State Board increases Oregon's HS graduation requirements

by Bend Weekly News Sources

The State Board of Education voted today to increase Oregonâ€™s graduation requirements in order to better prepare students for college and the workforce. Students will be required to take more rigorous coursework and higher levels of math and science in order to receive a diploma. The change was approved in a unanimous vote of the State Board in Salem on Thursday morning. The State Board took the action in order to better prepare Oregon students for postsecondary education and the workplace. The global economy has changed the nature of work and the kinds of jobs young people will enter. Students need higher levels of knowledge and skills than ever before to succeed. Two-thirds of all jobs require at least some postsecondary education or training, and the current high school graduation requirements are not challenging enough to provide adequate preparation. Nearly 80% of graduates, knowing what they know now, wish they had worked harder while they were in high school in order to be better prepared for college and the workforce. â€œIn order to be successful, all students need education and training beyond Oregonâ€™s current high school requirements. Our economy and quality of life depend on the changes we make in bringing forward this new vision for high school,â€• Governor Kulongoski said. â€œI strongly support the State Boardâ€™s work, and I look forward to working with all of our schools to implement this work and provide them with the resources they need. The new requirements are the result of a historic effort to involve educators, business leaders and advocates from across the state.â€• â€œTodayâ€™s action puts us on a clear path to ensure that every high school graduate will succeed in a changing world, Castillo said. â€œOregonâ€™s diploma will be a passport to college and workforce readiness, and I am proud of the involvement of educators across the state in helping to shape this work.â€• The State Board approved: -- Requiring three credits of math, with algebra I the minimum level for which credits may be earned. This would take effect for the class of 2014. -- Requiring three credits of science, up from two, with two of them laboratory-based courses, to take effect with the class of 2012. -- Requiring three credits from among arts, second language and professional technical education, starting with the class of 2012. -- Ensuring that all students have the opportunity to earn credit by demonstrating proficiency, based on content standards, in lieu of traditional "seat time" in a class. The board wants to give districts flexibility to meet students' needs in different ways. -- Requiring students to demonstrate a set of "essential skills." They'll include reading and interpreting a variety of texts, writing for a variety of purposes, speaking and presenting publicly, applying mathematics in a variety of settings, demonstrating civic and community engagement, and thinking critically and analytically. The State Board will continue to work in the coming months on a plan to implement the new requirements, including teacher preparation and support to elementary and middle school students so theyâ€™ll be ready to enter high school prepared to meet the new requirements. Some provisions of the new diploma will require new Administrative Rules or action by the Oregon legislature.