

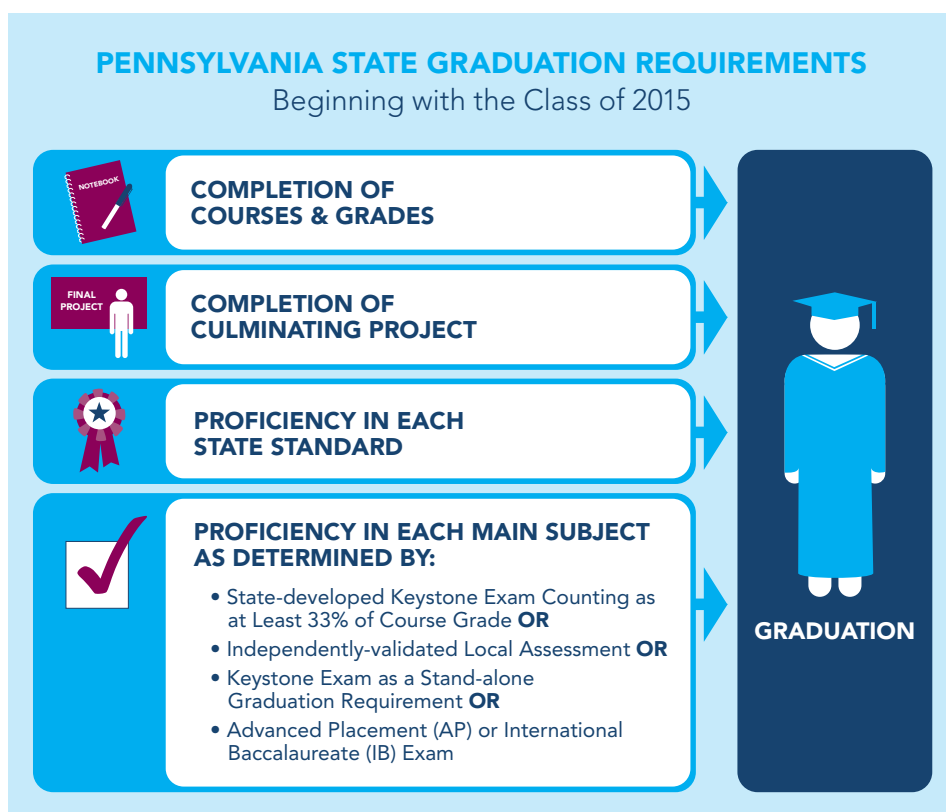
# WHAT STUDENTS AND PARENTS NEED TO KNOW ABOUT PENNSYLVANIA'S NEW STATE HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

**Did you know that according to a 2010 study by Georgetown University two-thirds of all new jobs created in the United States require at least some postsecondary education?**

That's why it is critical that we prepare all students to graduate high school with the potential to continue their studies and grow their skills. In Pennsylvania, a new system of graduation requirements will help ensure that students are performing at levels equivalent to their peers nationally and are graduating with the knowledge and skills needed to be successful. Underpinning this effort are Pennsylvania's Common Core State Standards, recently adopted to give students, parents, and teachers a clear understanding of what students need to learn. By meeting high, consistent standards, students in Pennsylvania will leave high school prepared for the next phase of life, whether that is college or the workplace.

## WHAT ARE THE NEW GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS?

- Beginning with the class of 2015, students in Pennsylvania will earn their diploma under a new system of graduation requirements.
- For each core subject (see list on page 2), individual school districts will decide whether they will administer a state-developed final exam (Keystone) or create their own local assessment.
- If administering a Keystone Exam, each district will choose to include the exam score as at least 33% of a student's course grade; or, to require proficiency on a Keystone Exam as a stand-alone graduation requirement, which allows the district discretion on how to weight the assessment in course grades.



- If a district chooses to administer a local assessment, it must be as rigorous as the Keystone Exams and be independently validated to meet state standards.
- Students eligible to take an Advanced Placement (AP) or International Baccalaureate (IB) Exam will fulfill the new graduation requirements by obtaining a high score on either exam in a related content area.

## Keystone Exams

- The standards, anchors, and eligible content for each subject area of the Keystone Exams are grounded in Pennsylvania’s comprehensive approach to supporting student achievement: the Standards Aligned System (SAS) and the Common Core State Standards.
- In an effort to move assessment closer to the point of instruction and reduce testing time, the Department of Education is developing Keystone Exams in 10 core academic subjects: *Algebra I, Algebra II, Geometry, Biology, Chemistry, English Composition, Literature, Civics and Government, U.S. History, and World History*. Keystone Exams can replace locally-developed final exams in these courses and will serve as the state’s high school-level measure for compliance under *No Child Left Behind*.
- Students should take the Keystone Exam when they complete the related coursework. Some students may begin taking Keystone Exams as early as grades 6, 7, or 8; for example, if they take Algebra I in middle school.
- Students may retake a Keystone Exam to raise their score; and, if a student has not achieved proficiency after 2 attempts, he/she can complete a project-based alternative to demonstrate his/her knowledge in the subject matter.
- Keystone Exams will be administered 3 times each year: winter, spring, and summer.
- Keystone Exams will be available in both paper/pencil and online formats.
- A Keystone Exam should take 2 to 2.5 hours to complete.
- Sample Keystone Exam questions and scoring will be available online for students to review prior to taking the exams.

For more information on the new system of graduation requirements, including Keystone Exams, visit: [www.pdesas.org/assessment/graduation](http://www.pdesas.org/assessment/graduation).