

KPBSD December 4, 2023, Board Work Session – Graduation Requirements

Topic: Increasing the number of credits for graduation.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- **Gather input from students and families to better understand the full impact of increasing the graduation credit requirement to 24.** Hanover found that among students that graduated in four years, just under half (47%) reached 24 credits. However, given that graduation rates have been above 90% in 2022 and 2023, it is likely that if the cutoff were increased students would take more courses to meet the new requirement (rather than failing to graduate). Gathering feedback from students and families to understand the effects of larger courseloads could be an important step to understanding the impact of the credit change both in and out of the classroom.
- **Provide additional support to students that fail a math or English course on their path to on-time graduation.** Hanover found that students who had failed a math or English course at any point in high school were less likely to graduate in four years than students who were ever enrolled part-time or were ever chronically absent (attendance rate less than 90% of enrolled days in a school year).

KEY FINDINGS

Across the three cohorts studied (expected graduation in 2021, 2022, and 2023), approximately 90 percent of students that were eligible to graduate did so within four years (2 percent of those graduated early). Among the students that graduated in four years:

- About 91 percent earned at least 22 credits¹, while just under half (47 percent) of students earned 24 or more credits.
- Among students ever enrolled part-time that graduated within four years, about one in four (25%) earned 24 or more credits.

Among all students that graduated within four years, the proportion of students who earned at least 24 credits (and therefore would have been able to graduate if the minimum were raised from 22 to 24) varied by student group and by geography. Hanover observed the following disparities by group:

- By region, a 24-credit minimum would have affected students in the Southern Peninsula more severely than other regions. In the Southern Peninsula, just 16 percent of 4-year graduates earned 24 credits, compared to 34-36 percent in Eastern and Outlying Schools, and 66 percent of students in the Central Peninsula.
- By cultural group, 33 percent of Alaskan Native and 5 percent of Russian Old Believer achieved at least 24 credits compared to 49 percent of other or non-specified cultural groups). Note, however, that less than 50 total students from either Alaskan Native or Russian Old Believer were included in the analysis.

- About one third (34%) of economically disadvantaged students earned 24 or more credits, compared to just over half (51%) of non-economically disadvantaged students.

Students who were ever part-time enrollees were less likely to graduate compared to students that were always enrolled full-time. However, this difference was smaller in the most recent (2023) cohort than in earlier cohorts.

- In the 2021 cohort, 63 percent of ever part-time students graduated in four years, compared to 96 percent of always full-time students (a 33-point gap).
- In the 2023 cohort, 88 percent of ever part-time students graduated on time compared to 93 percent of always full-time students, a gap of just five percentage points.

Overall, a student that failed a math or English course had an approximately three in four chance of graduating in four years (77% of students, across cohorts). This is a lower 4-year graduation rate compared to students who were enrolled part-time (81% 4-year graduation rate) or were ever chronically absent (86% 4-year graduation rate).