

State plans overhaul of high school curriculum

Requirements more specific; economics added; testing revised

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WAYNE -- Education officials from across the state gather at William Paterson University this morning to discuss plans to overhaul the state's high school curriculum to better prepare students for a seamless transition into college or the workplace.

Math, science, and language arts requirements for graduation would become more specific -- including a new requirement in economics -- and content would be more rigorous in these areas to match knowledge needed for academia or the workforce.

Testing of students would change, as well, with the High School Proficiency Assessment being replaced with new required assessments in language arts, geometry, algebra I and II, biology and chemistry.

The recommendations come from a group called the New Jersey High School Redesign Steering Committee, which Friday released the results of its 20-month study.

"These recommendations comprise an ambitious plan," the report says. "By setting a higher bar for the outcomes of high school, the committee has proposed a fundamental change in public education in the state that will affect students in all grades."

The report says New Jersey's current high school graduation requirements do not reflect the skills students need to be successful once they leave high school.

The new requirements would be phased in starting with 9th graders in the 2008-09 school year. Additional requirements would be phased in for the 2010-11 and 2012-13 school years.

Other recommendations in the report include strengthening teacher recruitment, emphasizing personalized learning approaches and creating a council to align the education system from preschool through four-year colleges.

The different recommendations would require approvals from various agencies to be enacted, including the Department of Education, the state Board of Education, local school boards and the state Legislature.