

State Law and High School Diplomas: Certifying Achievement of the Maine Learning Results

by Frank Hackett

Starting with the graduating class of 2007, Chapter 127 of Maine State Law (Instructional Program, Assessment and Diploma Requirements) requires that all students demonstrate satisfactory understanding of the Maine Learning Results in order to receive a high school diploma. This requirement initially applies to the content areas of English Language Arts and Mathematics, with Science, Social Studies and Health/Physical Education to follow (see Table I at right). If full financial support of the new school funding formula (Essential Programs and Services) is eventually achieved by the state legislature, students in future graduating classes will also need to demonstrate Maine Learning Results proficiency in the content areas of Career Preparation, Modern and Classical Languages and Visual and Performing Arts (see Table I).

Bangor High School Graduation: a Two-Part System

For Bangor High School students, eligibility to earn a high school diploma will call for both the fulfillment of the traditional course credit requirements as established by Bangor School Department policy, as well as demonstrating satisfactory performance on assessments that are designed not only to measure our course content, but also the Maine Learning Results standards. Because the Maine Department of Education has not completed the technical specifications that they will require local school systems to meet, the certification formula for graduation from Bangor High School is not finalized; however, it is anticipated that it will consist of multiple student performance measures, including but not limited to:

1. teacher created common assessments;
2. course grades; and,
3. external assessments such as the Maine Educational Assessment (MEA).

Therefore, the final decision as to whether a student is eligible to graduate from Bangor High School will result from an evaluation of multiple student data sources, providing for a broad range of information as to how well the student has performed.

As mentioned, part of the diploma eligibility calculation will be student performance on common assessments that Bangor High

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School teachers have developed. Their dedication and hard work over the last several years has allowed us to ensure that the tests given to students for the purpose of meeting the state mandated certification requirement are part of our instructional program. This strong commitment to making sure that the assessments we give are connected to student coursework allows us to deliver an efficient model for certification – one that maximizes instructional time and helps students to succeed. Absent this work done by our teachers, students would be faced with “off-the-shelf” tests developed by people who do not know our curriculum. In this regard, the assessments created by Bangor educators have been viewed as

model work, with teachers and administrators receiving frequent requests for presentations and advice from schools across the state.

In the event that students perform poorly on any given assessment, teachers have also developed replacement tests that will give students another chance to meet the standards. The administration of these assessments will occur after students have been given more instruction in the content. In some cases, replacement tests will provide students alternate ways to demonstrate their knowledge than was expected on the original assessment. If students still struggle to meet the standard, additional opportunities for learning will be provided outside of the normal school day and/or year.

Finally, we have designed a data collection system that will provide for timely reports on student progress. These reports will present students

Table 1:
Content Area Certification for High School Graduation Timeline

| Graduating Class Of: | Content Areas Certified: |
|----------------------|--|
| 2007 | English Language Arts, Mathematics |
| 2008 | English Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, Health/Physical Education |
| 2010 and beyond | English Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, Health/Physical Education, Career Preparation, Modern and Classical Languages, Visual and Performing Arts |

and parents with a clear understanding of how well they are doing and whether they are on track to meet the graduation requirements. Because the assessments are delivered over the course of the four high school years, it will be critically important that both students and parents regularly monitor progress. Given the sheer number of assessments required by the state, consistent student performance over all four years of high school will be essential to meet the Maine Learning Results diploma requirement.

Bangor High School students and parents will be provided with more detailed information over the next several months leading up to the 2004-2005 school year. If you are interested in reading more about the Maine Department of Education requirements, please visit their website at: <http://www.state.me.us/education/homepage.htm>.

NOTICE

Employment Opportunity Ads on Web

Beginning this spring, Bangor Schools will place advertisements for employment openings in the school district only on the Bangor Schools website, www.bangorschools.net, and on www.ServingSchools.com, a third-party website that acts as a forum for school employers and potential employees. The School District will continue to place a mini-advertisement in Bangor Daily News saying “See www.ServingSchools.com”.



Many teachers, administrators, and students contributed their time and expertise for this issue. To persons unidentified, we apologize. Each contribution is greatly appreciated.

Sarah Tabor Jonathan Wright
Nancy Hodgkins Marilyn Gass
Scott Burditt Mike DeRespino
Maureen Ireland Sherry Hodgins
Mark Roth Al Banfield
Wendy Libby Julie Cameron
Paul Bouchard Steven Bloodworth
Heather Kuhl Dave Robinson
Eric Hutchins Ellen Holmes
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the Communique is published by the Bangor School Department for the Citizens of Bangor.

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