



THE WASHINGTON STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

Governance | Accountability | Achievement | Oversight | Career & College Readiness

August 8, 2014

Dear members of the Career and Education Opportunities Task Force:

In addition to submitting my edited draft, I wanted to send this letter highlighting specific proposed recommendations in the report that we will be discussing next week.

First, I truly believe this is very important and good work. The Task Force had a meaningful impact on the work of the State Board of Education (SBE) in modifying the 24-credit diploma framework in January of last year to include the 'personalized pathways' framework. I also believe that our discussions about math and science course equivalencies contributed to the success of that proposal legislatively. The Task Force has strengthened the positive momentum on a number of fronts in making CTE an integrated component to a career and college-ready diploma. There are a few recommendations in the draft report, however, that concern me. I am worried that these recommendations do not necessarily represent a policy direction toward an integrated career and college-ready diploma. I have highlighted the two particular recommendations and my concerns below.

The first is the incorporation of Common Core Standards, listed as item #4. The item reads:

Incorporating Common Core Standards & Assessments. First, the state should *avoid requiring both assessments and course credits* for graduation in the same subject area. This is particularly true for the new Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) assessments of English Language Arts and Mathematics, which are expected to be set at a "college and career ready" level. This would provide more flexibility for students, as long as there is an assurance that students have an *opportunity for a meaningful senior year*, particularly those who do not meet the standard on the assessments.

The statement "the state should avoid requiring both assessments and course credits for graduation in the same subject area" would appear to essentially mean that the state should not require any assessments for graduation, since the state requires course credits in all the assessed subjects (science, math, and english). If that is the proposed recommendation, it should say that clearly, so that members know what they are discussing. Further, I would not be in favor of this particular proposal as I currently understand it, as I believe preserving the link that exists in current law between high school graduation and demonstration of proficiency on the Common Core is an appropriate one. For that reason, I request that we have time to discuss this specific recommendation in depth at our next meeting.

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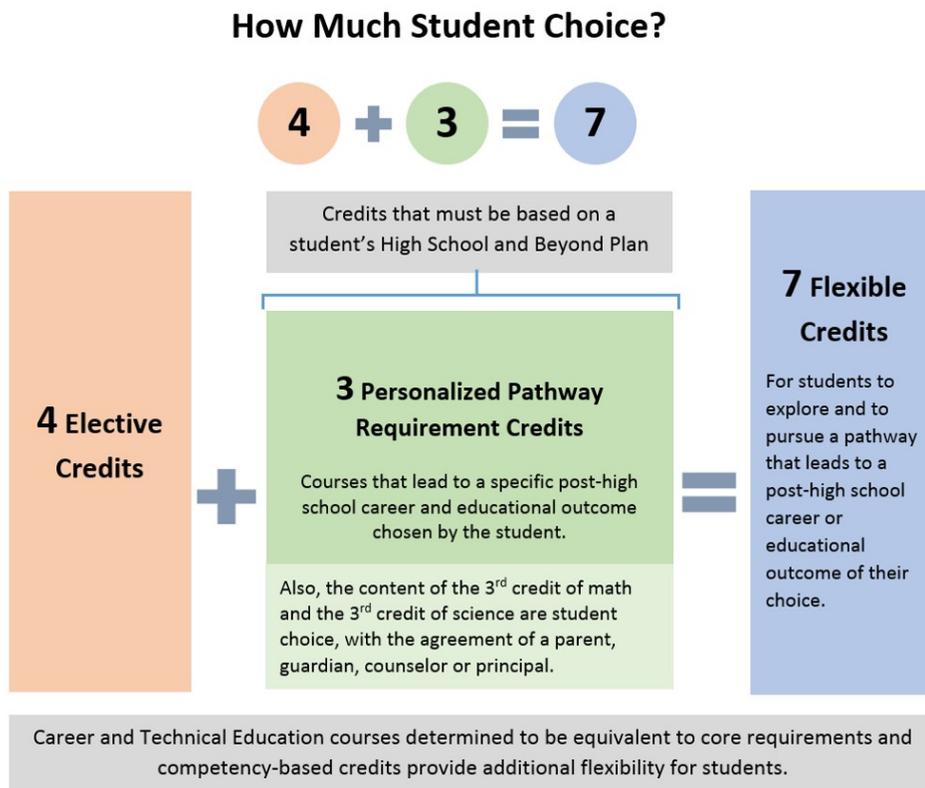
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The second item is the statewide policies for CTE, listed as item #6. The item reads:

6. **Statewide Policies for CTE.** The Task Force had extensive discussions about course equivalency that should not be forgotten. Assuring that students have *equitable access to equivalency crediting* for CTE courses is important. The Legislature should continue focusing on course equivalencies, in hopes of making it easier for educators to offer more innovative, hands-on learning. The Legislature should explore whether students enrolled in a sequence of classes at skill centers need an *exemption from proposed graduation requirements*, or whether the issues and concerns of skill center students can be addressed through course equivalencies.

This item seems very connected to the work we have done as a group. However, the recommendation itself seems not to acknowledge the movement that has already been made on this issue. The Legislature acted to expand access to course equivalencies through Senate Bill 6522; this should be reflected, as the statement concerning the Committee’s work “not being forgotten” implies to me that nothing has happened. In addition, the State Board of Education worked closely with skill center directors in crafting the ‘personalized pathways’ framework to ensure students could pursue CTE sequences while completing the new graduation requirements. This work was done in part at the behest of this group. Asking the Legislature to explore an exemption to high school graduation requirements seems to ignore the work that has already been done to address this issue.

I am including below a copy of the chart that SBE staff have developed to illustrate the variety of flexibilities afforded students pursuing a CTE program of study.



I look forward to our discussion at the next meeting on these and the other recommendations.

Sincerely,

Isabel Muñoz-Colón
SBE Member