

Procedures for Policy 4.605

Graduation Requirements

1. GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

All students will have access to a rigorous education that will prepare them for success in postsecondary and the workforce. All coursework should be aligned to the Tennessee Academic Standards for that subject and course.

Policy Implications:

- a. All students will meet the following course graduation requirements:

English 4 credits

Mathematics 4 credits

Science 3 credits

Social Studies 3 credits

Personal Finance 0.5 credit

Wellness 1 credit

Physical Education 0.5 credit

Foreign Language 2 credits

Fine Arts 1 credits

Elective Focus 3 credits

Additional Electives 6 credits (as required by the Smith County Board of Education)

- b. The graduation requirements and additional courses required for postsecondary/workforce training readiness will be tied to the vision of the high school graduate and to the Tennessee Academic Standards.

To earn a regular high school diploma, students must:

- i. Earn the prescribed twenty-eight (28) credit minimum;
- ii. Complete the ACT or SAT prior to graduation, if the student was enrolled in a Tennessee public school during their eleventh (11th) grade year*; and
- iii. Have a satisfactory record of attendance and discipline.
- iv. Complete a United States civics test.¹
- v. Complete a capstone experience

* Effective for all students beginning with those students graduating during the 2017-18 school year.

Schools will minimize tracking of students by ability, eliminate central classes taught below the college preparation level, and provide all students a challenging course of study.

- c. Students with disabilities will be included in regular classes to the maximum extent possible and with appropriate support and accommodations. To earn a regular high school diploma, students with disabilities must earn the prescribed twenty-eight (28)-credit minimum. In rare cases, as determined by the IEP team, a student with disabilities may earn a regular high school diploma, after earning the prescribed twenty-two (22)-credit minimum as required by the Tennessee State Board of Education. Students who fail to earn a yearly grade of seventy percent (70%) in a course that has an End of Course examination and whose

disability adversely affects performance in that test will be allowed, through an approved process, to add to their End of Course examination scores by demonstrating the state identified knowledge and skills contained within that course through an alternative performance-based assessment. The necessity for an alternative performance-based assessment must be determined through the student's individualized education program (IEP). The alternative performance-based assessment will be evaluated using a state-approved rubric.

A special education diploma may be awarded at the end of their fourth (4th) year of high school to students with disabilities who have²

- i. not met the requirements for a regular high school diploma,
 - ii. received special education services or supports and made satisfactory progress on an individualized education program (IEP), and
 - iii. have satisfactory records of attendance and conduct. Students who obtain the special education diploma may continue to work toward a regular high school diploma through the end of the school year in which they turn twenty-two (22) years old.
- d. An occupational diploma^{3,4} may be awarded to students with disabilities at the end of their fourth (4th) year of high school who have
- i. not met the requirements for a regular high school diploma,
 - ii. received special education services or supports and made satisfactory progress on an IEP,
 - iii. have satisfactory records of attendance and conduct,
 - iv. have completed the occupational diploma Skills, Knowledge, and Experience Mastery Assessment (SKEMA) created by the Tennessee Department of Education, and
 - v. have completed two (2) years of paid or non-paid work experience. The determination that an occupational diploma is the goal for a student with a disability will be made at the conclusion of the student's tenth (10th) grade year or two (2) academic years prior to the expected graduation date. Students who obtain the occupational diploma may continue to work toward a regular high school diploma through the end of the school year in which they turn twenty-two (22) years old.
- e. Students must complete four (4) credits of English, including English I, English II, English III, and English IV.
- f. Students must complete four (4) credits of mathematics including Algebra I and II, Geometry or the equivalent Integrated Math I, II, and III, and another mathematics course beyond Algebra I or Integrated Math I. Students must be enrolled in a mathematics course each school year. Students who complete any of the required math credits prior to the ninth (9th) grade may receive graduation credit for that coursework; however, those students are still required to enroll in a mathematics course during each high school year.

The Bridge Math course is recommended for students who have not scored 19 or higher on the ACT mathematics subtest or a 460 on the SAT mathematics subtest by the beginning of the senior year. Other factors like career interest, study habits, etc. can be used to determine twelfth (12th) grade placement.

Credits received for non-credit recovery mathematics courses taken during the summer may count towards the required mathematics course during the subsequent school year. Any applicable End of Course examination must be taken during the fall semester immediately following the summer course. Credit may not be given in a summer course with an associated End of Course examination until the student takes the examination.³

Students with a qualifying disability who have deficits in mathematics as documented in the IEP shall be required to achieve at least Algebra I and Geometry (or the equivalent Integrated Math I and Integrated Math II). The required number of credits in mathematics will be achieved through strategies such as, but not limited to, increased time, appropriate methodologies, and accommodations as determined by the IEP team.

- g. Students must complete three (3) credits of Science. Students must complete Biology, Chemistry or Physics, and a third (3rd) lab science. Students with a qualifying disability as documented in the IEP shall be required to achieve at least Biology I and two (2) other lab science credits. The required number of credits in science will be achieved through strategies such as, but not limited to, increased time, appropriate methodologies, and accommodations as determined by the IEP team.
- h. Students must complete three (3) credits of Social Studies. The content of the social studies courses will be consistent with Tennessee Academic Standards and with admissions requirements of Tennessee public institutions of higher education. Required courses include United States History and Geography, World History and Geography, Economics, and United States Government and Civics.
- i. Students must complete one-half ($\frac{1}{2}$) credit in Personal Finance. Three years of JROTC may be substituted for one-half ($\frac{1}{2}$) credit of Personal Finance if the JROTC instructor attends the Personal Finance training.
- j. Students must complete one (1) credit in wellness. The wellness courses will integrate concepts from health, physical fitness, and wellness and may be taught by a team of teachers from one (1) or more teaching areas, including health, physical education, family and nutrition sciences, and health sciences education. Participation in marching band and interscholastic athletics may not be substituted for this aspect of the graduation requirements. Credit earned in two (2) years of JROTC may be substituted provided the local system has complied with requirements of the State Board of Education. Credit for basic training may be substituted, upon the choice of the student, for the required credit in lifetime wellness and credit in one (1) elective course or for credit in two (2) elective courses.
- k. Students must complete one-half ($\frac{1}{2}$) credit in Physical Education. This requirement may be met by substituting a documented and equivalent time of physical activity in marching band, JROTC, cheerleading, interscholastic athletics, school sponsored intramural athletics, and other areas approved by the local board of education.
- l. Students must complete two (2) credits of the same Foreign Language. The credit requirement for foreign language may be waived by the local school district for students, under certain circumstances, to expand and enhance the elective focus.
- m. Students must complete one (1) credit in Fine Arts. The credit requirement for fine arts may be waived by the local school district for students, under certain circumstances, to expand and enhance the elective focus.
- n. Students must complete three (3) credits in an elective focus. All students will pursue a focused program of study designed to prepare them for the workforce and postsecondary study. The intent of the elective focus is to provide students with an opportunity to explore a particular academic area in greater depth.

The elective focus may be CTE, science and math, humanities, fine arts, AP/IB, or other areas approved by the local board of education. Students completing a CTE elective focus must complete three (3) credits in the same CTE career cluster or state-approved program of study.

Schools should make every effort to ensure that all students complete a state or locally approved elective focus, however, schools may waive the elective focus requirement for those students who transfer during the junior or senior year to a Tennessee high school from a school in another state or from a non-public school, if the completion of the elective focus would prevent or delay graduation.

Students who begin an elective focus in a Tennessee high school and transfer during the junior or senior year to another Tennessee high school may, with the permission of the Director of Schools, have the elective focus requirement waived if the receiving school does not offer the same elective focus area and is unable to offer related coursework to complete a state or locally approved focus area, or if the completion of the elective focus would prevent or delay graduation.

- o. Computer education is not specifically listed in the graduation requirements. However, T.C.A. § 49-6-1010 requires every candidate for graduation to have received a full year of computer education at some time during the candidate's educational career. Computer science and courses such as digital art and design, architectural and engineering design, programming and logic, web design, and website development will also satisfy this requirement and serve as a complement to a student's elective focus.
- p. Local high schools must accept postsecondary credits as a substitution for an aligned graduation requirement course, including general education and elective focus courses for those students who take and pass dual enrollment courses at a postsecondary institution for credit.
- q. Students in Smith County must complete an additional six (6) credits of electives. Strong recommendations for this requirement include but are not limited to work based learning, service learning, career connections, or ACT prep. Other electives may be chosen to better fit the needs of each individual student.
- r. Prior to graduation, each student should complete a capstone experience. The principals, with approval from the director of schools, may waive this requirement in extenuating circumstances. The purpose of this experience is for the student to gain skills such as time management, dedication, commitment, and workforce skills. These may include, but are not limited to communication and teamwork. Examples of such experiences are:
 - i. Clinical Internships
 - ii. Work Based Learning Experience
 - iii. Service Learning Experience (minimum of 40 hours and successful completion of the class)
 - iv. Community Service (Minimum of 40 hours)
 - v. The completion of two full varsity seasons of a competitive sport or band.
 - vi. The completion of a local, regional, and state competition at least twice during high school (ie: CTSO, Band)
 - vii. Other senior project as developed by the principal with approval from the director of schools or his designee.

The principal will work with the director of schools for the authorization and oversight of each student project.

2. MOVE ON WHEN READY⁵

The Move on When Ready Act provides public high school students who wish to graduate more than

semester early the opportunity to graduate high school early and gain entry into a postsecondary institution.

Policy Implications:

- a. A public high school student may complete an early high school graduation program and be eligible for unconditional entry into a public two (2)-year institution of higher education or conditional entry into a public four (4)-year institution of higher education, if the student fulfills each of the following requirements:
 - i. Earns eighteen (18) credits that include;
 1. English I, II, III, and IV
 2. Algebra I and II or Integrated Math I and II
 3. Geometry or Integrated Math III
 4. United States History
 5. Two (2) courses in the same foreign language
 6. One (1) course selected from the following:
 - I. Economics
 - II. Government
 - III. World Civilizations
 - IV. World Geography
 7. One (1) course selected from the following:
 - I. History and appreciation of visual and performing arts
 - II. A standards based arts course, which may include studio art, band, chorus, dance or other performing arts
 8. Health and Physical Education (Wellness)
 9. Biology
 10. Chemistry
 - ii. Has a cumulative GPA of at least 3.2 on a 4 point scale;
 - iii. Scores at the advanced/mastery level on each End of Course assessment taken;
 - viii. Meets benchmark scores of 19 or higher on the ACT mathematics subtest or a 460 or higher on the SAT mathematics subtest and 18 or higher on the ACT English subtest and a 19 or higher on the ACT reading subtest or 450 or higher on the SAT critical reading subtest;

- v. Achieves a passing score on a nationally recognized language proficiency assessment; and
 - vi. Completes two (2) credits in AP, IB, dual enrollment or dual credit courses.
- b. A student pursuing early graduation through the Move on When Ready program may take two (2) high school English courses in an academic year.
 - c. A student pursuing early graduation through the Move on When Ready program must complete an intent form available from the department of education and submit it to her or his high school principal.
 - d. A student pursuing early graduation through the Move on When Ready program is exempt from any additional graduation requirements
 - e. A student who completes the Move on When Ready program shall be awarded a regular high school diploma.

3. GRADUATION WITH HONORS, STATE HONORS, AND STATE DISTINCTION

See Policy 4.606

4. PLAN OF STUDY

Prior to the ninth (9th) grade or age fourteen (14), all students will develop an initial four (4)-year plan of focused and purposeful high school study. The plan will be updated annually and will connect the student's academic and career goals to school. As part of this process, all students should take a career interest inventory during the seventh (7th) grade and tenth (10th) grade and use the results to inform their plan of study.

Policy Implications:

- a. When a student is in the seventh (7th) grade, the student should complete a career interest inventory, the results of which must be used to inform future course planning decisions.
- b. Beginning in seventh (7th) grade, but no later than eighth (8th) grade, the student, parent or guardian(s), and school counselor or faculty advisor will jointly prepare an initial plan of focused, purposeful high school study that will cover either: four (4) years, grades nine through twelve (9- 12) or five (5) years, grades eight through twelve (8-12).
- c. By the end of tenth (10th) grade, the student should complete the second (2nd) career interest inventory. The parent or guardian(s) and school will focus the plan to ensure the completion of the program of study and a smooth transition to postsecondary study and work. The plan should be informed by results from the career interest inventory and contain information about career options and long-term goals supported by the plan through the courses to be taken in the eleventh (11th) and twelfth (12th) grades as well as courses to be taken at the postsecondary level.
- d. The plan of study should be reviewed annually by the student and school counselor or faculty advisor, and revised based on the student's academic progress and changes in the student's interests and career goals. Results of various types of assessments will also be used in adjusting the plan of study.
- e. High school and middle grades faculty will collaborate in planning curriculum and the transition between middle grades and high school.

- f. For students with an IEP, the four (4) year or five (5) year plan of study should also connect the student's goals for high school including, the courses and/or training and/or skills necessary to meet his or her potential after high school. The required plan will include identifying possible transition service needs of the student under the applicable components of the student's IEP.

5. WORK-BASED LEARNING FRAMEWORK⁶ & CAPSTONE EXPERIENCE

See Policy 4.211

6. ASSESSMENT (cross reference 4.700)

See Policy 4.700

7. CREDIT RECOVERY (cross reference 4.2091)

See Policy 4.2091

SPECIAL EDUCATION STUDENTS⁴

Special education students, who successfully complete their Individualized Educational Program (IEP), meet the requirements for a regular diploma, pass the required competency assessment and have satisfactory records of attendance and conduct shall be awarded a regular diploma.

Special Education Diploma

A special education diploma shall be awarded to students who have satisfactorily completed their IEP and who have satisfactory records of attendance and conduct, but who have not met the proficiency testing requirements.²

Occupational Diploma

Special education students who do not meet the requirements for a high school diploma may be awarded an occupational diploma if the student has:^{3,4}

1. satisfactorily completed their IEP;
2. maintained satisfactory records of attendance and conduct;
3. completed the occupational diploma Skills, Knowledge, and Experience Mastery Assessment (SKEMA);
4. completed at least four (4) years of high school; and
5. has two (2) years of paid or non-paid work experience.

The decision to attain an occupational diploma shall be made at the conclusion of the student's tenth (10th) grade year, or two (2) academic years prior to the expected graduation date. Students who have received an occupational diploma are permitted to continue to make progress towards a high school diploma until the end of the school year in which they turn twenty-two (22) years old.

Alternate Academic Diploma

Special education students who do not meet the requirements for a regular high school diploma may be awarded an alternate academic diploma if the student has:⁴

1. Completed at least four (4) years of high school;
2. Participated in the high school alternate assessments;
3. Earned the prescribed twenty-two (22) credit minimum;
4. Made satisfactory progress on their IEP;
5. Maintained satisfactory records of attendance and conduct; and
6. Completed a transition assessment that measures postsecondary education and training, employment, independent living, and community involvement.

8. STUDENT LOAD

All full time students in grades 9-12 shall be enrolled each semester in subjects that produce a minimum of seven units of credit for graduation per year. Students with hardships and gifted students may appeal this requirement to the director of schools and then to the board.⁷

In order to graduate early, students must meet the move on when ready criteria.