

Hello,

I hope this email finds you well. It has come to my attention that the State Board of Education passed a rule to eliminate the speech course requirement for graduation and replace it with a "Digital Literacy" course. I am excited for the idea of increasing literacy in the digital field. However, I fear that removing the speech course requirement would create harmful long-term effects on Idaho students. I am glad we have people like you working for our state that have had experience teaching in the classroom to help voice possible concerns current teachers have. I am reaching out to you to give you a teacher's perspective on the possible removal of the speech course requirement.

In this day and age, students have grown up avoiding face-to-face contact with their peers. Even though a lot of life has moved to various digital outlets, the necessity of speech class has not changed. In fact, I would argue that it is more important now than ever before to teach students how to effectively communicate with one another. I have taught Fundamentals of Oral Communication for the past six years. During this time, I have witnessed a sad truth from our students; incoming freshmen are not developing necessary communication skills on their own. In a speech classroom, students are able to...

- Synthesize ideas and identify the best ways convey a message to an audience
- Communicate using nonverbal cues
- Recognize situational and cultural contexts that effect communication
- Listen to other's point of view
- Overcome nerves to convey important messages during stressful situations

By the end of the year, students have built confidence and found their voice. Other classes do not evaluate a student's ability to learn the skills shown above. We need to give them the opportunity to acquire these skills before they are sent to the workforce. Fellow teachers at school have told me they can tell which students have taken speech class compared to the students haven't based on how comfortable a student is during classroom discussions/activities. But it isn't just the teachers that are seeing this value. Every year during Parent-teacher conferences, open house tours of our school, or other meetings I have had parents consistently tell me that they are glad their child is in speech class. I hope we do not remove this speech course requirement. I plead with you to help fight to keep these necessary communication skills in our schools.

Please email me or call me if you have any questions or concerns, I'd be happy to speak with you more about this topic.

Sincerely,

NW

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