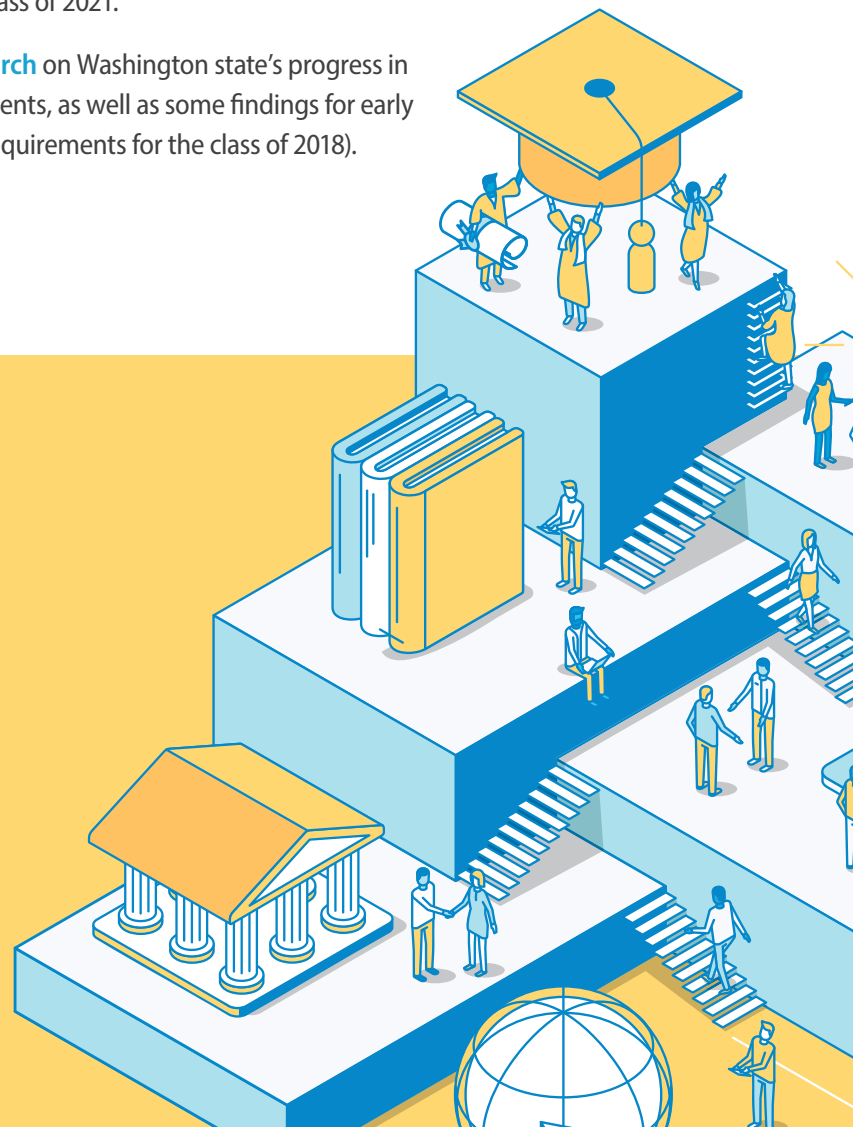


# Ensuring Students are Prepared for Postsecondary Opportunities

## IMPLEMENTING CAREER- AND COLLEGE-READY CREDIT REQUIREMENTS FOR HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION IN WASHINGTON

Setting up students for postsecondary success has long been a priority in Washington state. In 2014, the Legislature approved career- and college-ready credit requirements for high school graduation that better align with career pathways, as well as admissions standards at Washington public universities. These requirements increased the total number of credits students needed to graduate from 20 to 24; the state required an additional credit of laboratory science, an additional credit of fine arts, and two credits of world languages (with some flexibility). The requirements took effect for the class of 2019, although some districts implemented them earlier and others received a waiver to delay implementation until the class of 2021.

This infographic highlights findings from [recent research](#) on Washington state's progress in implementing the career- and college-ready requirements, as well as some findings for early implementer districts (which implemented the new requirements for the class of 2018).



*This infographic was prepared under Contract ED-IES-17-C-0009 by Regional Educational Laboratory Northwest, administered by Education Northwest. The content does not necessarily reflect the views or policies of IES or the U.S. Department of Education, nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Government.*

# Characteristics of early and on-time implementer districts

Overall, **9 percent of early implementer districts** required the class of 2018 to meet the new career- and college-ready credit requirements. In comparison, **56 percent of on-time implementer districts** required the class of 2019 to meet the requirements.



Schools in early implementer districts tended to have more teachers and offered a larger variety of courses per student than schools in other districts.

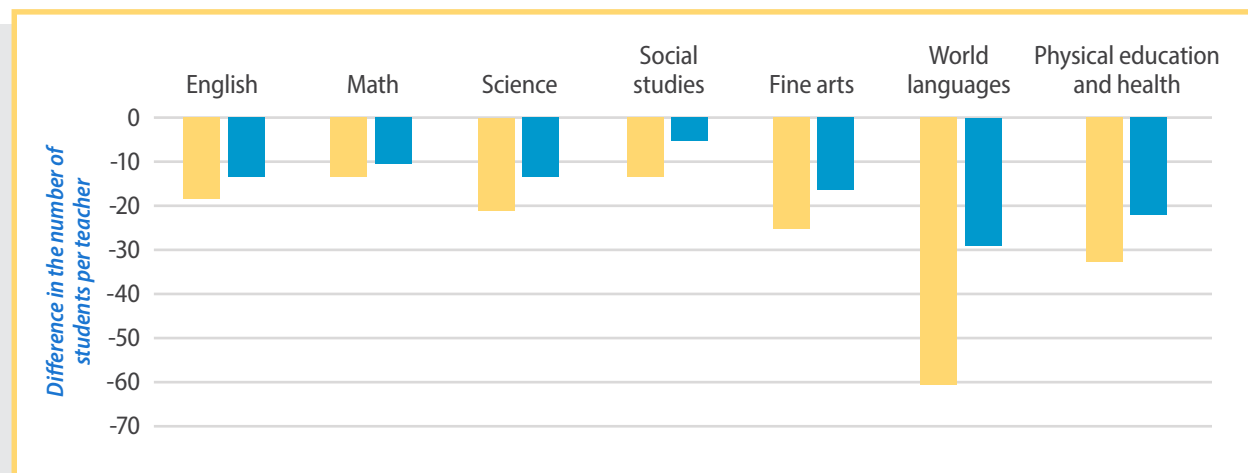
## Early implementer districts have more teachers in required content areas relative to the size of the student population.



Having fewer students per teacher in required content areas gives students sufficient opportunities to take and retake courses—which facilitates meeting the new career- and college-ready credit requirements.

● District implemented all career- and college-ready credit requirements except fine arts, world languages, or both

● District implemented all career- and college-ready credit requirements



## Districts that implemented the career- and college-ready credit requirements on time (class of 2019) tended to have more class periods in a day.



Overall, 48 percent of on-time implementers had seven or eight class periods in a day compared with 21 percent of districts with waivers to implement the career- and college-ready credit requirements by the class of 2021.

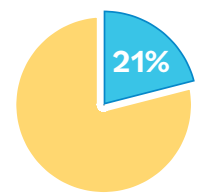
# Potential consequences of implementing the new requirements

Statewide, **27 percent of graduates** met the career- and college-ready credit requirements in 2018—the year before the change was required.

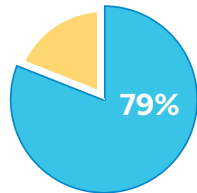


Students attending high-poverty schools and current English learner students met the career- and college-ready credit requirements less often than other student groups. These students often did not meet all the requirements because they were missing world languages and/or laboratory science credits.

Earned at least two laboratory science credits<sup>1</sup>

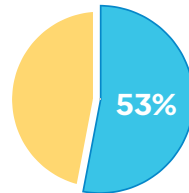


Students attending high-poverty schools

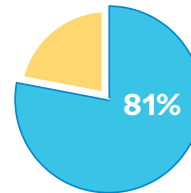


Students attending low-poverty schools

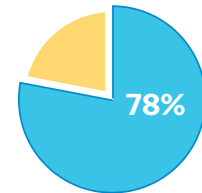
Earned at least two world languages credits



Current English learner students



Former English learner students



Never English learner students

Between 2012/13 and 2017/18, there were **few relationships between district-level increases in graduation credit requirements and student academic outcomes.**



On average, credits attempted; credits earned; GPAs; state assessment scores; and the probability of graduating on time, dropping out, or meeting credit requirements for admission to a public four-year university in Washington varied little from year to year, despite increases in graduation requirements.



In addition, between 2012/13 and 2017/18, year-over-year district-level increases in graduation credit requirements had few associations with academic outcomes for students from different racial/ethnic, socio-economic, and geographic backgrounds.



Stakeholders expressed concern that student groups with a higher dropout risk may be inequitably affected by increasing high school graduation credit requirements. However, the study observed few changes in academic outcomes for students from these groups.

<sup>1</sup> Science credits had to include one credit of laboratory science in 2018 and two credits of laboratory science in 2019.

# Considerations for education leaders when increasing high school graduation credit requirements

1

Encourage schools to offer students more opportunities to earn credits. Consider strategies such as adapting scheduling and offering accelerated options for credit recovery.

2

Continue to raise awareness about credit requirements and communicate requirements clearly to students.

3

Conduct a needs assessment to understand how barriers to credit accrual may be overcome. Ask:

- Can we hire and retain certified teachers in core areas?
- Can we improve school facilities (for example, by adding laboratory space)?
- Can we strengthen academic programs in elementary and middle school to prepare students for high school success?
- Can we offer academic programs that give students multiple ways to earn required credits (such as dual-credit courses, work-based learning, and/or online classes)?

4

Maximize existing policies—and explore new ones—to help students meet graduation requirements. For example:

- **Encourage English learner students to earn world languages credits through taking a proficiency test in their home language.**
- Investigate options for creating policies and providing supports that reduce gaps in laboratory science credit attainment between high- and low-poverty schools.
- Allow flexibility in earning credits during the COVID-19 pandemic (**see guidance from the Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction**).
  - For example, capstone projects, independent learning projects/presentations, and college admissions/work-readiness assessments could be used to earn or recover credits—if students earn a certain score, they earn credit for certain courses.

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Hanson, H., & Fantz, T. (2020). *Implementation of career- and college-ready requirements for high school graduation in Washington* (REL 2020–020). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Regional Educational Laboratory Northwest. Retrieved from <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/projects/project.asp?projectID=4594>.