

# MAKING the GRADE

FALL 2008



## “FUTURE-READY” GRADUATES

All parents want their children to graduate from high school with the skills to be successful in college or in the workforce. Unfortunately, too many students graduate unprepared for college or a successful career.

The North Carolina State Board of Education understands the importance of graduating students who have the skills to compete in the 21st century and has taken important steps to ensure that students graduate with these skills. This tabloid provides parents with information on the Future-Ready Core Course of Study and the North Carolina Graduation Project, two of the Board’s major initiatives to ensure public school students graduate “future ready.”

## HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES NOT FULLY PREPARED

A recent survey found that over 40 percent of college faculty feel that first-year students are academically unprepared for college-level courses. Nearly the same percentage of employers feel recent high school graduates lack the skills to advance. Even high school graduates, when asked, say they would have taken harder courses if they had known what it would take to be successful after graduation. The ACT Study, "Ready for College and Ready for Work: Same or Different?," found that "whether planning to enter college or workforce training programs after graduation, high school students need to be educated in a comparable level of readiness in reading and mathematics."

With all this in mind, the State Board of Education in June 2007 approved the Future-Ready Core Course of Study with the goal that all students would graduate prepared for post-secondary education and careers.

## FUTURE-READY CORE

Beginning with the 2009-2010 ninth grade class, all students will be expected to meet the requirements outlined under the Future-Ready Core Course of Study. The primary differences between this course of study and previous courses of study are:

- an additional mathematics course for those students who previously did not pursue the College/University Prep Course of Study;
- a recommended four elective credits in a concentrated area; and
- an increase from 20 to 21 for the total number of credits required for graduation.

By taking four elective credits in a concentrated area, students can tailor their course concentrations to fit their interests and goals while building a strong academic foundation. Under the six total elective units required for graduation, four elective credits (a four course concentration) could be taken from one of the following areas of focus: Career and Technical Education, JROTC, Arts Education or any other subject area (e.g. mathematics, science, social studies, English). The remaining two electives must be any combination from Career and Technical Education, Arts Education or Second Languages.

For some students with learning disabilities, the Occupational Course of Study will remain an option. These students should have the Occupational Course of Study identified in their Individualized Education Program.

Answers to some "Commonly Asked Questions on the Future-Ready Core" are available online at [www.ncpublicschools.org/gradrequirements](http://www.ncpublicschools.org/gradrequirements).



## NORTH CAROLINA GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

CONTENT AREA	FOR NINTH GRADERS ENTERING BETWEEN 2000 – 2008/09			AVAILABLE FOR NINTH GRADERS 2000 – >	FOR NINTH GRADERS ENTERING IN 2009/10 AND LATER
	CAREER PREP	COLLEGE TECH PREP	COLLEGE/ UNIVERSITY PREP	OCCUPATIONAL	FUTURE-READY CORE
English	4 Credits	4 Credits	4 Credits	4 Credits	4 Credits
Mathematics	3 Credits	3 Credits	4 Credits	3 Credits	4 Credits
Science	3 Credits	3 Credits	3 Credits	2 Credits	3 Credits
Social Studies	3 Credits	3 Credits	3 Credits	2 Credits	3 Credits
Second Language	Not Required	Not Required	2 Credits	Not Required	Not required for graduation, but required for admission to the UNC System.
Computer Skills	No specific course required; student must demonstrate proficiency through testing.	No specific course required; student must demonstrate proficiency through testing.	No specific course required; student must demonstrate proficiency through testing.	No specific course required; student must demonstrate proficiency through testing.	No specific course required; student must demonstrate proficiency through testing.
Health and Physical Education	1 Credits	1 Credits	1 Credits	1 Credits	1 Credits
Electives	2 Credits	2 Credits	3 Credits	6 Credits	6 Credits
Career/Technical	4 Credits <b>OR</b>	4 Credits	Not Required	4 Credits	2 elective credits of any combination from either: Career and Technical Education (CTE), Arts Education or Second Languages 4 electives credits (strongly recommended) from one of the following: CTE, JROTC, Arts Education or any other subject area
JROTC	4 Credits <b>OR</b>				
Arts/Education	4 Credits				
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>20 CREDITS</b>	<b>20 CREDITS</b>	<b>20 CREDITS</b>	<b>22 CREDITS</b>	<b>21 CREDITS</b>

## NORTH CAROLINA GRADUATION PROJECT

Beginning with the 2007-08 ninth grade class, all incoming freshman are required to successfully complete the North Carolina Graduation Project to receive a high school diploma.

The North Carolina Graduation Project is an integral part of North Carolina's high school exit standards. This performance-based exit assessment provides students with a vehicle to demonstrate what they know and are able to do as they prepare to graduate from high school.

The North Carolina Graduation Project provides students the opportunity to connect what they've learned throughout their school career, the skills they've acquired, and work habits to real world situations and issues. Students begin their project in their freshman year when they give initial thought to the kind of project they would like to pursue and then conclude their project in their senior year when they present their project to a panel.

## WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO GRADUATE FROM HIGH SCHOOL?

From kindergarten on, students are getting ready for high school graduation. Every high school student must:

- meet the course and credit requirements based on when they entered high school as a freshman (see course/credit requirements chart);
- successfully complete the North Carolina Graduation Project (for students who entered ninth grade in 2007-08 or later);
- earn passing scores on five essential end-of-course tests: Algebra I, Biology, Civics and Economics, English I and U.S. History (for students who entered ninth grade in 2006-07 or later);
- earn a passing score on the Computer Skills Test; and
- meet any local graduation requirements.



**The NC Graduation Project consists of four major components:**

1. A research paper demonstrating research skills and writing skills.
2. A product created through the use of knowledge and skills in a meaningful way to accomplish a goal.
3. A portfolio, which is a learning record of the student's process and progress through all the steps of the graduation project. This physical record will help the student keep track of his/her work.
4. An oral presentation during which the student will present information on the chosen topic to a review panel.



## PARENTS PLAY KEY ROLE IN GRADUATION PROJECT

Parents play an important role in their child's successful completion of his or her graduation project.

One of the key ways parents can help their child is by talking through possible topics for a graduation project. If your child doesn't have a particular topic in mind, you may want to suggest that they explore their environment for possible ideas, including current interests, career options, world events and trends and community needs.

Your local news media can be an excellent resource for topics. As you and your child read newspapers, watch the news and browse the Web, have your child list issues, stories, ads and other items that interest them. Guide them in discussions to help them identify one or more best topics to research for their graduation project.

Newspapers and other media often feature local experts on many subjects. Children should be encouraged to look for references in stories, ads and opinions of people who are expert in their subjects. For example, if exploring health and fitness, they should look for stories about nutritionists, exercise specialists, nurses and doctors or identify clinics, businesses and other places where health professionals work. Discuss with your child the best ways to contact these health professionals and/or places where they work.

Encourage your child to consider talking with local experts and agencies within the community or within the school. With your child, look at newspaper stories, editorials, letters to the editor and comments on blogs and Web sites to identify key stakeholders in the issue(s) your child is considering.

**...CONTINUED ON PAGE 4**

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Once your child has identified key stakeholders, help them develop interviewing skills by drafting possible questions they'd like to ask the people whose work or concerns relate to their graduation project topic. To help them with interviewing, have them identify quotes in news stories and think of questions the reporter/researcher may have asked the person or have them watch a newscast and see how the reporters interview their subjects.

Have your child discuss with professional journalists how they evaluate the accuracy, completeness, appropriateness, and usefulness of information. They should study ways local newspapers and other media cite sources, such as the attribution of quotes and/or the results of studies and research.

Following are some additional ways parents can help their children stay focused and engaged:

- Help your child remember key graduation project dates by posting a graduation calendar in a prominent place in your home.
- Stay in touch with your child's mentor on a regular basis. The mentor is a community or faculty member who has expertise and experience with the project topic and helps guide your child through its completion.
- Feel free to ask questions of your child's graduation project academic advisor, graduation project coordinator and mentor.
- Listen to your child practice his or her presentation. Offer suggestions that may be helpful for improvement.
- Read your child's research paper and offer feedback.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

**North Carolina Graduation Requirements** – [www.ncpublicschools.org/gradrequirements](http://www.ncpublicschools.org/gradrequirements)

**North Carolina Graduation Project** – [www.ncpublicschools.org/graduationproject](http://www.ncpublicschools.org/graduationproject)

**21st Century Graduates: A Closer Look at the North Carolina Graduation Project** – Findings from the North Carolina Business Committee for Education 2006 Partner Survey, [www.ncpublicschools.org/docs/graduationproject/business/21stcenturygraduates.pdf](http://www.ncpublicschools.org/docs/graduationproject/business/21stcenturygraduates.pdf)

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## FUTURE-READY GRADUATES

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