The term “College and Career Readiness” has gained popularity in our vocabulary over the past decade. College and Career Readiness is more than a new term; it is a new way of looking at the number and kind of credits that students earn in high school in order to be prepared for their post-high school life.

In Washington State, it is our State Board of Education (SBE) that is charged with establishing graduation requirements, which currently includes both credit requirements and a student’s High School and Beyond Plan (RCW.28A.230.090). The requirements set by the SBE were 19 credits for the class of 2012 and 20 credits for the classes of 2013-2015. With the 2014 legislative session and the passage E2SSB 6552, the SBE implemented the 24-credit graduation requirements for the class of 2019 and beyond. (Prior to the 24-credit requirement, districts could locally determine a higher credit requirement. Arlington Public Schools has been requiring 22.5 credits since 2008.)

In this new framework, a student who is “College and Career Ready” graduates from high school with the knowledge and skills in English and mathematics necessary to be successful in their postsecondary education or in job training for the career they choose. This includes a broad array of experiences, including community college, university, technical/vocational program, apprenticeship, or significant on-the-job training. The vehicle that prepares them to be “College and Career Ready” is the 24-credit framework, which allows students the ability to customize their education to meet their post-high school goals through “personalized pathways”. The 24-credit framework includes the following:

- An increase from two to three credits in science
- An increase from one to two credits in the fine arts
- Implementation of a world language requirement - two years are now required
- The required third year of mathematics can be met with a math equivalency
- Development of a new way of granting equivalency for credits earned in Career and Technical Education (CTE) classes. For select courses, CTE courses can count as math and science courses at the same time

When students develop their personalized pathway, an agreement takes place between the family and school in which the new additional credit requirements can be met by other credits related to a student’s career interest area.
Arlington Public Schools is already working hard to prepare for implementation of these requirements by forming a College and Career Readiness Task Force to look at what is being done now and to build a bridge to the new requirements. The task force includes a student, a board member, parents, teachers, counselors, and administrators. Tasks that have begun and will be completed include:

- Evaluating Board Policy regarding graduation requirements and determine if changes are needed.
- Investigating best practices and programming to prepare students for college and/or the new work force.
- Implementing a new customized High School and Beyond Plan with a personalized pathway that travels with the student as they go through middle and high school years in Arlington.
- Engaging teachers to evaluate current offerings and future needs.

The College and Career Ready framework asks that districts examine their current practices and determine what changes will need to take place to be ready for the class of 2019. Some of these changes will be minor while others will require us to think differently about what courses and options to we offer to our students.