

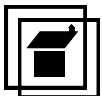
## 5460 HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION

The Board of Education will recognize the successful completion of the secondary school instructional program by the award of a State-endorsed diploma certifying the pupil has met all State and local requirements for high school graduation. The Board will annually certify to the Executive County Superintendent each pupil who has been awarded a diploma has met the requirements for graduation.

### A. High School Graduation Requirements

A graduating pupil must have earned a minimum of 120 (four-year high school: no fewer than one hundred twenty credits) credits in courses designed to meet all of the New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards including, but not limited to, the following credits:

1. 20 Twenty credits in language arts literacy aligned to grade nine through twelve standards, effective with the 2009-2010 grade nine class;
2. 15 Fifteen credits in mathematics, including Algebra I or the content equivalent (“content equivalent” is defined at N.J.A.C. 6A:8-1.3) effective with the 2008-2009 grade nine class, including geometry or the content equivalent effective with the 2010-2011 grade nine class, and including a third year of mathematics that builds on the concepts and skills of algebra and geometry and that prepares pupils for college and 21<sup>st</sup> century careers effective with the 2012-2013 grade nine class;
3. 15 Fifteen credits in social studies, including satisfaction of N.J.S.A. 18A:35-1 and 18A:35-2: five credits in world history, and the integration of civics, economics, geography, and global content in all course offerings;
4. 15 Fifteen credits in science, including at least five credits in laboratory biology/life science or the content equivalent effective with the 2008-2009 grade nine class, including one additional laboratory/inquiry-based science course which shall include chemistry or physics effective with the 2010-2011 grade nine class, and including one additional laboratory/inquiry-based science course effective with 2012-2013 grade nine class;
5. 3-3/4 Three and three-quarters credits in health, safety, and physical education during each year of enrollment, distributed as one hundred fifty minutes per week, as required by N.J.S.A. 18A:35-5, 7 and 8;



6. 5 Five credits in visual and performing arts (dance);
7. 5 Five credits in world languages or pupil demonstration of proficiency as set forth in N.J.A.C. 6A:8-5.1(a)2ii(2);
8. 2-1/2 Two and one-half credits in financial, economic, business, and entrepreneurial literacy, effective with 2010-2011 grade nine class;
9. 5 Technological literacy, consistent with the Core Curriculum Content Standards, integrated throughout the curriculum;
10. 5 Five credits in 21<sup>st</sup> century life and careers, or career-technical education; and
11. Electives as determined by the high school program sufficient to total a minimum of 120 credits.

Credit means the award for the equivalent of a class period of instruction which meets for a minimum of forty minutes, one time per week during the school year or as approved through N.J.A.C. 6A:8-5.1(a)2.

OPTION II: Expanded Opportunities for fulfilling high school graduation requirements

## **PURPOSE**

Option II establishes alternate pathways for students of the Mercer County Technical Schools District to satisfy requirements for high school graduation and meet the New Jersey Core Curriculum Standards in accord with the New Jersey Administrative Code (*N.J.A.C. 6A:8-15.1(a)lii*) and Common Core Standards for Math and Literacy.

The purpose of Option II is to provide educational experiences that are meaningful and relevant, and that provide students with opportunities to explore and achieve at high levels. In order to maximize student achievement and meet diverse pathways for learning, Option II permits students to employ alternative learning experiences that are stimulating and intellectually challenging, and that enable students to fulfill or exceed the expectations set forth in the Core Curriculum Content Standards.

Employment of Option II may include, but is not limited to, one or more of the following alternatives: student exchange programs, interdisciplinary or theme-based programs,



independent study, internships, community service, accredited college coursework, meaningful research and structured learning experiences.

Option II alternatives requested by eligible students must meet or exceed the proficiencies established by the New Jersey Core Curriculum Standards, receive prior approval by the principal and/or Option II Review Committee and demonstrate satisfactory performance as measured by district approved competency assessment instruments in order for credits to be awarded.

It is understood that participation in Option II alternative experiences is voluntary. Students may fulfill the requirements for graduation by pursuing credits earned through the traditional classroom environment (*N.J.A.C.6A:8-5.1*), through alternative learning experiences availed by Option II (*N.J.A.C.6A:8-5.1(a)lii*), or through a combination of both programs. However, approved participation in Option II activities implies student and/or parent responsibility for attendance, transportation, personal safety and well-being, specialized equipment and any and all costs not otherwise provided by the school.

### **ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES**

- All programs of study, individual or group, approved under Option II must meet or exceed the proficiencies and skills identified by the New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards and Common Core Standards for Math and Literacy.
- Skill proficiency will be measured or demonstrated through assessment instruments established by the Option II Review Committee.
- Students wishing to pursue programs of study under Option II guidelines must first present their proposal to the Option II Review Committee for approval.
- The Option II Review Committee shall consist of the principal, the supervisor of secondary education, the supervisor of secondary education for admissions, the guidance counselor and a minimum of one area of study teacher. Other district personnel may comprise the committee at the discretion of the principal.
- The principal shall have primary responsibility and authority for the implementation of the Option II program and will oversee all aspects of the program.



- All eligible students will be afforded equitable access to programs of study under the Option II program. Eligibility will be determined by the Option II Review Committee. In its deliberation, the Option II Review Committee will weigh the overall benefits, costs, advantages and disadvantages both to the student and the district.
- All programs of study proposed through the Option II program shall have specific instructional objectives (*N.J.A.C.6A:5-1-(a)lii(c)*) aligned with the Core Curriculum Content Standards and Common Core Standards for Math and Literacy and comply with all applicable laws and regulations including child labor laws and regulations governing occupational safety.
- Individual requests by students to employ Option II alternatives must be submitted to the principal or supervisor of secondary education by August 1, prior to the school year in which they are proposed for implementation.
- Programs approved and credits awarded toward the attainment of a high school diploma shall be reviewed and determined by the Option II Review Committee.
- Parents and/or students may appeal decisions rendered by the Option II Review Committee. Such appeals will be heard by the Superintendent of Schools.
- Students electing independent study, college coursework, internships, or other programs that are held off the high school campus and approved by the Option II Review Committee will be responsible for providing their own transportation to and from the work or school site.
- Students approved for off-campus learning experiences shall be responsible for their personal safety and well-being. Internships or other worksite learning experiences at area businesses will require a signed Memorandum of Agreement among the school, the worksite and the student. Such memoranda will specify the roles and the responsibilities of each party.



- The Mercer County Technical Schools District or any of its academies bear no responsibility for student transportation or personal safety and shall be held harmless for any liability arising from issues of transportation or personal safety for students participating in the Option II programs or activities.
- Students approved for Option II activities must have parental permission to participate in any alternative learning experiences. Such permission will be granted through a Memorandum of Understanding for Educational Services (MOU) signed by the parent or legal guardian and returned to the district before beginning the program.
- All other learning experiences and/or college coursework approved by the Option II Review Committee shall be the financial responsibility of the students or his/her parents or legal guardians.

## **PROCEDURES FOR IMPLEMENTING OPTION II ACTIVITIES**

### **I. Application Process**

Students or their parents may initiate a request for Option II activities. Such requests must be made by August 1 of the school year in which the Option II activity will take place. All requests must be made in writing directly to the principal for students of the Mercer County Technical Schools District.

Requests for Option II activities must be submitted on application forms available in the office of the principal or supervisor of secondary education. The student (and his parents, if they wish to attend) will be required to appear before the Review Committee to present his proposal. Approvals or denials will be returned to the student or his parents within ten (10) working days for the day the proposal is received.

### **II. Evaluation Criteria**

All applications will be evaluated by the Option II Review Committee. At a minimum, all proposals must meet the following criteria:

- Alignment with the New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards and Core Curriculum Standards for Math and Literacy.



- Clearly specified instructional objectives.
- Learning experiences that are substantial in nature, intellectually challenging, academically beneficial to the student and measurable by district approved assessment instruments.
- Overall costs, feasibility, advantages and disadvantages both to the student and the Mercer County Technical Schools District.
- Compliance with all applicable laws and regulations, including child labor laws and occupational safety regulations.

### **III. Option II Review Committee**

All requests for Option II learning activities will be evaluated by a Review Committee. The committee will consist of the principal, supervisor of secondary education and one or more teachers. The principal may designate other personnel to sit on the committee including personnel external to the school district.

The primary role of the Option II Review Committee will be to assist the principal or supervisor of secondary education to collect and review pertinent information and recommend approval or disapproval of alternative learning activities as proposed by the student or his/her parents or legal guardians. The committee may also suggest possible Option II alternatives and assist in the identification and/or development of appropriate assessment instruments. Additionally, the committee will assess the transferability of Option II credits earned in another school district.

### **IV. Appeal Process**

Students whose Option II proposal(s) has been denied by the Review Committee, or their parents, may request a hearing of the committee. The committee will then provide its findings to the parent and student and offer a rationale as to why the proposal was rejected. Students may resubmit alternate proposals for consideration of the committee, if such proposals are made within established timelines.

Students or their parents may appeal a decision of the Option II Review Committee only after they have first met with the committee to present their rationale for approval. Appeals must be made within ten days to the Superintendent of Schools whose decision will be final.



## V. Program Integrity

In order to insure the integrity of the learning experience approved under this program, the student will be required periodically or upon demand to provide evidence of progress and attendance. The principal or his/her designee will be responsible for certifying course completion and the award of credits consistent with the district's policies on graduation.

If a student is unable to complete the Option II learning experience for valid reasons, the principal along with members of the Review Committee will evaluate the experience completed to date and make a determination for the award of partial credit or recommend an alternate experience.

If a student quits or is unable to complete the learning experience for insufficient reason (lack of effort, failure to follow through, indecision, etc.), the principal shall request of the coordinator of student personnel services that the student's transcript be adjusted to reflect the experience as a failure.

In order to certify completion of curricular programs and activities based upon specific instructional objectives aligned to the standards, the principal will develop appropriate mechanisms to document student progress and program completion on student personnel records.

Students transferring from other schools who request acceptance of course credits awarded through similar Option II programs shall have their transcripts evaluated by the principal, coordinator of student personnel services and other members of the Option II Review Committee. It shall be incumbent upon the student or his parents to request the copies of the student's official transcript be sent from the former school. Such transcripts must explain the alternate learning experience in sufficient detail to allow for a fair and comprehensive assessment by staff of the Mercer County Technical Schools District.

## VI. Data Collection & Program Assessment

Data from all approved Option II learning alternatives, both individual and group experiences, will be collected at the end of each school year and assessed by the principal and members of the Review Committee. The assessment will include data from district approved assessment instruments. This information will then be forwarded to the Superintendent of Schools who shall present the findings to the Board of Education and the public.



B. Additional Graduation Requirements

1. Attendance requirements as indicated in Policy No. 5200.
2. Any statutorily mandated requirements for earning a high school diploma;
3. Demonstrated proficiency in all sections of the High School Proficiency Assessment (HSPA), Competency Assessments, or Alternative High School Assessment process applicable to the class graduating in the year they meet all other graduation requirements, based on a schedule prescribed by the Commissioner in accordance with N.J.A.C. 6A:8-4.1(b) through (d); and

C. High School Proficiency Assessment (HSPA) and Alternative High School Assessment (AHSA) and Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC):

The following information was released December 2, 2014 from NJ DOE, RE: UPDATED: Graduation Requirements for the classes of 2016, 2017, and 2018:

Earlier this year, Commissioner Hespe notified you that in New Jersey's transition from the High School Proficiency Assessment (HSPA) to the Partnership for the Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) End-of-Course assessments that the students, including students with disabilities, in the classes of 2016, 2017, and 2018 would be able to demonstrate the proficiencies in English Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics required by state statute by either meeting the 'cut score' on the PARCC assessments or meeting the 'cut score' on an substitute assessment or by meeting the criteria of the NJDOE portfolio appeal process. Additionally, a student with a disability, whose IEP team determines that the student is exempted from the requirements above would be required to achieve the alternate proficiency in his/her IEP.

Since that notification, we have been able to develop 'concordant' cut scores for additional substitute assessments that our schools currently utilize. Thus, the table below has been updated. For the classes of 2016, 2017, and 2018, students will be able to demonstrate proficiency in both ELA and math by meeting ONE of the criteria in each column below:





# POLICY

English Language Arts	Mathematics
Passing score on a PARCC ELA Grade 9 or	Passing score on PARCC Algebra I or
Passing score on a PARCC ELA Grade 10 or	Passing score on PARCC Geometry or
Passing score on a PARCC ELA Grade 11 or	Passing score on PARCC Algebra II or
SAT $\geq$ 400 or	SAT $\geq$ 400 or
ACT $\geq$ 16 or	ACT $\geq$ 16 or
Accuplacer Write Placer $\geq$ 6 or	Accuplacer Elementary Algebra $\geq$ 76 or
PSAT $\geq$ 40 or	PSAT $\geq$ 40 or
ACT Aspire $\geq$ 422 or	ACT Aspire $\geq$ 422 or
ASVAB-AFQT $\geq$ 31 or	ASVAB-AFQT $\geq$ 31 or
Meet the Criteria of the NJDOE Portfolio Appeal	Meet the Criteria of the NJDOE Portfolio Appeal

1. The district will provide pupils who have not demonstrated proficiency on one or more sections of the HSPA following the 11<sup>th</sup> grade, or applicable Competency Assessments, with the opportunity to demonstrate such competence through both repeated administrations of the HSPA and the AHSA process conducted in accordance with rules of the State Board of Education.
  - a. The Principal shall submit the results of the AHSA process to the Executive County Superintendent of Schools by March 31 of each year, or as otherwise determined by the Commissioner of Education, for approval for graduation in June of the same year. Such results shall include information, as prescribed by the Commissioner, pertaining to pupils successfully completing the AHSA process, and to those who fail to complete the AHSA process successfully.
  - b. The Executive County Superintendent, as the Commissioner's designee, shall review the results of each pupil's AHSA and recommend to the Commissioner either approval or disapproval for graduation.
  - c. All English Language Learners (ELLs) shall satisfy the school district's requirements for high school graduation, except that any ELLs may demonstrate that they have attained State minimum levels of proficiency through:



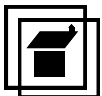
- (1) Passage of the AHSA process in their native language, when available, and passage of an English fluency assessment approved by the Department of Education; or
  - (2) Passage of the AHSA process in English with appropriate accommodations.
- d. Pupils with disabilities as defined in N.J.A.C. 6A:14-1.3 or eligible under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and who participate in the AHSA process are not required to participate in repeated administrations of the HSPA.

D. Attendance

Regular attendance is required for the successful completion of a course of study and graduation. Pupils are expected to be present in every scheduled class except as their attendance is excused in accordance with Board Policy 5200.

E. Pupils with Disabilities

1. The district, through the IEP process and pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A:14-4.11 - Graduation, may, for individual pupils with disabilities as defined in N.J.A.C. 6A:14-1.3, specify alternate requirements for a State-endorsed diploma.
2. The district shall specifically address any alternate requirements for graduation in a pupil's IEP, in accordance with N.J.A.C. 6A:14-4.11.
3. The district shall develop and implement procedures for assessing whether a pupil has met any alternate requirements for graduation individually determined in an IEP.
4. Pupils with disabilities who meet the standards for graduation according to the school district's graduation requirements shall have the opportunity to participate in graduation exercises and related activities on a nondiscriminatory basis.
5. A pupil with a disability whose individualized education program prescribes continued special education programs beyond the fourth year of high school shall be permitted to participate in commencement ceremonies with his/her graduating



class and shall receive a certificate of attendance, provided the pupil has attended four years of high school.

6. When a pupil with a disability graduates or exceeds the age of eligibility, the pupil shall be provided a written summary of his or her academic achievement and functional performance prior to the date of the pupil's graduation or the conclusion of the school year in which he or she exceeds the age of eligibility. The summary shall include recommendations to assist the child in meeting his or her postsecondary goals.

## F. High School Diploma

1. The Board of Education shall award a State-endorsed high school diploma to prospective graduates who have met all of the requirements adopted in accordance with State and local requirements.
2. The Board of Education shall not issue a high school diploma to any pupil not meeting the criteria specified in State and local requirements.
3. The Commissioner of Education shall award a State-issued high school diploma in accordance with the provisions of N.J.A.C. 6A:8-5.2(c) and (d).
4. The Board of Education shall award a State-endorsed high school diploma to any currently enrolled pupil formally requesting an early award of the diploma in accordance with the provisions of N.J.A.C. 6A:8-5.2(e) and Board Policy 5465.

## G. Notification

Each pupil who enters into the high school and the pupil's parent(s) or legal guardian(s) will be provided a copy of the school district's requirements for a State-endorsed diploma, and those programs available to assist pupils in attaining the State-endorsed diploma.

## H. Reporting

The Superintendent, in accordance with N.J.S.A. 18A:7C-7 and 18A:7E-3, shall report annually at a public meeting not later than September 30, to the Board of Education and the Commissioner:

1. The total number of pupils graduated;



2. The number of pupils graduated under the AHSA process;
  3. The number of pupils receiving State-endorsed high school diplomas as a result of meeting any alternative requirements for graduation as specified in their IEPs;
  4. The total number of pupils denied graduation from the 12<sup>th</sup> grade class; and
  5. The total number of pupils denied graduation from the 12<sup>th</sup> grade class solely because of failure to pass the HSPA or AHSA, based on the provisions of N.J.A.C. 6A:8-5.1(a)3.
- I. The Superintendent shall provide the district's graduation requirements each year they are evaluated through the Quality Single Accountability Continuum (QSAC) to the Executive County Superintendent and update this filed copy each time the graduation policy and requirements are revised.
- J. Commencement Activities and Graduation Procedures and Ceremonies Commencement Activities.

The Board endorses graduation activities and ceremonies. The date of graduation shall annually be recommended by the Superintendent and approved by the board.

Graduation shall not occur prior to completion of the required one-hundred-eighty day instruction.

#### Guidelines for Graduation Year Activities

Pupil participation in special graduation year activities will require conduct of the highest caliber in all school situations.

Criteria for exclusion from these activities concern consistent behavioral patterns and shall include, but not be limited to:

1. Consistent involvement in disciplinary actions;
2. Suspension; and
3. Collaborative evaluation by the staff.



4. The final decision shall be made by the Superintendent.
5. Pupils and parent(s) or legal guardian(s) shall be given advance notification of these criteria.

## Graduation Procedures and Ceremonies

No pupil shall be barred from participation in graduation ceremonies for arbitrary or discriminatory reasons. No pupil shall participate in commencement exercises unless he/she has completed all district requirements for graduation.

The Board reserves the right to deny participation when extreme circumstances warrant it. Such denial shall be treated in the same manner as a suspension and the pupil so affected shall be afforded the rights of review provided in policies of this Board.

The Board reserves the right to withhold a diploma and transcripts until all fines are paid.

The President of the Board of Education and/or another designated member of the Board shall award the diplomas. Board members and former Board members shall be afforded the opportunity to award diplomas to their own children.

N.J.S.A. 18A:7C-1 et seq.; 18A:35-1; 18A:35-4.9; 18A:35-7;  
18A:36-17

N.J.A.C. 6A:8-1 et seq.; 6A:8-5.1; 6A:8-5.2; 6A:14-4.11 et seq.

Cross reference: Policy Guide Nos. 5200, 5240, 5410, 5465

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