

Shelby County Board of Education

5004

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Revised: 05/28/13, 07/01/13, 12/17/13,
10/28/14, 10/25/16, 05/28/19, 03/01/22

GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

I. PURPOSE

To identify requirements for graduation for Shelby County Schools.

II. SCOPE

This policy applies to all students seeking graduation from Shelby County Schools.

III. POLICY STATEMENT

- A. The State Board of Education has established minimum standards for graduation from any Tennessee public high school. Any student who meets the requirements shall be awarded the appropriate diploma as specified in the Rules of the Tennessee Department of Education and the Tennessee State Board of Education Rules, Regulations and Minimum Standards for the Operation of the Public School System. Additionally, a student's diploma and transcript shall indicate whether the student is graduating with any special recognition outlined in accordance with the regulations to this policy or the policies/regulations of the Tennessee State Board of Education or the Tennessee State Department of Education.
- B. The Board delegates to the Superintendent the authority to:
 - 1. Delineate areas that may be substituted for the physical education requirement
 - 2. Identify areas of elective focus beyond those listed in the State's High School Policy
 - 3. Determine, in accordance with state rules/regulations, how students shall be noted and be recognized at their graduation ceremonies if they achieve any of the graduation honors/recognitions, etc., identified in the regulations to this policy and/or the policies/regulations of the Tennessee State Board of Education or the Tennessee State Department of Education.

IV. RESPONSIBILITY

- A. The Office of Academics is responsible for administering this policy, including coordinating the logistics required for printing and distribution of diplomas.

B. The Superintendent (or designee) is responsible ensuring that this policy is followed.

Legal References:

1. T.C.A. §49-6-6001
2. TRR/MS 0520-01-03
3. T.C.A. §49-12-301 Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children
4. T.C.A. §49-6-1209
5. T.C.A. §49-6-408
6. T.C.A. §49-6-412
7. T.C.A. §49-6-8103
8. Tennessee State Board of Education High School Policy 2.103

GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

Administrative Rules and Regulations

Adoption: 05/28/13

Issued Date: 08/25/15

Revised: 12/05/17, 01/31/18, 05/28/19, 12/03/19, 03/01/22

REGULAR HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA

To earn a regular high school diploma, students shall meet the minimum standards established by the State Board of Education. Specifically, students shall complete the ACT or SAT prior to graduation, if the student was enrolled in a Tennessee public high school during their 11th grade year*, have a satisfactory record of attendance and discipline, and earn the following twenty-two (22) units of credit:

• English Language Arts	4 credits
• Mathematics	4 credits
• Science	3 credits
• Social Studies	3 credits
• Wellness	1 credit
• Physical Education	0.5 credit
• Personal Finance	0.5 credit
• Elective Focus	3 credits
• World Language**	2 credits
• Fine Arts**	<u>1</u> credit
Total	22 credits

** Effective for all students beginning with those students graduating during the 2017-2018 school year.*

*** Also see World Language and Fine Arts description in the Description of Requirements section below.*

Students of Non-senior Status - Students of non-senior status who meet the minimum standards established by the State Board of Education and earn the required twenty-two (22) units of credit may receive a high school diploma. This does not necessarily qualify a student for the Early High School Graduation Program under the Move on When Ready Act. Students who wish to participate in that program must fulfill all of the specified requirements of the act.

Students with Disabilities - Students with disabilities shall 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 shall earn the prescribed twenty-two (22) credit minimum.

Description of Requirements -

Note: Pursuant to State Board of Education Policy 2.103, students may take coursework for high school credit prior to grade nine (9). If a student successfully completes any of the State

Board-required high school credits as evidenced by a passing grade in the course prior to grade nine (9), the student shall receive the graduation credit for that coursework.

English – Four (4) Credits

Students are required to complete four (4) credits of English, including English I, English II, English III, and English IV.

Mathematics – Four (4) Credits

Students are required to 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 mathematics credits prior to 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.

Students with a qualifying disability who have deficits in mathematics, as documented in the individualized education program (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.

Science – Three (3) Credits

Students shall complete three (3) credits of Science. Students shall complete Biology I, Chemistry or Physics, and a third lab science. Students with qualifying disabilities 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.

Social Studies – Three (3) Credits

Students shall 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. Three (3) years of JROTC may be substituted for one-half (1/2) credit of U.S. Government.

Personal Finance – One-Half (.5) Credit

Students shall complete one-half (1/2) credit in Personal Finance. Three (3) years of JROTC may be substituted for one-half (1/2) credit of Personal Finance if the JROTC instructor attends the Personal Finance training.

Wellness – One (1) Credit

Students shall 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 or more teaching areas, including health, physical education, family and nutrition sciences, and health sciences education.

- A. Participation in marching band and interscholastic athletics may not be substituted for this aspect of the graduation requirements. Credit earned in two years of JROTC may be substituted for one (1) credit of Lifetime Wellness.
- B. Upon the choice of the student, credit for basic training may be substituted for the required credit in Lifetime Wellness and credit in one (1) elective course, or for credit in two (2) elective courses.

Physical Education – One-Half (.5) Credit

Students shall complete one-half (½) 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 identified by the Superintendent in accordance with policy 5004 Graduation Requirements.

Electives – Three (3) Credits

Students shall complete three (3) credits in an elective focus. The elective focus may be Career and Technical Education (CTE), science and mathematics, humanities, fine arts, Advanced Placement (AP)/International Baccalaureate (IB), Cambridge, or other areas identified by the Superintendent in accordance with policy 5004 Graduation Requirements. Students completing a CTE elective focus must complete three (3) credits in the same CTE career cluster or state-approved program of study.

The Superintendent may waive the third credit requirement of the elective focus during a student's senior year if the completion of the third elective focus credit would prevent or delay graduation. This waiver option includes 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.

World Language – Two (2) Credits and Fine Arts – One (1) Credit

Students shall complete two (2) credits of the same world language and one (1) credit in fine arts. The credit requirements for world language and fine arts may be waived by the District for students, under certain circumstances, to expand and enhance the elective focus.

Computer Education – One (1) Full Year

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. Students who transfer from another state during their senior year are exempt from this requirement.

United States Civics Test

A student during his or her high school career must take and pass a United States civics test in accordance with T.C.A. §49-6-408 in order to meet the social studies course credit requirements to earn a full diploma upon graduation. A student may be provided the opportunity to take the test as many times as necessary to pass the test. A passing score on the civics test shall be noted on a student's transcript.

Capstone Experience (Encouraged)

The completion of a capstone experience is encouraged, but not required for graduation. A capstone experience may be completed during the junior or senior year. Options for the capstone experience may include, but are not limited to the following: junior/senior project, virtual enterprise, internship, externship, work-based learning, service learning (minimum of 40 hrs.), or community service (minimum of 40 hrs.).

GRADUATION HONORS AND RECOGNITIONS

Graduation honors and recognitions shall be awarded in accordance with this Policy and applicable state law and guidance.

Voluntary Community Service – A student who voluntarily completes at least ten (10) hours of community service each semester that the student is in attendance shall be recognized by the high school at the graduation ceremony by awarding a certificate of service, placing an appropriate designation on the student's diploma or other credential, providing a ribbon or cord to be worn with the graduation regalia, or recognizing the community service in another suitable manner.

Graduation with State Honors – Students who score at or above **all** of the subject area readiness benchmarks on the ACT or equivalent score on the SAT will graduate with “state honors”.

Graduation with State Distinction – Students will be recognized as graduating with “state distinction” by attaining a B or better average and completing at least one (1) of the following:

- (a) Earn an industry credential promoted by the Department of Education;
- (b) Participate in at least one (1) of the Governor's Schools;
- (c) Participate in one (1) of the state's All-State musical organizations;
- (d) Earn statewide recognition or award at a skill- or knowledge-based state tournament, convention, or competition hosted by a statewide student organization, and/or qualify for national recognition by a national student organization;
- (e) Be selected as a National Merit Finalist or Semi-Finalist;
- (f) Attain a score of 31 or higher composite score on the ACT or SAT equivalent;
- (g) Attain a score of three (3) or higher on at least two Advanced Placement (AP) exams;
- (h) Successfully complete the International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma Programme; or
- (i) Earn twelve (12) or more semester hours of postsecondary credit.

Graduation with Shelby County Schools Honors – The District may design student recognition programs that allow students to graduate with honors if they have met the graduation

requirements and have attained an overall grade point average of at least a 3.0 or higher on a 4.0 scale. The District may set a higher GPA at its discretion. The District may specify additional requirements, such as requiring students to demonstrate performance of distinction in one (1) or more areas.

Shelby County Schools Designation of Exemplary Recognition – In order to best prepare students for college and an ever more competitive global job market, Shelby County Schools supports, encourages, and motivates students to challenge themselves by taking the most rigorous course of study. Students eligible for the *Designation of Exemplary Recognition* must have earned twelve (12) Honors or Advanced Placement credits (any combination) in Grades 9-12 or a combination of such credits totaling twelve (12), with each Advanced Placement credit equal to 1.5 honors credits. A minimum of two (2) Honors or Advanced Placement courses is required during the senior year. A qualified graduate will receive a Diploma that indicates the exemplar status and *Designation of Exemplary Recognition* will be printed on the graduate's final high school transcript.

Tennessee Tri-Star Recognition – A student who earns a composite score of nineteen (19) or higher on the ACT, or an equivalent score on the SAT, and earns a capstone industry credential as promoted by the Department of Education, shall be recognized as a Tennessee Tri-Star Scholar upon graduation from high school. The public high school shall recognize the student's achievement at the graduation ceremony by noting the recognition in the school's graduation program and by placing an appropriate designation on the student's diploma or other credential. In addition, a ribbon or cord to be worn with the graduation regalia may be provided.

Industry Credential Recognition: District Distinction – Students shall be recognized as graduating with district distinction if they have met the graduation requirements, have obtained an overall grade point average of at least a 3.0 or higher on a 4.0 scale, and have earned an industry credential promoted by the Department of Education.

WorkKeys Recognition – Students graduating with a gold or platinum medal on National Career Readiness Certificate (WorkKeys) shall be recognized at their graduation ceremony.

District-developed Work Ethic Distinction – Students graduating with a District-developed work ethic distinction shall be recognized at their graduation ceremony.

Tennessee Seal of Biliteracy – The District shall recognize students who have attained a high level of proficiency in speaking, reading, and writing in one (1) or more languages in addition to English with a Seal of Biliteracy. Students receiving this recognition shall meet the following criteria:

- (a) Complete all English language arts (ELA) requirements for graduation with an overall grade point average of 3.0 or higher in those classes;
- (b) Demonstrate English proficiency through one (1) of the following:
 1. Score at the on-track or mastered level on each ELA end-of-course assessment taken;
 2. Score three (3) or higher on an Advanced Placement English Language or English Literature exam; B1 or higher on a Cambridge International English exam; or four (4) or higher on an International Baccalaureate English exam;

3. Score 22 or higher on the ACT Reading subtest or 480 or higher on the SAT evidence-based reading and writing subtest; or
 4. Score 4.5 or higher on the WIDA Access, if the student is an English learner; and
- (c) Demonstrate proficiency in a world language through one (1) of the following:
1. Score Intermediate-Mid or higher in all three (3) communication modes (interpersonal, interpretive, and presentational) on a world language proficiency assessment recognized by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL);
 2. Score three (3) or higher on an Advanced Placement world language exam; B1 or higher on a Cambridge International world language exam; or four (4) or higher on an International Baccalaureate world language exam;
 3. Score at the Intermediate level or higher on the Sign Language Proficiency Interview (SLPI: ASL);
 4. Pass a foreign government's approved non-English language exam, or score at a level comparable to Intermediate-mid or higher on the ACTFL proficiency scale on another country's secondary level standardized exam in the country's non-English native language; or
 5. Score at a level comparable to Intermediate-Mid or higher on the ACTFL proficiency scale on an LEA developed alternate model. Alternate models may only be used if the identified world language does not have an associated nationally recognized assessment and must address communication, cultures, connections, comparisons, and communities.

Each school shall document and track students' progress toward the Seal of Biliteracy. The Shelby County Board of Education shall affix an appropriate insignia to the diploma of the qualifying student indicating that the student has been awarded a Tennessee Seal of Biliteracy.

MOVE ON WHEN READY ACT/EARLY GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

A public school student may complete an early high school graduation program and be eligible for unconditional entry into a public two-year institution of higher education or conditional entry into a public four-year institution of higher education, if the student fulfills each of the following requirements:

- (a) Earns seventeen (17) credits to include:
1. English I, II, III, and IV
 2. Algebra I and II*
 3. Geometry*
 4. United States History
 5. Two (2) courses in the same world language
 6. One (1) course selected from the following:
 - (i) Economics
 - (ii) Government
 - (iii) World Civilization
 - (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

****If the District elects to offer the Integrated Math sequence, Integrated Math I, II, and III may fulfill the Algebra I, Algebra II, and Geometry requirements.***

- (b) Has a cumulative grade point average of at least 3.2 on the Uniform Grading System four (4) point scale;
- (c) Scores at the on-track or mastered level on each end-of-course assessment taken (excluding end-of-course assessments taken during the student's final semester prior to early graduation);
- (d) Meets benchmark scores of twenty-one (21) or higher composite score on the ACT or an equivalent score on the SAT;
- (e) Achieves a passing score on a nationally recognized world language proficiency assessment; and
- (f) Completes at least two (2) early postsecondary courses.

These early postsecondary courses may be included within the 17 credits listed in (a) above and/or in addition to the 17 credits listed in (a) above.

A student pursuing early graduation through the Move on When Ready program may take two (2) high school English courses in an academic year.

A student pursuing early graduation through the Move on When Ready program shall indicate to the high school principal the student's intent prior to the beginning of grade nine (9) or as soon thereafter as the intent is known. The intent shall be indicated on a form provided by the Department of Education and signed by the parent.

A student pursuing early graduation through the Move on When Ready program in accordance with these requirements is exempt from additional graduation requirements.

A student who completes the Move on When Ready program shall be awarded a regular high school diploma.

GRADUATION PROVISIONS FOR CERTAIN STUDENTS IN OR EXITING CUSTODY OF THE DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES

The District shall not require any enrolling or transferring student, who is in grade eleven (11) or higher and in the custody of the department of children's services or exiting its custody, to meet more than the minimum requirements for graduation set forth by the State Board of Education. The District shall issue a full diploma to any such student who meets the minimum requirements.

ADJUSTMENT OF GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS – PROVISIONS FOR STUDENTS OF MILITARY PARENTS

SCS shall waive specific courses required for graduation for students of military parents who enroll/transfer into the district if the student has satisfactorily completed similar course work in another district; or SCS shall provide reasonable justification for the denial. If a waiver is not granted to a student who would qualify to graduate from the sending school, SCS shall provide an alternative means of acquiring the required course work so that graduation may occur on time.

SCS shall accept the exit or end-of-course exams required for graduation from the sending state, norm-referenced achievement tests, or alternative testing in lieu of testing requirements mandated for graduation by the state of Tennessee or SCS. If alternatives cannot be accommodated by SCS for a student transferring in his/her senior year, SCS and the sending district shall ensure the receipt of a diploma from the sending district, if the student meets graduation requirements in the sending district.

Additionally, for a student of military parents transferring to SCS at the beginning or during his/her senior year, who is ineligible to graduate after all alternatives have been considered, SCS and the sending district shall ensure the receipt of a diploma from the sending district, if the student meets graduation requirements in the sending district. If the sending district is not a member of the Interstate Commission, SCS shall use best efforts to facilitate the on-time graduation of the student through adjustment of graduation requirements based on course waivers and acceptance of the sending state's examinations/tests or alternative testing.

OCCUPATIONAL DIPLOMA

An occupational diploma may be awarded to students with disabilities at the end of their fourth year of high school who have:

- (a) Not met the requirements for a regular high school diploma;
- (b) Received special education services or supports and made satisfactory progress on an IEP;
- (c) Satisfactory records of attendance and conduct;
- (d) Completed the occupational diploma Skills, Knowledge, and Experience Mastery Assessment (SKEMA) created by the Tennessee Department of Education; and
- (e) 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.

SPECIAL EDUCATION DIPLOMA

A special education diploma shall be awarded at the end of their fourth year of high school to students with disabilities who have:

- (a) Not met the requirements for a regular high school diploma;
- (b) Received special education services or supports and made satisfactory progress on an individualized education program (IEP); and
- (c) 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.

ALTERNATE ACADEMIC DIPLOMA

Beginning with students entering the ninth (9th) grade in 2018, an alternate academic diploma may be awarded to students with the most significant cognitive disabilities at the end of their fourth year of high school who have:

- (a) Participated in the high school alternate assessments;
- (b) Earned the prescribed twenty-two (22) credit minimum;
- (c) Received special education services or supports and made satisfactory progress on an IEP;
- (d) Satisfactory records of attendance and conduct; and
- (e) Completed a transition assessment(s) that measures, at a minimum, postsecondary education and training, employment, independent living, and community involvement.

The required credits may be earned either through the state-approved standards or through alternate academic diploma course requirements defined by the Department of Education. A student who earns an alternate academic diploma shall continue to be eligible for special education services under IDEA until the student receives a regular high school diploma or through the school year in which the student turns twenty-two (22).

EQUIVALENCY HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA

The equivalency diploma will be available in accordance with the state law and rules and/or guidance of the Tennessee Department of Education and the Tennessee Department of Labor and Workforce Development.

PUPIL COURSE WORKLOAD

All full-time students in grades 9-12 shall be enrolled each semester in subjects that produce a minimum of five (5) units of credit for graduation per year. Students with hardships and gifted students may appeal this requirement to the Superintendent and then to the Shelby County Board of Education.

FOCUSED AND PURPOSEFUL PLAN OF STUDY

Students are expected to meet the graduation standards in place the year they enter ninth (9th) grade, unless otherwise specified in law, State rules/policy/guidance, or District policy. Prior to the ninth (9th) grade or age fourteen (14), all students, including students with an IEP and/or 504 plan, will jointly prepare with their parent or guardian(s), school counselor or faculty advisor, and the IEP and/or 504 team as appropriate, an initial four (4)-year plan of focused and

purposeful high school study that complies with the standards outlined in the Tennessee State Board of Education High School Policy 2.103. The plan shall 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 postsecondary interests and career goals. Appropriate high school and middle grade staff (e.g., school counselor, administrator, graduation coach) will collaborate to transition students between middle grades and high school.

Pursuant to TCA 49-6-412, results of various types of District-approved assessments will also be used to inform and adjust the plan of study. Students shall take a career interest inventory during either middle school or ninth (9th) grade. Additionally, a career aptitude assessment shall be administered to students in grade seven (7) or grade eight (8).

The plan of focused and purposeful high school study shall:

- (a) Cover either grades nine through twelve (9-12) or grades eight through twelve (8-12);
- (b) Connect a student's goals for high school to the courses or training that shall equip the student with the skills necessary to meet their goals after high school;
- (c) Consider a variety of indicators, such as student academic strengths and needs, attendance, behavior, and course grades;
- (d) Include information regarding elective focuses aligned to the student's career aptitude assessment results, including:
 1. a student's readiness for specific early post-secondary opportunities (EPSOs),
 2. relevant career and technical education (CTE) programs of study,
 3. industry credentials, and
 4. work-based learning experiences;
- (e) Provide students with opportunities to begin building technical skills in a field of interest, in addition to employability, work-ethic, and leadership skills required to be successful in that job; and
- (f) If applicable, identify possible transition service needs of a student under the applicable components of the student's IEP and/or 504 plan.