

# fact\$ *in a backpack*

November 2006

## Gov. Taft eyes core curriculum as legacy

As Gov. Bob Taft prepares to leave office at the end of 2006, he continues to push for a change in high school graduation requirements statewide. Taft proposed "The Ohio Core" in his State of the State Address in January 2006.

The state legislature is now meeting in a lame duck session, meaning some of its members will leave office at the end of the year based on the results of the Nov. 7 election. Since Gov. Taft is a Republican and his successor, Gov. Elect Ted Strickland is a Democrat, some in the legislature believe the Republicans will attempt to push Taft's plan through the lame duck session before the governor's office changes hands.

If passed, The Ohio Core would take effect with students entering ninth grade in the fall of 2008, also known as the Class of 2012 or current seventh graders.

There is heavy opposition to The Ohio Core both because of the parts of the plan and because of the timing of the hearings that began after the Nov. 7 election.

### What is The Ohio Core?

Core does not increase the number of credits required to graduate. It changes the specific courses required in an attempt to better prepare graduates for college and the workforce.

**Specifically, Core would require the following classes:**

- four years of math, including Algebra II;
- four years of English;
- three years of lab-based science, including physical science and biology and one year selected from among chemistry, physics or higher-level biology;
- three years of social studies;
- two years of foreign language.

Other elements of the plan include making the core curriculum a requirement for admission to any state-funded four-year college or university. Remedial education would be focused on Ohio's two year colleges.

Students in their junior year of high school would be required to take an assessment to indicate if they are "on track for future success."

The plan would also add a measure to the State Report Card to indicate how well graduates are prepared for college and work.

*Source: Ohio Governor's Office*

### Graduation requirements in WCSD

West Carrollton High School's graduation requirements will be changing over the next three years, as a result of the school's shift from a 4-period to a 7-period day. The class of 2007 will need 24 credits to graduate. The class of 2008 will need 23 and the class of 2009 will need 22. The State of Ohio requires a minimum of 21 credits to graduate.

Specific course requirements at WCHS include:

- four credits of English;
- four credits of Social Studies including World Studies, American History and U.S. Government and Politics;
- three credits of math;
- three credits of science, including one each of biological sciences and physical sciences;
- one credit of health and physical education combined;
- one credit of business;
- one credit of practical arts;
- one credit of fine arts.

WCHS offers two foreign language options: Spanish and German as well as a shorter course in Conversational French. Foreign language credit is one option for students seeking an Honors Diploma. Algebra II is offered but not required for graduation. It is possible for students to meet the math requirements without taking Algebra II.

The entire WCHS course catalog is available online at [www.westcarrolltonschools.com](http://www.westcarrolltonschools.com).

We want to communicate CANDIDLY with you about district finances. Got a question about money? Send it in and we will answer it.

Call or write to Sharon Naragon, community relations coordinator at [snaragon@wcsd.k12.oh.us](mailto:snaragon@wcsd.k12.oh.us) or 937-859-5121, ext. 1133.

### WORD FILE

*core: [kor] n. 1. the central part of anything;  
2. the most important part*

# How does Ohio compare across the nation?

The Ohio Core proposal does not increase the total number of credits required to graduate; however, it requires more courses in certain areas. One area is foreign language which currently is required only in certain circumstances.

Most other states do not require foreign language credits for high school graduation. However, more are beginning to add the requirement, according to the Education Commission of the States which last updated its database in August 2006.

For the class of 2007, only Rhode Island, New York and Maryland require foreign language credits. Rhode Island requires two years, New York requires one year and

Maryland exempts students on vocational tracks. Georgia, North Carolina and Tennessee require two years for college prep students only.

With the class of 2008, New Jersey students must have one year of foreign language and Washington students on professional career paths must have two years. In 2013, all Delaware students will be required to have two foreign language credits and in 2016, the same will be required of Michigan students. Other states have language in their requirements that encourages credits in foreign language.

The class of 2013 is currently in sixth grade. The class of 2016 is currently in third grade.

## What's being said about The Ohio Core?

Supporters of the Core proposal say it will better prepare graduates for college and the work force in a rapidly changing world.

*"We are living in a global economy. Workers must be prepared to apply increased knowledge and skills that can be quickly upgraded and adapted to meet the rapidly changing conditions of the 21st century. We must prepare every young Ohioan to succeed. If we don't, our students will not be able to compete with talent from around the world." -- Gov. Taft.*

*"Many successful professionals say they do not use the higher mathematics required. The important point of learning mathematics is to train the mind for complex problem solving and critical thinking all adults need to navigate a difficult, changing world. The business community has endorsed these bills as important to develop an educated, able workforce for Ohio. Remember, none of us knows what will be needed in this new, changing economy." -- Jane Sonenshein, State Board of Education, 10th District.*

Opponents of Core say it will increase costs by requiring more math, science and foreign language teachers, of which the state is already short. They also say research does not support Core.

*The only study "found that there is no support for the proposition that those not going to college need to be qualified to enter college credit courses in order to enter the workforce.*

*"A learning environment can be challenging without being standardized ... the Ohio Core curriculum isn't more rigorous, it's just more rigid. And in an economy that is based on flexibility and adaptation, there could hardly be a more seriously flawed approach than this one."*

*-- The Buckeye Institute for Public Policy Solutions*

## Credits needed to graduate in 2007

Statewide graduation requirements vary across the nation. In all states, additional requirements may be imposed by individual school districts. In Colorado, Iowa, Massachusetts, Michigan and Pennsylvania, all requirements are set locally. However, beginning with the Class of 2011, Iowa and Michigan will impose statewide credit requirements.

State	Credits	State	Credits
Ala.	24	Mont.	20
Alaska	21	Neb.	**
Ariz.	20	Nev.	22.5
Ark.	21	N.H.	1975
Calif.	13	N.J.	22
Colo.	NA	N.M.	23
Conn.	20	N.Y.	22
Del.	22*	N.C.	20
Florida	24	N.D.	21
Georgia	22	Ohio	21
Hawaii	22*	Okla.	23
Idaho	21	Ore.	22*
Illinois	16	Pa.	NA
Indiana	20	R.I.	18*
Iowa	NA*	S.C.	24
Kansas	21	S.D.	22
Kent.	22	Tenn.	20
La.	23	Texas	22*
Maine	16	Utah	15*
Md.	21	Vt.	20
Mass.	NA	Va.	22
Mich.	NA*	Wash.	19
Minn.	21.5	W.Va.	24
Miss.	20*	Wis.	13
Mo.	22*	Wyo.	13

\* These states are increasing their requirements over the next several years. Delaware students will need 24 credits beginning with the class of 2013. Hawaii's minimum will increase to 24 with the class of 2010. Iowa will require 13 credits beginning in 2011. Michigan will require 16 credits beginning in 2011 and then 18 in 2016. Oregon's minimum will increase to 24 in 2010. Rhode Island is going up to 20 in 2008. Texas will require 24 credits in 2008. Utah will see the most dramatic increase to 24 credits in 2011.

\*\*Nebraska operates on a different credit system. It requires 200 credit hours which are figured differently than the other states.

Source: Education Commission of the States; [www.ecs.org](http://www.ecs.org)