

GENERAL QUESTIONS

Why are we making this move now? Has enough time has passed since the latest graduation requirements were implemented?

We know that too many young people are graduating unprepared for the next step – or they are not engaged enough to graduate at all. For example:

- Of the 6,820 members of the class of '05 graduates who enrolled in North Carolina community colleges in 2005-06, more than 44 percent had to take some type of “developmental” course in at least one subject. That shows they were not prepared for college.
- About four in 10 students do not graduate from high school in four years.
- Members of the business community say that skills required of an entry-level employee today are similar to those needed for college-level work. There is no significant difference. College-ready is the same as work-ready today.

Won't this just discourage more students from graduating from high school?

We believe that by challenging students more and by changing high schools through the New Schools Project, Learn and Earn and other innovative efforts, students will be more engaged in their studies and more motivated to stay in school. By seeing how education is

linked to what they want to do with their lives, students will be more willing to remain in school.

Also, to address the academic needs of students, we are focusing resources on middle school literacy, on the potential for course recovery through the NC Virtual Public School and other programs, and on encouraging more individualized educational planning for students who are having a difficult time in school. The Reading First initiative at the elementary level also should help us ensure that students enter middle and high school with strong reading skills.

Where will we find enough math, science and second-language teachers?

It is always a challenge to find an adequate supply of qualified teachers, especially in these fields. Technology should help us in this area. The NC Virtual Public School is one way to bring consistently strong instruction to even the most remote schools in North Carolina.

How will you allow students to opt out of the requirements?

For some students with disabilities, the occupational course of study will continue to be available as one way toward graduation. For all other students, the core course of study will be expected. However, we anticipate that some courses may be allowed as substitutes.

Who gets to make the final decision about what a student takes?

Parents, in cooperation with the student's teachers and principal, would have the final say about the courses each student takes. In order for students to substitute courses, for example, parents would be expected to sign-off on this change.

What about students with disabilities who may not qualify for the Occupational Course of Study yet who will struggle greatly with this core?

There may be course substitutions that would help these students succeed in the core course. These details remain to be worked out, and that is one reason that we are holding these regional meetings – we need to hear your ideas from your community and from your local schools before every detail is finalized.

The timing seems ambitious – why is this effective so soon?

Board members feel a tremendous sense of urgency to prepare young people better for college and for work. We feel that this change should not be delayed; the need for additional student academic preparation is already here. We should not send the message to today's middle school and elementary school students that the status quo is sufficient.

What extra support is provided for students who need additional help?

Local school districts currently receive state and federal funds to serve at-risk students. These funds can be deployed to provide support to students in need. This would be done in much the same way that local school districts re-deployed some at-risk student funds to provide intervention for elementary and middle school students who did not meet the Student Accountability Standards. This is one area in which North Carolina State Board of Education members want to hear more from you – local educators in your own communities.

Technology also will provide some support through virtual courses that can assist in credit recovery and other course needs.

MATHEMATICS REQUIREMENT FAQs

1. What are the four math courses required by this Core Course of Study?

The four math course requirement could be filled by one of the two options below:

- Integrated Math I, II, III and a course beyond Algebra II/Integrated Math III
- Algebra I, Geometry, Algebra II, and a course beyond Algebra II/Integrated Math III (such as Advanced Functions and Modeling, Pre-calculus, Discrete Mathematics or AP Statistics)

2. What courses in the current North Carolina Standard Course of Study in Mathematics would fulfill the fourth mathematics requirement?

Courses in the current North Carolina Standard Course of Study in Mathematics that are beyond Algebra II/Integrated Mathematics III include: Advanced Functions and Modeling (AFM), Pre-calculus, Integrated Mathematics IV, Discrete Mathematics and AP Statistics. The North Carolina State Board of Education and the Department of Public Instruction are considering revising the North Carolina Standard Course of Study in Mathematics. If revision takes place, then it is possible that other courses may be designed to meet the fourth mathematics course requirement.

3. Will the Technical Math courses be included as choices for the fourth math course requirement?

No, the Technical Math courses – as they now exist in the North Carolina Standard Course of Study in Mathematics – will not be included as choices for the fourth mathematics course requirement. Potential revision of the North Carolina Standard Course of Study in Mathematics, if it occurs, might make it possible that other courses be designed to meet the fourth mathematics course requirement.

4. Can the Integrated Math I-IV sequence be used to satisfy the four math course requirement?

Yes, the Integrated Math I, II, III and IV sequence satisfies the four math course requirement. It provides for both college and workforce readiness.

5. Why do ALL students need the four-math course requirement supported by the American Diploma Project?

The American Diploma Project supports the expectation that all high school students should be prepared according to a common academic experience – one that prepares them for both post-secondary education and the workforce. CT, Inc. found that there is an unprecedented convergence of skills necessary for success no matter which path students choose. If the level of expectation is not the same for all students, then high school graduates will not be given the foundation of academic skills that they will need to learn additional skills as their jobs change, and they will not be prepared to enter college ready for credit-bearing courses. A common core curriculum provides equity and opportunity for ALL students.

6. Can locally-developed courses continue to be used to meet the fourth math course requirement?

No, locally developed courses will no longer meet the fourth math course requirement. The fourth mathematics course must come from the choices within the North Carolina Standard Course of Study in Mathematics. Again, the North Carolina State Board of Education and the Department of Public Instruction are considering revising the North Carolina Standard Course of Study in Mathematics. If revision takes place, then it is possible that other courses may be designed to meet the fourth mathematics course requirement.

7. How is the math requirement meeting the needs of the 21st century?

The North Carolina Standard Course of Study in Mathematics contains mathematical reasoning and problem solving components. It also addresses the needs of a technologically-skilled workforce. It will help prepare students to be both competitive and collaborative in a global economy.

8. What about a course substitution policy?

Courses which fulfill the fourth math requirement typically must come from the courses listed in questions #1 and #2. If a student has an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) that requires modifications or substitutions, then those modifications or substitutions should be followed.

SECOND LANGUAGES FAQs

1. Why are World Languages important for future-ready students?

- **Diversity**—North Carolina’s population, like the rest of the United States, is increasingly diverse. There is a significant demand for non-

English-speakers to communicate and interact with our communities in the workplace, in school, in hospitals, in government and in all aspects of our daily living.

- **Economics**—North Carolina is part of a global economy. Many of our jobs involve working and trading with the rest of the world. Although we may be able to “buy” anything in English, we cannot “sell” everything in English. Our students are also competing with students from across the globe who often speak more than one language. US students are at a disadvantage when they can only communicate in English.
- **National Security**—the security and defense of our nation requires us to understand the languages and cultures of others. The ability to speak, comprehend, read and write other languages is essential to our state and nation’s secure future.
- **Cognition and first language skills**—Research shows that language learning can give students a cognitive boost. Studies also show that students gain a deeper understanding of English by seeing it through another language.

2. Which languages are important?

The choice of which languages to offer is the decision of the local school district. Each language has value dependent upon an individual’s career choice or her/his background. The diversity present in our school system makes the case to find ways that these students can continue and build on the language competencies they already have. Almost 1,000 international firms call North Carolina home. Some reasons for studying various languages are:

French:

- 50 percent of English words come from the French language

- French ancestry
- Official language of the European Economic Community and one of two official languages for the Olympic Games
- Markets in 44 French-speaking countries

German:

- Recommended for majors in music, science, art, business and math at the college level
- German connected firms prefer that their employees have German communication skills
- German and English are both Germanic languages
- One fourth of tourists in the U.S. are German speaking

Latin:

- More than 60 percent of our English vocabulary is derived from Latin, and building a strong English vocabulary is a natural by-product of studying Latin
- Latin is excellent preparation for the study of modern languages
- Technical vocabularies of disciplines such as medicine, law, and art history are largely Latin based
- The study of Latin is the study of Roman and Greek civilization upon which all western societies are based

Spanish:

- The number of Spanish speakers in North Carolina
- Service professions such as police officers, construction, judicial, and medical need employees with Spanish communication skills
- Expanded markets in the Spanish speaking countries via treaties and trade agreements
- Increasing numbers of Spanish speakers in the work force

Less commonly taught languages:

(e.g., Mandarin Chinese, Japanese and Russian)

- Does not mean less commonly spoken
- Helps in trade and national security issues
- Individuals with these communication skills are in high demand
- Technology increases the likelihood of interaction with a speaker of one of these languages

3. What are the goals of the Second Language Standard Course of Study?

The focus of the SL SCS is foremost oral and written communication. It also includes understanding of other cultures, connections to other disciplines, the ability to compare one's own language and culture to others and to take the language into the community either in person or through technology.

4. How can second language study be relevant to all students?

All students regardless of their career paths need the same basic communication skills upon which to base their future language learning. These skill sets are addressed in the Level I Goals and Objectives in the SL SCS. Level II provides the opportunity for teachers to begin to diversify the instruction and allow students to explore language particular to their interests and career choices and post-secondary education. The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (DPI) convened a group of career technical and foreign language teachers to develop activities, lessons and strategies to help both groups of teachers begin to connect the two disciplines of study.

5. Are two years of language study sufficient?

Two years of second language study are required for admission to the 16 constituent institutions of The University of North Carolina. The purpose of the first two years is to provide students with a basic knowledge of words, phrases and simple linguistic structure, as well as an introduction to understanding another culture. Students have the opportunity to build upon the basics at the upper levels of language instruction in high school and college.

True functional proficiency in a language requires an extended, uninterrupted sequence of study and daily contact with the language. It is best accomplished with a strong, articulated program that begins in elementary school, continues in middle school, and culminates in high school.

6. Where are the teachers?

A recent study has shown that there are a number of licensed foreign language teachers in North Carolina currently teaching other subjects. New licensure policies make it easier for individuals with strong language competence to obtain licensure through assessments. The teaching force can also be supplemented by visiting teachers from other countries. The greatest challenge is to find teachers of some of the less commonly taught languages such as Chinese and Russian.

7. Do foreign language teachers have the tools to prepare future-ready students?

Foreign language teachers require professional development opportunities to develop new methodologies to teach all students. They also need professional development opportunities to strengthen their linguistic skills, including study abroad.

8. What could the future of foreign language instruction look like?

The future could include:

- Expansion of language offerings
- Expansion of immersion programs K-12
- New assessments that measure proficiency instead of seat time
- Continuous learning opportunities through technology and exchanges