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ABSTRACT

A national sample of public school districts was surveyed to determine high school graduation requirements existing in the 1981-82 and 1984-85 school years. Expectations for 1987-88 were also surveyed. The Office of Educational Research and Improvement's Center for Statistics conducted the survey through its Fast Response Survey System. School district activities to improve learning were also surveyed. Results indicated that the number of required credits has increased between 1981-82 and 1984-85 from 19.7 to 20.3. However, even though the school districts plan to increase their requirements to 21.0 by 1987-88, they will still be lower than the recommendations of the National Commission on Excellence in Education. The Commission recommends three credits in mathematics, yet results indicated requirements of 1.6, 1.9, and 2.4 for 1981-82, 1984-85, and 1987-88, respectively. Three credits are also recommended for science, yet the results showed requirements of 1.5, 1.8, and 2.0 for the respective school years under study. In general, requirements have also increased in English, social studies, and foreign language. The number of hours per day spent in credit classes varied according to geographic region. Requirements for homework and grading policies were reported, as well as the availability and evaluation of programs to improve achievement. The survey questionnaire is appended. (GDC)

BULLETIN OERI

U.S. Department of Education • Office of Educational Research and Improvement

Center for Statistics

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Public High School Graduation Requirements

Since 1981-82, school districts have slightly increased the number of credits required for high school graduation--both overall and in science and mathematics. Moreover, districts plan to increase their requirements even more by the 1987-88 school year. Nevertheless, graduation requirements in the Nation's school districts will still be lower in general than the recommendations of the National Commission on Excellence in Education (NCEE) These are some of the findings of a recent survey of school districts conducted by the Center for Statistics (CS) through its Fast Response Survey System (FRSS).

Background

In 1982 the FRSS conducted a survey of school districts for the National Commission on Excellence in Education on academic requirements in high schools. This, along with many other studies, provided data used by the Commission for its publication A Nation At Risk. The Commission portrayed American education in crisis and recommended that "State and local high school graduation requirements be strengthened and that, at a minimum, all students seeking a diploma be required to lay the foundations in the Five New Basics."[1]

The response to A Nation At Risk (and other studies critical of the state of American education) was swift. Within a year, the Commission had compiled two volumes of State and local educational reforms: Meeting the Challenge and The Nation Responds. However, information on local initiatives in these reports pertains only to selected examples and was not intended to be representative of activity at the local level. This FRSS survey was designed to provide a national picture of local activities regarding academic requirements and initiatives to improve learning. Information was requested with respect to three points in time: 1982, 1985, and expectations regarding 1988.

Credits Required for Graduation

On the average, seniors graduating from high school in 1984-85 were required to have completed 20.3 credits (table 1).[2] This is an increase of 0.6 credits from 1981-82, when district requirements averaged 19.7. By 1987-88,[3] district requirements are expected to increase to 21.0. The increase in requirements can also be seen in the distributions of required credits. The

proportion of districts with relatively low requirements has been decreasing. In 1982, for example, 14 percent of the districts required fewer than 18 credits; by 1985 the proportion had dropped to 9 percent and by 1988 it is expected to decrease to 3 percent. Conversely, the proportion of districts with high requirements has been increasing: from 8 percent requiring 23 or more credits in 1982, to 12 percent in 1985, to 20 percent in 1988 (not shown in tables).

Public school districts were fairly homogeneous on average credit requirements regardless of district size or metropolitan status.[4] For example, students graduating from rural districts in 1985 were required to complete 20.2 credits, on the average, while those in urban districts needed 20.5 (table 1). Requirements by district size and metropolitan status were also rather homogeneous in 1982, and this is also expected to be true in 1988. Regional differences, however, are evident for all 3 years. For example, in 1985, districts in the West and Southwest required about two more credits than those in other regions (21.6 credits in West and Southwest districts compared with 19.6 to 19.9 credits in districts in other regions). Similar differences occurred in 1982 and are expected to occur in 1988 (table 1).

In addition, a few districts had or will have additional requirements for college-bound or honor students: 3 percent in 1982, 6 percent in 1985, and 8 percent in 1988. On the average, college-bound students in these districts were required to take about 1.5 more credits for graduation (not shown in tables).

Basic Course Requirements

Although mathematics and science requirements have increased since 1982, there still is a substantial gap between district requirements and the Commission's recommendations. In 1985 district requirements averaged 1.9 credits in mathematics and 1.8 credits in science, somewhat more than the 1.6 and 1.5 needed in 1982 (table 2). However, the Commission's recommendation of 3 credits in each subject was met or exceeded by relatively few districts: 15 percent in mathematics and 9 percent in science (not shown in tables).[5] By 1988 mathematics and science requirements are expected to increase to 2.3 and 2.0 credits, on the average. The proportion of districts meeting the Commission's recommendations will increase as well: 32 percent in mathematics and 16 percent in science.

Requirements in English and social studies also have increased slightly. Seniors graduating in 1985 averaged 3.8 credits in English or language arts, and 2.8 credits in social studies or history (table 3). By 1988 these requirements are expected to average 3.9 and 2.9 credits, very close to the Commission's recommendations of 4 and 3.

Relatively few districts have requirements in foreign language, although the number who do so is increasing. In 1982, 2 percent required some foreign language; this proportion increased to 5 percent in 1985 and will increase to 11 percent in 1988. Similarly, almost no districts required computer science courses in 1982. By 1985, 9 percent required graduating seniors to have taken a computer science course, and by 1988, 22 percent will have a similar requirement (not shown in tables). Across all districts, the average number of required credits in either of these subjects is quite small--ranging from 0 to 0.2 credits. However, in districts

with requirements, the average required credits have remained stable and will continue that way: 0.7 credits in computer science and 1.4 credits in foreign language, on the average (not shown in tables).

Time Spent in School

In 1985, high school students attended school for 178 days[6] and took an average of 6.1 credit classes per day (table 4). Since the average class period was 51 minutes long, high school students took credit classes for 309 minutes (or 5.1 hours) per day--a yearly average of 916 hours. The amount of time spent in credit classes each day increased slightly since 1982, when districts reported 5 hours per day.[7]

There were regional differences in the number of hours spent in credit classes per day in 1985 (table 4). Students in North Atlantic districts attended credit classes 4.5 hours per day, on the average, while those in the West and Southwest averaged 5.6 hours. Credit class time in the Great Lakes and Plains and in the Southeast fell in between (averaging 5.1 and 5.3 hours).

Homework Requirements

One-third of the districts had formal policies in 1985 requiring the regular assignment of homework (table 5). This figure represents an increase since 1982 when about 23 percent had such requirements.[8] The differences among districts, however, remained the same. Large districts (10,000 or more students) and urban districts had formal homework policies more frequently than small districts (less than 2,500 students) and rural districts (table 5). In addition, such policies were more prevalent in the North Atlantic region than in other regions.

Grading Policies

In 57 percent of the districts, teachers were required to follow a district-wide grading policy (table 5). Administrators in 78 percent of these districts described their policies as based on an absolute scale (i.e., according to a fixed standard), while 15 percent said the scale was relative to class performance (i.e., on a curve). The remaining districts used other criteria (not shown in tables). District-wide policies were more prevalent in the Southeast than in other regions, and less prevalent in suburban than in rural districts (table 5).

Activities to Improve Achievement

Administrators were also asked whether certain policies, programs, or practices designed to improve achievement were used in their districts; whether they had been instituted or augmented since 1981-82; and for an evaluation of effectiveness.

Program Availability

Each of the following programs or activities was in operation in at least 60 percent of the districts at the time of the survey. The second percentage given is the percentage for programs instituted subsequent to 1981-82.[9]

- Programs to improve student attendance (90 percent, 47 percent);
- Curriculum reform (86 percent, 65 percent);
- Practices to substantially reduce classroom disruption (85 percent, 54 percent);
- Minimum grade requirements for participation in extracurricular activities (81 percent, 29 percent);[10]
- Gifted and talented or advanced placement programs (75 percent, 47 percent);
- Recommendations for changes in textbooks (73 percent, 48 percent);
- Introduction of new initiatives in mathematics, science, or technology (72 percent, 66 percent);
- Study skills instruction (69 percent, 51 percent);
- Requirements for inservice training in effective classroom management (69 percent, 54 percent); and
- Policies requiring students to have more writing experience (63 percent, 66 percent).

Somewhat fewer districts (about 40 percent) had reduced the average class size, provided special diplomas or other academic recognition (other than honor roll), or required competency tests for graduation. Only 4 percent provided special academic high schools.

All the educational enhancement activities (with the exception of minimum grade requirements for participation in extracurricular activities) followed a similar pattern with regard to the time they were introduced and whether or not they were later augmented. Some districts (between 5 and 29 percent) had instituted these activities in 1981-82 or before and had not augmented them since. Somewhat more (between 20 and 37 percent) had established the programs or policies by 1981-82, but had also augmented them subsequently.[11] The largest group (between 47 and 66 percent) had initiated the activities since 1981-82 (table 6).

Differences in Availability by District Characteristics

Availability of these programs, policies, and practices to improve learning differed markedly by district size, metropolitan status,[12] and region. About two-thirds of these activities were more prevalent in urban districts and large districts than in rural districts and small districts (tables 7 and 8). However, proportionately more rural than urban districts and more

small than large districts required minimum grades before students could participate in extracurricular activities. Study skills instruction and practices to reduce classroom disruption were equally prevalent in large and small districts, and in urban and rural districts. Recommendations for textbook changes showed no differences related to size. Two other activities showed no differences related to metropolitan status: reductions in average class size and provision of special diplomas or other academic recognition.

Gifted and talented programs were available more frequently in the North Atlantic and Southeast than in other regions (table 9). The Southeast also had the highest proportion of districts awarding special diplomas and requiring inservice training in effective classroom management. Instruction in study skills was more prevalent in North Atlantic districts. The North Atlantic region and West and Southwest region led the other regions with requirements for more student writing. Reductions in class size, competency test requirements for graduation, and inservice training requirements in effective classroom management were available least frequently in the Great Lakes and Plains.

Program Evaluation

Administrators generally believed that the programs, policies, and practices had a moderately positive effect on learning (table 6). On a 5-point scale ranging from "-2" (strong negative effect) to "+2" (strong positive effect), average evaluations ranged from 0.9 (minimum grade requirements for participation in extracurricular activities) to 1.4 (requirements for more student writing; curriculum reform; initiatives in mathematics, science, and technology; and specialized academic high schools).

Survey Background

In August 1985, the survey form (a copy of which is attached) was mailed to a stratified national probability sample of 565 districts representing the estimated total of 11,248 districts with high schools in the Nation. Data collection was completed in October 1985 with a 99 percent response rate. The data were adjusted for questionnaire nonresponse and weighted to national totals. All statements of comparison made in the text are significant at the 90 percent confidence level or better. Standard errors for selected items are presented in table 10 as a general guide to the precision of numbers in the tables.

The survey was performed under contract with Westat, Inc., using the Fast Response Survey System (FRSS). Westat's Project Director was Elizabeth Farris, and the Survey Manager was Judy McNeil Thorne. Douglas Wright was the CS Project Officer for this survey. FRSS was established by the Center for Statistics to quickly collect small quantities of data needed for education planning and policy formulation, and to do so with minimum burden on respondents.

For More Information

For more information about this survey or the Fast Response Survey System, contact Helen Ashwick, Office for Educational Research and Improvement, Center for Statistics, 555 New Jersey Avenue, NW., Washington, D.C. 20208, telephone (202) 357-6761.

Notes

[1]U.S. Department of Education, the National Commission on Excellence in Education, A Nation At Risk: The Imperative for Education Reform. Washington, D.C. U.S. Government Printing Office, 1983. The Commission recommended the following graduation requirements: 4 years of English, 3 years of mathematics, 3 years of science, 3 years of social studies, and one-half year of computer science.

[2]A credit was defined as a class scheduled for a minimum of 200 minutes per week (275 minutes for a laboratory class) for 36 weeks. All credits have been converted to a 4-year base.

[3]For convenience, school years are abbreviated as 1982, 1985, and 1988.

[4]Because of the similarity of requirements among the districts, the variances for these estimates are small, and relatively small differences are statistically significant. Only differences of more than 1 credit for total requirements are discussed.

[5]Credits have been rounded. All districts with more than 2.5 credits in mathematics or science have been included in these percents.

[6]Eleven percent of the districts reported that they had increased the number of school days since 1982 (not shown in tables).

[7]Data from the 1982 FRSS survey. Because of small variances, the difference of 10.3 minutes per day is statistically significant. Across a school year, this difference amounts to 30.3 more hours of credit classes.

[8]Data from the 1982 FRSS survey.

[9]Based on the number of districts that had the program at the time of the survey.

[10]It should be noted that the item on the questionnaire did not specify a minimum grade requirement, e.g., "C" average.

[11]For two activities (specialized academic high schools and special diploma or other academic recognition), the percent of districts that had instituted the activity in 1981-82 or earlier and changed it subsequently was about the same as the percent that had introduced the activity early but had not changed it since.

[12]These analyses focus exclusively on differences between large and small districts, and between urban and rural districts.

Table 1.--Mean number of credits required for graduation, by year and district characteristics: United States, 1985

District characteristic	School year		
	1981-82	1984-85	1987-88
All districts with high schools	19.7	20.3	21.0
District size			
Less than 2,500	19.8	20.4	21.1
2,500 - 9,999	19.5	20.0	20.8
10,000 or more	19.7	20.2	21.2
Region			
North Atlantic	19.0	19.6	20.4
Great Lakes and Plains	19.4	19.9	20.6
Southeast	19.0	19.8	20.9
West and Southwest	21.2	21.6	22.3
Metropolitan status			
Rural	19.7	20.2	21.1
Suburban	19.8	20.3	21.0
Urban	19.9	20.5	21.5

NOTE.--A credit was defined as a class scheduled for a minimum of 200 minutes per week (275 minutes for a laboratory class) for 36 weeks. All credits have been converted to a 4-year base.

Table 2.--Mean number of mathematics and science credits required for graduation, by year and district characteristics: United States, 1985

District characteristic	Mathematics			Science		
	1981-82	1984-85	1987-88	1981-82	1984-85	1987-88
All districts with high schools	1.6	1.9	2.3	1.5	1.8	2.0
District size						
Less than 2,500	1.7	1.9	2.3	1.6	1.8	2.0
2,500 - 9,999	1.6	1.8	2.3	1.4	1.6	2.0
10,000 or more	1.7	2.0	2.4	1.4	1.7	2.1
Region						
North Atlantic	1.7	1.9	2.4	1.5	1.7	2.2
Great Lakes and Plains	1.4	1.7	2.0	1.4	1.6	1.8
Southeast	1.8	2.2	2.6	1.6	1.8	2.2
West and Southwest	1.8	2.1	2.5	1.7	2.0	2.2
Metropolitan status						
Rural	1.7	1.9	2.3	1.6	1.8	2.1
Suburban	1.6	1.8	2.3	1.4	1.6	2.0
Urban	1.7	2.1	2.5	1.4	1.7	2.1

NOTE.--A credit was defined as a class scheduled for a minimum of 200 minutes per week (275 minutes for a laboratory class) for 36 weeks. All credits have been converted to a 4-year base.

Table 3.--Mean number of English and social studies credits required for graduation, by year and district characteristics: United States, 1985

District characteristic	English/language arts			Social studies/history		
	1981-82	1984-85	1987-88	1981-82	1984-85	1987-88
All districts with high schools	3.6	3.8	3.9	2.6	2.8	2.9
District size						
Less than 2,500	3.6	3.8	3.9	2.6	2.8	2.9
2,500 - 9,999	3.7	3.8	3.9	2.7	2.7	2.8
10,000 or more	3.6	3.7	3.8	2.6	2.8	2.9
Region						
North Atlantic	4.0	4.0	4.0	3.1	3.1	3.2
Great Lakes and Plains	3.4	3.6	3.7	2.5	2.7	2.8
Southeast	3.9	3.9	4.0	2.4	2.5	2.7
West and Southwest	3.6	3.8	3.9	2.6	2.8	2.9
Metropolitan status						
Rural	3.6	3.8	3.9	2.6	2.8	2.9
Suburban	3.7	3.8	3.9	2.6	2.8	2.9
Urban	3.7	3.8	3.9	2.6	2.7	2.9

NOTE.--A credit was defined as a class scheduled for a minimum of 200 minutes per week (275 minutes for a laboratory class) for 36 weeks. All credits have been converted to a 4-year base.

Table 4.--Mean number of school days per year, credit classes per day, minutes per credit class, and minutes of credit classes per day, by district characteristics: United States, 1985

District characteristic	Mean number			
	School days per year	Credit classes per day[1]	Minutes per credit class	Minutes of credit classes per day[2]
All districts with high schools	178.0	6.1	51.1	308.6
District size				
Less than 2,500	177.5	6.1	51.0	313.0
2,500 - 9,999	179.0	5.8	50.9	295.1
10,000 or more	179.1	5.9	53.2	311.4
Region				
North Atlantic	180.2	6.0	44.8	267.2
Great Lakes and Plains	177.8	6.0	51.2	305.7
Southeast	177.9	5.8	54.9	319.8
West and Southwest	176.7	6.3	53.2	336.3
Metropolitan status				
Rural	177.4	6.1	51.8	315.7
Suburban	179.0	5.9	49.7	295.4
Urban	179.0	5.9	51.2	298.9

[1]Taken by more than 50 percent of students.

[2]Calculated from the number of credit class periods per day and the average number of minutes per period.

Table 5.--Districts with policies requiring the regular assignment of homework and with district-wide grading policies, by district characteristics: United States, 1985

District characteristic	Percent of districts with	
	Policies requiring the regular assignment of of homework	District-wide grading policies
All districts with high schools	34	57
District size		
Less than 2,500	30	58
2,500 - 9,999	41	55
10,000 or more	51	56
Region		
North Atlantic	53	51
Great Lakes and Plains ...	28	53
Southeast	35	78
West and Southwest	30	57
Metropolitan status		
Rural	27	61
Suburban	44	49
Urban	57	62

Table 6.--Availability of programs, policies, and practices to improve academic achievement and evaluation of their effect: United States, 1985

Program, practice, or policy	Percent of districts that				Mean evaluation of program[2]
	Had program in 1985	Instituted program in 1981-82 or earlier and have not augmented it[1]	Instituted program in 1981-82 or earlier and have augmented it[1]	Instituted program after 1981-82[1]	
Special academic achievement programs					
Gifted and talented or advanced placement	75	22	31	47	1.3
Specialized academic high schools	4	29	20	51	1.4
Special diploma or recognition (other than honor roll)	41	22	20	58	1.2
Use of instructional time					
Programs to improve student attendance	90	16	37	47	1.3
Study skills instruction	69	19	30	51	1.2
Practices to reduce classroom disruption	85	13	33	54	1.3
Reduction in average class size	43	15	32	53	1.2
Improvement of instructional quality					
Initiatives in math, science, and technology	72	5	30	66	1.4
Curriculum reform	86	6	29	65	1.4
Recommendations for changes in textbooks	73	15	37	48	1.1
Requirements for students to have more writing experience	63	10	24	66	1.4
Requirements for inservice training in effective classroom management	69	11	35	54	1.3
Testing and requirements					
Competency test requirements for graduation	39	18	32	50	1.0
Minimum grade requirements for participation in extracurricular activities	81	31	40	29	0.9

[1]Based on number of districts that had the program in 1984-85. Percents may not add to 100 because of rounding.

[2]Based on a 5-point scale ranging from "-2" (strong negative effect) to "+2" (strong positive effect).

Table 7.--Availability of programs, policies, and practices to improve academic achievement, by district size: United States, 1985

Program, practice, or policy	District size		
	Less than 2,500	2,500-9,999	10,000 or more
	(Percent)		
Special academic achievement programs			
Gifted and talented or advanced placement	68	90	97
Specialized academic high schools	2	7	23
Special diploma or recognition (other than honor roll)	38	46	63
Use of instructional time			
Programs to improve student attendance	87	96	94
Study skills instruction	67	72	71
Practices to reduce classroom disruption	83	89	82
Reduction in average class size	38	56	58
Improvement of instructional quality			
Initiatives in math, science, and technology	67	82	88
Curriculum reform	84	92	97
Recommendations for changes in textbooks	71	77	78
Requirements for students to have more writing experience	56	80	75
Requirements for inservice training in effective classroom management	67	73	79
Testing and requirements			
Competency test requirements for graduation	53	51	66
Minimum grade requirements for participation in extracurricular activities	83	77	70

Table 8.--Availability of programs, policies, and practices to improve academic achievement, by metropolitan status: United States, 1985

Program, practice, or policy	Metropolitan status		
	Rural	Suburban	Urban
	(Percent)		
Special academic achievement programs			
Gifted and talented or advanced placement	68	84	98
Specialized academic high schools	3	6	25
Special diploma or recognition (other than honor roll)	40	43	51
Use of instructional time			
Programs to improve student attendance	87	94	98
Study skills instruction	67	72	77
Practices to reduce classroom disruption	82	90	85
Reduction in average class size	40	49	50
Improvement of instructional quality			
Initiatives in math, science, and technology	66	81	90
Curriculum reform	82	94	97
Recommendations for changes in textbooks	70	76	83
Requirements for students to have more writing experience	59	69	82
Requirements for inservice training in effective classroom management	70	65	88
Testing and requirements			
Competency test requirements for graduation	33	46	66
Minimum grade requirements for participation in extracurricular activities	84	75	72

Table 9.--Availability of programs, policies, and practices to improve academic achievement, by region: United States, 1985

Program, practice, or policy	Region			
	North Atlantic	Great Lakes and Plains	Southwest	West and Southwest
	(Percent)			
Special academic achievement programs				
Gifted and talented or advanced placement	90	60	90	77
Specialized academic high schools	6	3	9	3
Special diploma or recognition (other than honor roll)	42	38	58	34
Use of instructional time				
Programs to improve student attendance	92	85	88	96
Study skills instruction	82	65	61	70
Practices to reduce classroom disruption	88	82	81	89
Reduction in average class size	52	35	51	46
Improvement of instructional quality				
Initiatives in math, science, and technology	83	64	71	77
Curriculum reform	90	81	82	94
Recommendations for changes in textbooks	76	71	71	72
Requirements for students to have more writing experience	81	50	58	74
Requirements for inservice training in effective classroom management	69	56	90	77
Testing and requirements				
Competency test requirements for graduation	49	17	57	57
Minimum grade requirements for participation in extracurricular activities	78	79	75	89

Table 10.--Standard errors of selected items

Item	Estimate	Standard error
Mean number of credits required for graduation:		
In 1984-85, all districts	20.3	.1
In 1984-85, urban districts	20.5	.3
In 1984-85, rural districts	20.2	.1
In 1981-82, all districts	19.7	.1
Expected in 1987-88, all districts	21.0	.1
Mean number of subject credits required for graduation in 1984-85:		
Mathematics, all districts	1.9	.02
Mathematics, Southeast districts	2.2	.07
Mathematics, Great Lakes and Plains districts	1.7	.05
Science, all districts	1.8	.03
English/language arts, all districts	3.8	.02
Social studies/history, all districts	2.8	.02
Percent of all districts requiring 23 or more credits for graduation:		
In 1981-82	7.8	1.4
In 1984-85	11.7	1.7
Expected in 1987-88	19.7	1.8
Mean number of:		
School days per year, all districts	178.0	.1
Credit classes per day, all districts	6.1	.04
Minutes of credit classes per day, all districts	308.6	1.9
Minutes of credit classes per day, North Atlantic districts	267.2	4.5
Minutes of credit classes per day, West and Southwest districts	336.3	3.3
Percent of districts with policies requiring the regular assignment of homework:		
All districts	34.0	1.9
Small districts	30.2	2.9
Large districts	51.3	5.5
Percent of districts that had the following programs, practices, or policies to improve academic achievement in 1984-85:		
Practices to reduce classroom disruption, all districts	84.5	1.7
Gifted and talented or advanced placement programs, all districts	74.6	1.8
Requirements for students to have more writing experience, all districts	63.1	2.0
Competency test requirements for graduation, all districts	39.0	1.9
Curriculum reform, small districts	83.8	2.5
Requirements for students to have more writing experience, North Atlantic districts	81.5	4.3
Special diploma or academic recognition, urban districts	50.5	7.0
Mean evaluation ratings of the following programs, practices, or policies to improve academic achievement:		
Study skills instruction, all districts	1.2	.03
Requirements for students to have more writing experience, all districts	1.4	.04
Minimum grade requirements for participating in extracurricular activities, all districts	.9	.04

NOTE.--Statistics used in this report are subject to sampling variability. The estimated standard error of a statistic (a measure of the variation due to sampling) can be used to examine the precision obtained in a particular sample. If all possible samples were surveyed under similar conditions, intervals of 1.645 standard errors below to 1.645 standard errors above a particular statistic would include the average result of these samples in approximately 90 percent of the cases. For example, for the first item in the table (mean number of credits required for graduation in 1984-85), a 90 percent confidence interval is from 20.1 to 20.5 (20.3 ± 1.645 times .1). If this procedure were followed for every possible sample, about 90 percent of the intervals would include the average from all possible samples.

Fast Response Survey System

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL CENTER FOR EDUCATION STATISTICS
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20202

Form approved
OMB No. 1850-0577
App. Exp. 10/85

SURVEY OF SCHOOL DISTRICTS ON HIGH SCHOOL ACADEMIC REQUIREMENTS/INITIATIVES

This report is authorized by law (20 U.S.C. 1221e-1). While you are not required to respond, your cooperation is needed to make the results of this survey comprehensive, accurate, and timely.

PLEASE ANSWER ONLY FOR HIGH SCHOOLS IN YOUR DISTRICT, SHOWING THE COMBINED EFFECTS OF STATE AND DISTRICT REGULATIONS AND INITIATIVES.

I. For each of the items below, enter the appropriate numbers for high schools in your district for 1984-85.

A. Number of scheduled days per school year when students are present _____ Is this an increase since 1982?

☐ Yes ☐ No

B. Number of credit class periods per day taken by more than 50% of students (excluding lunch, study hall, etc.) _____

C. Average number of minutes per credit class period _____

D. Is there a formal district policy requiring regular assignment of homework? ☐ Yes ☐ No

II. For each of the selected subjects below, enter the Carnegie units of credit that were or will be required of seniors graduating in each of the three specified years. The figures provided in column 2 represent your district's response to a 1982 FRSS survey. They may or may not have applied to that year's graduating seniors. Please add or correct, as necessary, so that they do apply to seniors graduating in 1982.

Check "yes" or "no" to indicate whether your requirements are based on units equivalent to Carnegie Units (minimum of 200 class minutes/week (275 for lab) for 36 weeks): ☐ Yes ☐ No

Selected High School Subjects	Units of Credit Required for Seniors Graduating in:		
	1982	1985	1988
A. Mathematics			
B. Science			
C. Computer science			
D. English/language arts			
E. Social studies/history			
F. Foreign language			
G. Total for graduation			
H. Total officially required for college bound/ honors students, if different from G.			

To which grade span do these requirements apply? ☐ 9-12 ☐ 10-12 ☐ Other

III. This question addresses measures which school districts might take with the goal of improving learning. Listed below are a number of strategies to accomplish this. In Section A, indicate whether each of the policies, programs, or practices was instituted in 1981-82 or before by entering checks under "yes" or "no" in the appropriate columns.

In Section B, indicate whether the policy or program in each area has been instituted or augmented since 1981-82.

In Section C, on a scale of -2 to +2 indicate the extent to which (in your opinion) the policy change, if any, has or will have a positive or negative effect on learning. (-2 = strong negative effect; -1 = moderately negative; 0 = no real change; +1 = moderately positive; +2 = strong positive effect).

Policy, Program, Practice Relating to High Schools	A. Instituted in 1981-82 or before		B. Instituted or augmented since 1981-82		C. Your opinion: Change has/will have negative or positive effect on learning (RATE -2 to +2)
	YES	NO	YES	NO	
a. Special Academic Achievement Programs					
1. Gifted-talented or advanced placement					
2. Specialized academic high schools					
3. Special diploma or other recognition (other than honor roll)					
b. Use of Instructional Time					
1. Steps taken to improve student attendance					
2. Study skills instruction, as part of other courses or as separate courses					
3. Substantial reduction in classroom disruptions (e.g., restrictions on use of intercom, student discipline policy)					
4. Reduced average class size					
c. Improvement of Instructional Quality					
1. Initiatives in math, science, technology (e.g., more training for math, science teachers, private sector cooperation, course enrichment)					
2. Academic curriculum reform, aside from that included in item c.1. above (e.g., objectives substantially revised for academic courses; more academic courses developed)					
3. Textbook recommendations (e.g., selection criteria strengthened, selection cycle shortened, funding increased)					
4. Policy requiring students to have more experience in writing					
5. Policy requiring teacher inservice training in more effective teaching techniques/classroom management					
d. Testing and Requirements					
1. Policy requiring competency tests for graduation					
2. Policy requiring minimum grade level to participate in extra-curricular activities					
e. Other(s) -- Specify					

IV. Do you have a district-wide policy for assigning grades (i.e., that all teachers are supposed to follow)? ☐ Yes ☐ No

IF YES, what kind of policy is it? ☐ Grading relative to average performance of class (on a curve) ☐ Absolute grading scale (according to a fixed standard)

☐ Other (Specify) _____

Person Completing Form _____ Title _____

School District _____ State: _____ Telephone (____) _____

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