

# Local School Board Graduation Requirement



## Context:

HB 171, Modernizing Graduation Requirements, is an opportunity for local school boards to transform more traditional school days into engaging student experiences that create more inclusive, thriving communities. New school board policies can be designed backward and informed first and foremost by young people to reimagine the learning experiences they've been asking for. It is imperative that districts create a local policy framework designed to fully implement new graduation requirements that include capstone projects, internships, and graduate profiles.

## Educators and Students want engaging experiences

A 2023 - 2024 evaluation of 47 schools participating in Innovation Zones, a state-funded initiative that supports high schools in transforming educational experiences, reflects the following:

- **2,449** students participated in 2,477 internships during the 2023 - 2024 school year, marking a **307%** increase from the previous year
- **70%** of those internships were paid
- **86%** of participating schools had implemented internships
- **45%** had implemented community capstones
- **70%** had finished or were updating a graduate profile

## Future Focused Education's findings

Over the past two years, through Instituto del Puente, Future Focused Education has convened hundreds of community members and educators to hear from young people about their hopes for the future. These conversations have led to policies that reinforce three common needs:

- Learning that is relevant and focused on meaning and purpose
- Meaningful mentorship to help young people contribute to their communities
- Care and concern for young people and their well-being

After a convening, with the Lake Arthur schools, community members, families and students, the district created a new policy designed to implement the following priorities.

**Partnership Development:** Establish a task force to build and maintain partnerships with local businesses, government entities, and community organizations and to lead the creation and update of the Profile of a Graduate for the Lake Arthur Community.

**Curriculum Integration:** Work with educators to integrate experiential learning, work-based learning, capstone projects, and technical skills training into the existing curriculum with special attention to innovative schedules, course offerings, and end-of-year public exhibitions of learning.

**Mental Health Collaboration:** Partner with mental health organizations to provide in-school services and support programs including peer mental health first aid.

**This fall, we convened students, teachers, administrators, school board members, and community members. Here's what they had to say about local school board graduation requirements in schools:**

*"Graduate profiles are supported by initiatives that teach basic life skills, trade classes, and personal development, ensuring students are prepared for post-graduation success."*

*"Students benefit from work-based learning opportunities like internships in community organizations, preparing them for life after graduation."*

*"Capstone projects like creating a video, developing a website, and addressing housing and mental health issues help students engage directly with community needs."*

**Community Outreach:** Engage community members in school activities and decision-making processes that emphasize collaborative leadership, shared power, and voice through regular meetings, events, and a site-based leadership team.

**Monitoring and Evaluation:** Regularly assess the impact of these initiatives on student engagement, academic performance, and community well-being. Adjust the policy as needed based on feedback and outcomes.

### Recommendations:

Recommend creating a readiness assessment to create local policy implementing new graduation requirements from HB 171.

### Next Steps:

1. Instituto del Puente to disseminate finalized Readiness Criteria
2. Statewide selection of 20 school districts in partnership with the Southwest Institute for Transformational (SWIFT) Community Schools
3. President of the New Mexico School Superintendents Association and Superintendent of Santa Rosa Consolidated Schools, Marty Madrid, to invite 20 school district superintendents to apply for the Instituto del Puente partnership opportunity
4. Using Readiness Criteria, Instituto del Puente will select 3 school districts to partner with Future Focused Education: Instituto del Puente Community Conversations - Spring 2025 convening