

## CABINET DECISION DOCUMENT

MINISTRY DOCUMENT NUMBER: 001/04

**MINISTER:** Honourable Christy Clark, Minister of Education

**TITLE:** Proposed Changes to the Graduation Program and Graduation Requirements

**ISSUE:** For Decision

On September 18, 2002, the Ministry of Education proposed a series of changes to the B.C. Graduation Program, consistent with government's New Era commitment to ensure a top-notch education system for all students. The changes proposed responded to the issues and concerns raised by parents, students, educators, community members and people from the post-secondary, industry and business sectors during consultations, which were held across the province between December 2001 and May 2002.

A second stage of consultation took place between September and December 2002 in response to the Minister's proposed changes to graduation requirements. More than 100 groups and 2,600 individuals provided written feedback and the Minister or ministry staff attended more than 40 meetings in communities throughout B.C.

### **RECOMMENDATION: Option 2**

Change the Graduation Program and Graduation Requirements based on the findings of the second public consultation process.

### **BACKGROUND:**

#### **Need for change**

The Graduation Program was last updated in 1995. The Ministry recognizes that, while the program and the education system are performing very well – especially compared to other jurisdictions – there is room, and need, for improvement. For example:

- Approximately 25 percent of B.C. students do not graduate; the number is as high as 60 per cent for Aboriginal students;
- A satisfaction survey in 2001 found that secondary students, overall, were only moderately satisfied with their school experience; and
- A 2001 graduate transition survey found that only 38 per cent of graduates were satisfied with how well the education system had prepared them for work; only 63 per cent were satisfied with how the system had prepared them academically for post-secondary education.
- Currently, students can graduate by meeting only one provincial assessment standard, a Grade 12 Language Arts exam. This standard is not comprehensive enough to measure the knowledge and skills needed by the graduates of today and the future.

## **Directions for Change**

Changes to the Graduation Program are consistent with the Government's New Era commitments to support more flexibility and choice in public schooling, give local schools boards more autonomy and control over the delivery of education services, subject to provincial curriculum and testing standards, and work with educators and employers to expand job training and skills development opportunities. The proposed changes are also consistent with the goals in the Ministry's Service Plan to shift the focus of the education system to improving student achievement, and to create a high quality, performance-oriented system.

Reflecting the findings of the first stage of consultation, and government's New Era commitments, the ministry's proposals for change were built around four themes:

- Increasing student choice
- Giving school boards more autonomy to meet local needs
- Raising standards to improve student achievement, and
- Increasing levels of student and parent satisfaction with the education system.

## **Responding to Feedback – Refining the Proposals**

The second stage of consultation was extremely constructive. Parents, students, educators and others identified a few concerns associated with some of the changes proposed in September 2002, and put forward a number of additional suggestions. The Ministry responded by refining its plan for an improved Graduation Program. Specifically:

- The proposal to add Grades 11 and 12 Physical Education to the graduation requirements resulted in the strongest opposition from students, parents, educators and interest groups (for example, over 90% of Internet responses). Most respondents suggested that society's problem with physical fitness and healthy lifestyle would not be solved by adding a Grade 11-12 requirement, when values of being active are a shared responsibility of families, community and the school system. We heard that changes in these values need to be addressed at a younger age. Students were the strongest opponents, saying it would result in reduced choice and flexibility. In addition, requiring Grade 11 and 12 Physical Education would stress the capacity of schools and school boards to accommodate the additional classes of PE and create capital demands for government to expand facilities. Therefore, Physical Education will not be required in Grades 11 and 12; students will be required to meet minimum standards for physical activity and knowledge of healthy lifestyles, and demonstrate this, as part of their Graduation Portfolio assessments (see the chart Appendix for an explanation of portfolio assessment);
- The proposal to mandate that all schools make the three mathematics courses (Applications, Essentials and Principles of Mathematics) available for students to choose in Grades 10-11 met with opposition from most groups. Students, parents and educators said the problem with lack of choice is really caused by post-secondary entrance requirements, many of which require Principles of Mathematics. Therefore, schools will not be required to offer all three

- Mathematics courses in Grades 10 and 11; the Ministry will work with post-secondary institutions to address concerns about math-related entrance requirements;
- Although most respondents favoured the general concept of Pathways, they were concerned about reduced flexibility for students. Even though the proposal stated that Pathways would not be “ability streamed” programming, the public responded to the proposal for a Pathway requirement as if it meant streaming. Therefore, students will not be required to complete 4 courses in a chosen Pathway Concentration; they will learn about different education and career opportunities and will be encouraged to focus their studies, but there will be no set requirement for course or credit concentrations in any given area.

### **Responding to Feedback – Four Key Directions**

The second round of consultations also found strong support for four key directions proposed in September 2002. These changes will be further developed and piloted in partnership with school boards in the 2003/2004 school year with staged implementation beginning with Grade 10 in September 2004.

#### **1. Add Grade 10 to the Graduation Program, with improvements to the curriculum**

Most people agreed that expanding the Graduation Program beyond Grades 11 and 12 would help to reinforce the importance of student achievement earlier in a student’s education. Currently, just Grade 11 and 12 marks “count” toward graduation; the addition of Grade 10 will elevate its importance—with students, teachers and parents—and help students focus their efforts earlier in secondary school. To support this change, a new Planning 10 course will guide students in learning about career development, education planning, financial literacy and health-related decision making – real-life skills that will add relevance to the curriculum, and help improve levels of student and parent satisfaction.

#### **2. Raise standards for student achievement by adding exams in key curriculum areas in Grades 10 and 11 while retaining the current Grade 12 exam program**

In the current Graduation Program, students only have to take one exam: Language Arts 12. The new program will add examinations in Language Arts 10, Mathematics 10, Science 10 and Social Studies 11. This will help provide further motivation for student achievement earlier in secondary school, instead of sending a message that achievement levels do not “count” until Grade 12. At the same time, to avoid putting undue pressure on younger students, Grade 10-11 exams will only count for 20 percent of a student’s final mark in each subject. (Grade 12 exams count for 40 percent) In addition, the full range of Grade 12 provincial exams will still be available for students applying to colleges and universities, or who want proof of their academic achievement for other purposes.

### **3. Improve student assessments – and support improved student achievement – by adding a requirement for Graduation Portfolio assessments in Grade 12**

Graduation Portfolios give students a chance to develop and demonstrate their skills in areas important to their futures that cannot be assessed in standard “pen-and-paper” tests. Portfolios will be paper-based or electronic collections of students’ work or other records of achievement. Portfolio assembly will begin in Grade 10, with specific support and guidance provided as part of the *Planning 10* course.

The areas covered in the portfolio will include education and career planning, information technology, community involvement, health and fitness, employability skills, and artistic expression. The Ministry will develop standards for schools to use in assessing students’ portfolios. Students will collect evidence to demonstrate that they have developed the knowledge and skills required to meet the standards set for each of the six key areas. Students may use school or community experiences as evidence in their portfolio. Some examples could include: material created as part of a science project, a memo from an employer in the student’s work experience attesting to a student’s achievements, a video or photograph of a student demonstrating a skill like woodworking, a demonstration of a computer application by the student, a verified record of aerobics class at the local community centre.

Schools and boards will determine how to staff appropriately for portfolio development and assessment. Portfolios standards and assessment will be piloted to test for feasibility before being fully implemented.

Schools in Delta, Nakusp, Surrey, North Vancouver, Trail and Port Alberni already use portfolio assessments to encourage student achievement in areas beyond the academic curriculum. These schools have a broader understanding of the achievements of their students in more areas. Their experience, and the experience from pilots, will be used to develop provincial standards for students’ portfolio evidence. The Ministry will also provide develop a guide for schools and students, which districts may use in staff training.

### **4. Increase student choice and school board autonomy by introducing more flexibility in the Graduation Program**

During the research and consultation, students and former students made it clear that having choices can help make school more interesting and relevant. Increasing student choice will likely improve levels of student and parent satisfaction. The new program will give students and school boards more flexibility in a number of ways:

- No limit to the number of locally-developed elective courses students can take that count toward graduation. Currently, students can only use two locally-developed courses toward graduation. This will increase the autonomy of school boards, increase relevance for students, and give avenues for teachers to demonstrate their creativity. This has the potential to reap a variety of benefits. For example, it will enable school boards to work with local business, industry and post-secondary institutions to develop industry training.

Aboriginal communities and school boards can work together to develop programs to meet the needs and interests of Aboriginal students. Students who find school inflexible or irrelevant may be motivated to remain until graduation, improving their futures.

- Dual credit toward graduation for any course taken at the post-secondary level.
- Increased opportunity to earn credits for credentials students receive from organizations such as Outward Bound, the Provincial Emergency Program and the Canadian Red Cross in Grades 10-12.
- Choice about whether to participate in Grade 12 exams (with the exception of the required Language Arts exam) based on their interests and post-secondary education/training plans.
- Greater choice about how students meet the Applied Skills or Fine Arts requirement (see the Appendix for details).
- More choice to meet the Social Studies requirement by adding a Grade 11 course in which students study Canadian government and citizenship with an applied focus to appeal to “hands-on” learners.

#### **FISCAL MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS:**

##### **For Government**

Implementing the changes in graduation requirements will have fiscal impact in two main areas: field implementation and support and finding efficiencies in the development and operation exams due to the changes in the exam program.

##### **Option 1: Status quo**

No additional costs

##### **Option 2: Change the Graduation Program and Graduation Requirements as proposed in September 2002 and refined in April 2003**

An additional \$1 million will be required over four years for general program implementation, with an additional \$1.2 million required over four years to develop new exams and retain current Grade 12 exams. The Ministry will fund the additional expense for field implementation and exams within its existing budget.

<b>Option</b>	<b>Implementation over 4 years</b>	<b>Testing Program over 4 years</b>	<b>Total over 4 years over status quo</b>
Option 1	Status quo	Status Quo	Status Quo
Option 2	\$1.0 M	\$1.20 M	\$2.2 M

## **For School Boards**

If government proceeds with Option 2, school boards will face modest cost increases due to adding Grade 10 data to their information systems of about \$1.1 million over the four years of implementation. Any additional costs related to changes in information systems necessitated by adding Grade 10 will be covered within the Ministry's budget.

### **OPTIONS:**

**Option 1:** Status quo with current (1995) Graduation Requirements and testing program (see Appendix for description)

#### *Considerations:*

- Does not respond to the findings of the public consultation
- Does not address student and parent satisfaction
- Does not improve provincial and overall assessment of student achievement
- Does not ensure a rigorous standard in all four key curriculum areas (language arts, mathematics, social studies and science)
- Will not increase student choice and board autonomy

**Option 2:** Change the Graduation Program and Graduation Requirements as proposed in September 2002 and refined in April 2003 (see Appendix for description)

#### *Considerations:*

- Raises the standards for BC graduates
- Increases student choice and provides more flexibility to schools
- Improves student achievement in areas of importance for all graduates
- Responds to public consultation, thereby likely raising public satisfaction
- Increases the relevance for some students, likely resulting in improvement to school completion and the graduation rates
- Increases school board autonomy; enables creative program development
- Addresses public concerns about health and fitness
- Improves education and career planning

**LEGISLATIVE IMPLICATIONS:**

The recommended changes will not require new legislation or regulations or amendments to existing legislation or regulations. Some changes to policy and ministerial orders will be required. These changes may result in modest reduction in regulations.

**SIGNATURE:**

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Christy Clark". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

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Honourable Christy Clark  
Minister of Education

**DATE:**

April 15, 2003

**KEY CONTACT:**

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**APPENDIX:**

Current graduation requirements and proposed changes, based on public consultation

## Appendix: Proposed Changes to the Graduation Program

### Overview: Adding Grade 10

Option 1 Current Graduation Program	Option 2 Proposed Changes Following Public Consultation	Benefits and Implications of Option 2
<p>Current Graduation Program consists of Grades 11-12</p> <p>52 credits (equivalent to thirteen 4-credit courses)</p> <p>28 of 52 credits must be in <i>Foundation Studies</i> and include:</p> <p>Language Arts 11 (4 credits)            Language Arts 12 (4 credits)            Social Studies 11 or BC First Nations Studies 12 (4 credits)            Mathematics 11 or 12 (4 credits)            Science 11 or 12 (4 credits)            Fine Arts 11 (2 credits)            Applied Skills 11 (2 credits)            CAPP 11 (2 credits)            CAPP 12 (2 credits)</p> <p>24 credits in <i>Selected Studies</i> (electives)</p> <p>Minimum of 16 credits of Ministry developed courses must be earned at the Grade 12 level, including Language Arts 12</p>	<p>Add Grade 10 to the Graduation Program</p> <p>80 credits (equivalent to twenty 4-credit courses)</p> <p><b>48 REQUIRED CREDITS, INCLUDING:</b></p> <p>Language Arts 10 (4 credits)            Language Arts 11 (4 credits)            Language Arts 12 (4 credits)            Social Studies 10 (4 credits)            Social Studies 11, BC First Nations 12, or Canadian Civics 11 (4 credits)            Science 10 (4 credits)            Science 11 or 12 (4 credits)            Mathematics 10 (4 credits)            Mathematics 11 or 12 (4 credits)            Physical Education 10 (4 credits)            Fine Arts and/or Applied Skills 10, 11, or 12 (4 credits)            Planning 10 (4 credits)</p> <p>4 credits for Portfolio Assessment</p> <p>28 elective credits</p> <p>Minimum of 16 credits at the Grade 12 level, inclusive of Language Arts 12; may be ministry-authorized or board/authority-authorized</p>	<p>Adding Grade 10 to the Graduation Program raises the importance of student achievement at an earlier grade.</p> <p>Students have greater choice by having fewer required courses in Grades 11-12.</p> <p><b>(See further information on specific changes below)</b></p>



## Provincial Graduation Program Exams

Option 1 Current Graduation Program	Option 2 Proposed Changes Following Public Consultation	Benefits and Implications of Option 2
<p>To graduate now, students must take one Grade 12 provincial exam – attached to one of four Language Arts 12 courses</p> <p>Classroom mark determines the standard for graduation in all courses except for 20 provincially examinable courses</p> <p>Other than Language Arts, the remainder of Grade 12 provincial exams (total of 20 exams currently) serve as tools for post-secondary entrance requirements and scholarship awards selection</p>	<p>Significantly revise the exam program, requiring Grade 10 and 11 graduation exams in 4 areas that count toward graduation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Language Arts 10/12</li> <li>• Science 10</li> <li>• Mathematics 10</li> <li>• Social Studies 11</li> </ul> <p>For math and social studies, students will take exams that match the required courses chosen</p> <p>Continue with current twenty Grade 12 exams, including second languages exams</p> <p>Make all Grade 12 Exams optional except Language Arts; students may opt to take them based on their post-secondary plans</p> <p>Allow students generous opportunity to make up exams if they opt out of taking them and later decide that they wish to take them for post-secondary entrance</p> <p>Call the combination of new and current exams the “Graduation Program Exams” (students will write exams in Grade 10, 11 and 12)</p>	<p>New Graduation Program Exams will raise standards for student achievement by requiring all graduates to be tested in Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies—all students must participate to graduate.</p> <p>Maintaining the current Grade 12 Exams will continue the focus on academic rigour in Grade 12 and continue to provide post-secondary institutions with a variety of examinable courses to determine entrance.</p> <p>This provides more choice for students: those who want to participate in optional Grade 12 exams for post-secondary entrance or to compete for scholarships may opt to take them; other students may take Grade 12 examinable courses without writing the exams.</p> <p>Optional exams at Grade 12 will encourage students to take courses of interest and will broaden student choice.</p>

## Graduation Portfolio Assessment

Option 1 Current Graduation Program	Option 2 Proposed Changes Following Public Consultation	Benefits and Implications of Option 2
<p>No provincial assessment of student skills and competencies other than Grade 12 Exams</p> <p>Students not assessed in areas that are important for all BC graduates of today such as information technology and employability skills</p>	<p>Assess all students on a portfolio that demonstrates their performance in key areas not covered by pen and paper exams, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• information technology;</li> <li>• community involvement and responsibility;</li> <li>• personal health, including fitness;</li> <li>• artistic expression;</li> <li>• employability skills; and</li> <li>• education and career planning.</li> </ul> <p>Students learn about the standards in the <i>Planning 10</i> course</p> <p>Include work experience or community volunteer experience in the portfolio</p> <p>Schools may choose to develop courses to support students in collecting evidence, meeting assessment standards, and preparing for their portfolio panel presentation</p>	<p>Before implementation, pilots will be conducted to ensure that portfolio assessment can be implemented successfully.</p> <p>Students will focus some of their learning on areas important to today's world such as computer skills, community involvement, and physical fitness.</p> <p>Standards for portfolio assessment, based on the attributes we want for all graduates, will provide a clear signal to students, teachers, parents, and the business community of their importance.</p> <p>Schools and school boards will have autonomy to decide how best to organize portfolio assessment in their schools, based on Ministry standards.</p>

## Locally Developed Courses

Option 1 Current Graduation Program	Option 2 Proposed Changes Following Public Consultation	Benefits and Implications of Option 2
<p>Only 2 locally developed courses (8 credits) can count toward graduation</p> <p>Locally developed courses do not meet the requirement for 16 credits (4 courses) at the Grade 12 level</p>	<p>Beyond the required courses, allow all board/authority-authorized courses to count towards graduation</p> <p>All Ministry and board/authority - authorized courses will meet the requirement for 16 credits (4 courses) at the Grade 12 level</p>	<p>Schools and school boards will have greater autonomy and flexibility to offer innovative local programs to meet the needs of students and communities.</p> <p>Enables schools to work with community and industry to develop courses</p> <p>Ministry standards for board/authority-authorized courses will improve quality.</p>

## Pathways → Focus Areas

Option 1 Current Graduation Program	Option 2 Proposed Changes Following Public Consultation	Benefits and Implications of Option 2
Nothing in the current requirements	<p>Ministry will design models for eight focus areas to help students make transition to the workplace, technical and trades training, college or university:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Business and Marketing</li> <li>• Fine Arts, Design and Media</li> <li>• Fitness and Recreation</li> <li>• Hospitality, Foods, Tourism</li> <li>• Humanities</li> <li>• Human Services</li> <li>• Sciences</li> <li>• Trades and Technology</li> </ul> <p>Students will consider one or more of the eight focus areas during the Graduation Program or design their own focus area(s) and relate them to their future education/career plans</p> <p>In their <i>Planning 10</i> course, students will explore and consider a wide variety of careers and interests and start thinking about choosing courses in one or more of the eight focus areas, including existing career preparation programs.</p>	<p>Students will focus on their futures earlier and have time in secondary school to explore options.</p> <p>All students will consider a broad range of career and education choices in their <i>Planning 10</i> course and as part of their Portfolios.</p> <p>School boards will be influenced to develop specialized and magnet programs to match the focus areas, for example industry training programs.</p> <p>Focus areas will encourage maintenance and expansion of effective career programs already developed in many school districts.</p> <p>The Graduation Program will be more personally relevant to students as they design and refine their own focus areas.</p> <p>Students will have the flexibility to change their Focus Areas at any stage in the Graduation Program.</p>

## Increasing Student Choice with More Ways for Student to Earn Credits

Option 1 Current Graduation Program	Option 2 Proposed Changes Following Public Consultation	Benefits and Implications of Option 2
<b>Post-secondary/secondary dual credit</b>		
Limited dual credit options	Beyond required courses, allow all public post secondary credits to count towards elective credits for graduation	<p>Students will have more choice with increased dual credit options.</p> <p>Dual credit will encourage partnerships between school districts, colleges and industry to develop programs; for example, industry training.</p>
<b>Equivalency, course challenge, external credential and independent directed studies</b>		
Grade 11-12 only; limited use of alternative ways to earn credits now	<p>Expand opportunities to Grade 10 and increase the areas in which external credentials may earn credits</p> <p>Expand independent-directed studies from 2 credits to allow for up to four credits.</p>	This expansion will increase the number of ways students can earn credits.

## Curriculum: Improvements that Increase Choice

Option 1 Current Graduation Program	Option 2 Proposed Changes Following Public Consultation	Benefits and Implications of Option 2
<i>Career and Personal Planning</i>		
<p><i>Career and Personal Planning</i> (CAPP) is a required area of study from Grades 8-12</p> <p>To graduate, students must complete 4 credits in CAPP, two in Grade 11 and two in Grade 12, as part of Foundation Studies</p> <p>Students must complete 30 hours of work experience as part of the CAPP 12 course</p>	<p>Replace CAPP 10 – 12 with a single required <i>Planning 10</i>, four credit course focused on these areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Career development and employability skills</li> <li>• Education planning and focus areas</li> <li>• Financial literacy</li> <li>• Health-related decision-making (substance abuse, sex education, AIDS prevention, etc.)</li> <li>• Portfolio planning and development</li> </ul>	<p>Students will have more choice in Grades 11 and 12.</p> <p>All students will focus on planning for their futures.</p> <p>All students will work on the skills they need to be successful in their personal lives, the workplace, and their future education and training.</p> <p>Students will complete 30 or more hours of work experience or community service for their Graduation Portfolio Assessment.</p>
<i>Fine Arts and Applied Skills</i>		
<p>To graduate, students must complete two credits in Applied Skills and two credits in Fine Arts</p> <p>The Ministry determines which courses qualify for Fine Arts and Applied Skills through regulation</p>	<p>Students can choose four credits of Fine Arts or of Applied Skills or two or more of each at any time in the Graduation Program (Grades 10-12)</p> <p>School boards determine which courses are Fine Arts and Applied Skills, based on Ministry guidelines</p> <p>Require schools to offer students a choice between Fine Arts and Applied Skills</p>	<p>Students have greater choice and flexibility in Grades 10 – 12.</p> <p>Schools or school board will have more flexibility in offering Fine Arts and Applied Skills courses in Grades 10 – 12.</p> <p>This provides for more local autonomy in meeting graduation requirements.</p>
<i>Mathematics</i>		
<p>Students may graduate with one of three Grade 11 Math courses:</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Applications of Mathematics 11</i> <i>Essentials of Mathematics 11</i> <i>Principals of Mathematics 11</i></p> <p>Schools are not obligated to offer all three math pathways, and some students cannot access the course they want or need to take.</p>	<p>Encourage school boards and schools to provide choice for students to access mathematics courses based on their students' learning needs and interests</p> <p>Ministry will work with university and college faculties to gain greater acceptance for all three mathematics courses for post-secondary entrance</p>	<p>More students will have choice among three math pathways.</p> <p>Maintains autonomy for school boards; no additional regulations.</p> <p>Schools and school boards will be encouraged to exercise greater flexibility in developing ways to offer all three mathematics options.</p>

Option 1 Current Graduation Program	Option 2 Proposed Changes Following Public Consultation	Benefits and Implications of Option 2
<u><i>Social Studies</i></u>		
<p>To graduate, students must take <i>Social Studies 11</i> or <i>BC First Nations Studies 12</i></p>	<p>Retain <i>Social Studies 11</i> and <i>BC First Nations Studies 12</i> as options to fulfill the social Studies requirement</p> <p>Develop a Canadian civics course which will also fulfill the Social Studies requirement, for a total of three options (more in line with Math which has three options, Language Arts has three, and Science has ten)</p> <p>Design the course with an applied focus</p>	<p>Students will have greater choice in fulfilling social studies requirement.</p> <p>New course will increase students' understanding of citizenship in a democratic society.</p>

### School Completion Certificates

Option 1 Current Graduation Program	Option 2 Proposed Changes Following Public Consultation	Benefits and Implications of Option 2
<p>Students are awarded a School Completion Certificate when schools reports them to the Ministry as having met the goals of their Student Learning Plan (part of the Grade 9-12 <i>Career and Personal Planning</i> curriculum)</p> <p>This document is not valued by students receiving a Dogwood Graduation Certificate; however, it is valued for some students with special needs or others completing school without meeting the graduation requirements.</p>	<p>Eliminate the School Completion Certificate as a credential for all students; retain it for students working on goals other than graduation</p> <p>School Boards can set local standards and determine whether or not students have achieved their goals</p> <p>School boards will report to the Ministry students who have earned a School Completion Certificate.</p>	<p>Students with special needs, or other students unable to meet the graduation requirements, will still receive recognition for their achievement.</p> <p>Students with special needs can combine their work toward their IEP goals and portfolio development to earn their certificates.</p> <p>Boards and the Ministry will have data on achievement for students working on individual goals, to use in planning improvement.</p>