

LATEST NEWS: N.J. High Schools told to get tough on specifics in curriculum redesign

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The state should require more specific and rigorous high school courses for all students and replace the junior year graduation test with end-of-course state tests.

Those are among the recommendations of the New Jersey High School Redesign Steering Committee, released Friday after almost three years of research and hearings.

The five basic recommendations of the committee are:

1. Align high school standards and graduation requirements with college and work force entry requirements. That would include:

- 4 years of English, including a state test given in 11th grade starting in 2009-2010.
- 3 years of math, including Algebra I, Geometry and Algebra II, each with an end-of-course state exam phased in beginning with the 2012 graduating class.
- 3 years of science, including lab biology and lab chemistry with end-of-course state exams beginning in 2008-2009. Local boards of education are encouraged to add a fourth year of science.
- 3.5 years of social studies, including Civics, U.S. history, world history, geography, and a half-year of economics for the class of 2014.
- 1 year of visual or performing arts, assessed by the local district.
- 1 year of a second language, with local boards of education encouraged to require a second year.
- 4 years of health and physical education.
- 1 years of career and consumer education, including financial literacy, job skills and life skills.

- Technology literacy should be integrated throughout the curriculum.

The most controversial item is expected to be the requirement that all students take algebra II.

2. High school testing should be designed to both measure achievement, and provide data to improve performance. Tests should align with expectations of higher education and the workplace.

3. Strengthen programs to recruit, support and retain the best teachers and school leaders. The Department of Education should work with colleges to upgrade and expand teacher education programs as needed.

4. Redesign high schools as learning communities that use personalized learning approaches to prepare and support all students.

5. Establish a council to create a seamless P-16 system of public education from preschool through college that will help all students reach their goals and reduce the need for remediation.

A briefing on the report is scheduled for today.