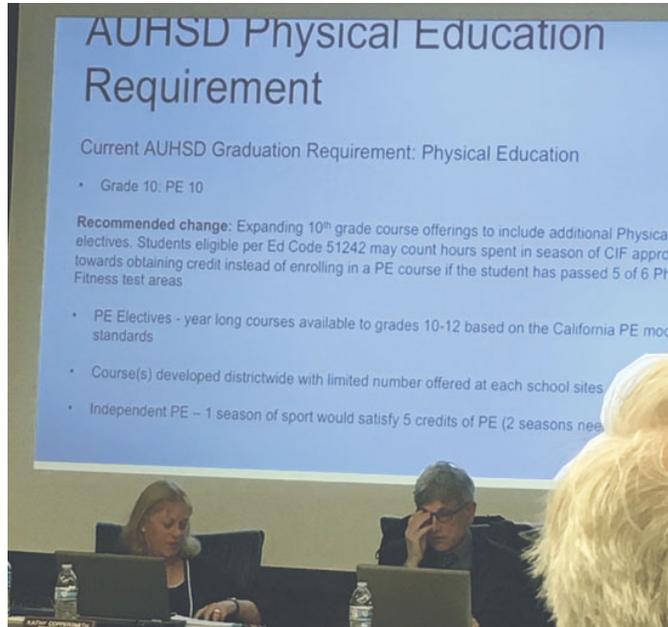


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AUHSD Considers Graduation Requirement Changes

By Cathy Tyson



The AUHSD School Board listens to a presentation from the Graduation Requirements Evaluation Committee about possible graduation requirement changes.

Photo Cathy Tyson

after high school with a focus on critical, creative and independent thinking skills as well as the ability to communicate verbally and in writing. They looked at the relevance of current graduation requirements, state and national trends, course enrollment data, college admission trends and more.

GREC reviewed three distinct graduation requirement models: the State of California, UC and CSU combined, and existing AUHSD requirements. A number of differences were illuminated. The committee had to balance student flexibility and choice to allow students to select pathways based on their interests, against district parameters of what it means to be a well-rounded student.

For example AUHSD requires three years of social studies to graduate, the same amount as the State of California, but the UC/CSU system only requires two years.

One of the biggest distinctions is for elective requirements, with AUHSD requiring nine courses, UC/CSU requiring only one year's worth, and the State of California requiring no electives.

In her presentation to the school board, Associate Superintendent Aida Glimme outlined the GREC recommendations that could be phased in over time, but ultimately it is up to the board to accept, reject or modify these recommendations (see box below). Glimme estimates it would take a year to develop any new courses, and the administration does not want to penalize existing students, so new rules would only apply to incoming freshmen after plans and classes have been solidified.

There was some concern among physical education instructors that changing requirements could affect PE staffing, but Glimme made it clear: "Nobody wants layoffs."

How many and what kinds of classes are necessary to graduate from one of Lamorinda's high schools? Over many months, a 45-member-strong volunteer Graduation Requirements Evaluation Committee researched possible changes.

Composed of students, teachers, counselors, parents and administrators, the committee thoroughly examined Acalanes Union High School District graduation requirements, evaluated the process and classes that students must complete, and established a guiding framework in order to make a recommendation to the school board.

More discussion of the recommendations and a final decision is expected at the May 18 school board meeting.

The last comprehensive review was conducted 15 years ago and there have been changes in the ensuing years, notably Common Core requirements and an increased focus on college and career readiness.

The GREC team sought to prepare students for life

It is possible that changes in graduation requirements would allow eligible students to be exempt from taking a PE course if they can satisfy the requirement by participating in an approved sport. Currently, 63 percent of AUHSD 10th graders play one or more sports.

Considering the late hour and the need for further discussion, the school board agreed to continue the matter and make a decision at its May 18 meeting.

GREC Recommended changes to AUHSD Graduation Requirements:

1. Expand English 4 (12th grade) course offerings to include English electives
2. Expand PE 10 (10th grade) course offerings to include PE electives and PE through independent study for eligible students
3. Require one year of visual or performing arts
4. Require one semester of health (social psychology)
5. Require three years of math

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