

Graduation Guidelines

Does the definition of a “well-rounded student” depend solely on academic success in the core subjects? Does it depend on students’ abilities to test well? Does it depend on their disposition and character? Many would argue that it is the combination of several aspects of education that lead to a successful graduate, whether that graduate plans to attend college or join the workforce upon graduation.

The Durango School District 9-R Board of Education has been engaging community members, staff members and students to discuss this very topic, as new guidelines and requirements for graduation will be going into effect for all 2021 grads. This work is essential in preparing schools, teachers and students for the rigor required to meet those requirements in the not-so-distant future.

Rote mathematics or regurgitating historical facts are not going to be sufficient for today’s academic rigor and will not provide students with all they need to be successful upon graduation. As schools continue to expand the ways in which they are able to reach students, more and more are integrating character and life skills that will contribute to their success no matter the issue or the solution, including: critical thinking, teamwork, communication, collaboration and creativity.

All Colorado school districts will begin implementing revised local high school graduation requirements that meet or exceed the Colorado Graduation Guidelines approved in May 2013 by the Colorado State Board of Education. Districts are charged with reviewing how well their current graduation guidelines meet these expectations and to adopt appropriate standards by 2017.

21st Century Skills, such as those mentioned previously like problem solving and critical thinking, are critical skills all students should possess; but the requirements for math, foreign language, English/language arts, etc., are equally important in the discussion as it is debated their importance, their focus and their level of rigor. Parents of 8th graders have been surveyed to gauge their priorities when it comes to graduation requirements, as their students will be the first graduates under these new guidelines. The included graph highlights the results of that survey, which is helping to lead the district toward the final guidelines.

It really is a combination of all these elements that lead to the most successful educational models and thus the most successful graduates. The school district leaders and the Board of Education has engaged with the community over the last year to lead toward a final decision around these requirements, one that is common sense and one that best benefits students and the community. The Board of Education plans to finalize the graduation guidelines for all 9-R students at the December 13, 2016 board meeting. The draft of proposed guidelines is available for your review and feedback is welcome to be provided to info@durango.k12.co.us.

