financial Literacy .5 credit

- Work-Based Learning Elective Course 1 credit

    o Includes a job shadow at higher education institution lab

Grade 12: 7 credits

- Math 1 credit – AP Statistics

- Math 1 credit – AP Calculus

- ELA 1 credit – dual-enrollment English Composition (3 college credits)

- Science 1 credit – Physics

- Social Studies 1 credit – Public Issues and World Affairs

- Phys Ed 1 credit

- Health .5 credit

- Family and Consumer Science .5 credit

Total: 26 credits

Considerations for this student profile: It is important to note that a student with these interests and goals, could also find success within a CTE program pathway. If this student were to explore a Health Sciences or Engineering CTE pathway, they could take college coursework of up to 17 college credits in science fields and apply that directly to real world problems. Depending on the student's goals, a CTE program could also set them up for success in the transition to a four-year college program in the sciences.

Additional Student Support Example

This student does her best to come to school ready to work and see her friends. Classes aren't easy for her and sometimes she can't make it to school because of transportation issues and some challenges at home, which can make her feel behind. She's been feeling behind in classes for a while now, and it makes being in school hard. Luckily, she enjoys seeing her friends and has a good relationship with the school counselor, which makes things a little better. In her freshman year, she almost didn't pass her science,

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math, or ELA classes. Going into her sophomore year, her counselor said that she'd have extra literacy and science support to help her catch up. She has been evaluated and didn't qualify for a 504 or IEP. Her friends and family had asked her about doing CTE, but there wasn't a program she was excited about. The one thing she knew she liked was theater, and it seemed like there would be more chances to do that at her current high school.

Grade 9: 6 credits

- Math 1 credit – Applications of Mathematics (pre-algebra and pre-geometry topics using applied math methods)
- ELA 1 credit – 9th Grade English (introductory ELA)
- Science 1 credit – 9th grade Life Science
- Social Studies 1 credit – World Studies
- Health .5 credit
- Phys Ed .5 credit
- Performing Arts 1 credit

Grade 10: 5.5 credits

- Math 1 credit – Statistics for Everyday Life (statistics and data science using applied math methods)
- ELA 1 credit – 10th Grade English
    - ELA non-credit bearing course – intervention
- Science elective 1 credit – Concepts of Science (science elective using project-based instruction to cover science concepts from Life Sciences, Physical Sciences, and Earth Sciences)
- Social Studies 1 credit – US History
- Phys Ed 1 credit
- Performing Arts .5 credit

Grade 11: 6 credits

- Math 1 credit – Algebra 1
- ELA 1 credit – Literacy Studio (English elective focusing on reading and writing skills connected to topics of student interest)
- Science 1 credit – Earth Science (10th grade science)
- Social Studies 1 credit – Civics

- Financial Literacy .5 credit

- Health .5 credit

- Performing Arts 1 credit

Grade 12: 5.5 credits

- Math 1 credit – Geometry 1

  o Math non-credit bearing course - intervention block

- ELA 1 credit – Creative Writing

- Science 1 credit – Physical Science

- Performing Arts 1 credit

- World Language 1 credit – American Sign Language

- Career Exploration Elective 1 credit - Internship

  o Includes an internship with a local theater troupe

Total: 23 credits

Considerations for this student profile:

1. Flexible pathway learning can be counted for credit under the new graduation requirements, provided that the learning has been assessed by a teacher holding the appropriate credential, in this case an art teacher.

2. In each grade level, this profile raises the question of: What additional support and learning time should the school provide to a student who doesn't enter high school with the necessary skills to access grade-level content to ensure the student can meet the graduation requirements? This school offers additional support through the school counselor and provides both remedial coursework and "double-doses" in the content areas the student has identified gaps.

3. Due to the student having a full schedule from intervention time and other required coursework in her early high school years, she waited until her senior year to enroll in a world language course and allow her to satisfy this requirement.

4. While this student ultimately made progress, this example raises questions about how the system supports students when existing interventions do not result in credit attainment. Schools will need to be intentional when providing additional credit-recovery pathways are available to support on-time graduation while maintain the appropriate level of rigor.

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Appendix E. Additional Resources

Throughout the report, we have referenced monthly presentations to the State Board of Education from August-December of 2025 as well as the inaugural Strategic Planning Retreat held on November 4, 2025. For more information, please visit the State Board of Education website as well as the Strategic Planning Retreat website.