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Background Brief on ...

# K-12 Education Reforms

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## **Education Act for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

Oregon's kindergarten through grade 12 (**K-12**) education is a product of the Education Act for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century originally adopted in House Bill 3565 (1991). During the 1995, 2001, and 2003 Legislative Sessions, the Act was amended to address higher content standards, expectations of student learning, and define uniform assessments.

The most recognized elements of the Act were the Certificate of Initial Mastery (**CIM**) and the Certificate of Advanced Mastery (**CAM**). The CIM represented standards of knowledge and skill proficiencies that students could demonstrate in English, mathematics, and science and were benchmarked to the tenth grade level. The challenge for educators was demonstrating the value of the CIM for a graduating student. The CIM standards appeared to have little or no bearing on university admissions, community college program placement, or employment opportunities. The CAM combined achievement of the CIM with additional academic proficiencies and career-related proficiencies achieved through a variety of hands-on, real-world learning experiences. House Bill 2263 (2007) abolished the CIM and CAM as of July 2008, but retained the associated content standards and assessments.

## **Recent Legislative Additions**

Since the 2003 Legislative Session, several bills have added to the Education Act for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

- House Bill 3129 (2005) required a student who receives a diploma to complete three years of mathematics and four years of English prior to high school graduation for students on or after July 1, 2009.
- Senate Bill 300 (2005), also known as the "Expanded Options" bill, created alternatives for students seeking advanced or technical coursework not offered by high schools. The bill caps the number of quarter hours awarded and gives priority to at-risk students. Senate Bill 23 (2007) made some technical changes to the program, such as permitting charter schools to participate in the program, and allowing school districts to request a waiver from participating in the program following good faith negotiations between the district and eligible post-secondary institutions for payment of student instructional costs.
- Senate Bill 1071 (2005) created the Oregon Virtual School

District (**OVSD**) within the Department of Education (**ODE**) to serve as a portal to on-line courses for K-12 public school students. The OVSD was intended to address the lack of statutory and administrative guidance for school districts that currently offer on-line courses.

- Senate Bill 318 (2007) changed the activities for which a school district or education service district could use grants from the School Improvement Fund, a grant program administered by the ODE and targeted toward increased student achievement. The School Improvement Fund was originally established in 2001 but was funded for one year only. Under Senate Bill 318, grant activities may include offering full-day kindergarten programs, reducing class size particularly in kindergarten through third grade, mentoring and retaining teachers, providing vocational education programs, and decreasing the student achievement gap.

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### **High School Graduation Requirements**

Starting in 2005, the Oregon State Board of Education began a focused review of Oregon's current academic content standards, credentialing requirements, and statewide student assessment system. In January 2007, the State Board voted to adopt new high school graduation requirements to be phased in over a seven-year period. To earn a diploma, students will need to successfully complete the credit requirements, demonstrate proficiency in essential skills, and meet personalized learning requirements. The minimum number of credits to graduate was raised from 22 to 24 including 4 credits in English; 3 credits in mathematics at the Algebra I content level or above; 3 science credits; and 3 credits from any combination of a second language, art, or career and technical education. The number of elective credits was reduced from nine to six.