

**POLICY SECTIONS**

1. Graduation Requirements
2. Graduation with Honors, State Honors, and State Distinction
3. Plan of Study
4. Work-Based Learning Framework
5. Assessment
6. Credit Recovery

**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

- 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 (1) earn the prescribed twenty-two (22) credit minimum, (2) complete the ACT or SAT, and (3) have a satisfactory record of attendance and discipline.

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-two (22)-credit minimum. 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 plan (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 year of high school to students with disabilities who have (1) not met the requirements for a high school diploma, (2) have satisfactorily completed an IEP, and (3) have satisfactory records of attendance and conduct. Students who obtain the special education diploma may continue to work towards the high school diploma through the end of the school year in which they turn twenty-two (22) years old.

- d. An occupational diploma may be awarded to students with disabilities at the end of their fourth year of high school who have (1) not met the requirements for a high school diploma, (2) have satisfactorily completed an individualized education program, (3) have satisfactory records of attendance and conduct, (4) have completed the occupational diploma Skills, Knowledge, and Experience Mastery Assessment (SKEMA) created by the Tennessee Department of Education, and (5) 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 (10<sup>th</sup>) grade year or two (2) academic years prior to the expected graduation date. Students who obtain the occupational diploma may continue to work towards the high school diploma through the end of the school year in which they turn twenty-two (22) years old.
- e. A public high 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 meets the requirements of T.C.A. § 49-6-8303.
- f. Students must complete four (4) credits of English, including English I, English II, English III, and English IV.
- g. 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 (9<sup>th</sup>) 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 (12<sup>th</sup>) 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.

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.

- h. Students must complete three (3) credits of Science. Students must complete Biology, Chemistry or Physics, and a third 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.
- i. 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.
- j. 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.
- k. 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 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.

- l. 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.
- m. 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.
- n. 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.
- o. 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.

- p. 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.

## **2. GRADUATION WITH HONORS, STATE HONORS, AND STATE DISTINCTION**

A variety of honors and distinctions may be awarded to graduating students meeting state or locally specified criteria.

Policy Implications:

- a. School systems may design student recognition programs that allow students to graduate with honors if they have met the graduation requirements and have obtained an overall grade point average of at least a 3.0 or higher on a 4.0 scale. School systems may set a higher GPA at their discretion. School systems may specify additional requirements, such as requiring students to demonstrate performance of distinction in one (1) or more areas.
- b. Students who score at or above all the subject area readiness benchmarks on the ACT or equivalent score on the SAT will graduate with state honors.

Each local school board shall develop a policy prescribing how students graduating with "state honors" will be noted and recognized.

- c. Students will be recognized as graduating with "state distinction" by attaining a B or better average and completing one of the following:
- i. Earn a national and/or state recognized industry certification
  - ii. Participate in at least one (1) of the Governor's Schools
  - iii. Participate in one (1) of the state's ALL State musical organizations
  - iv. Be selected as a National Merit Finalist or Semi-Finalist
  - v. Attain a score of thirty one (31) or higher composite score on the ACT or SAT equivalent
  - vi. Attain a score of three (3) or higher on at least two advanced placement exams
  - vii. Successfully complete the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme
  - viii. Earn twelve (12) or more semester hours of transcribed postsecondary credit

Each local school board shall develop a policy prescribing how students graduating with "state distinction" will be noted and recognized.

- d. Students that voluntarily complete at least ten (10) hours of community service each semester the student is in attendance at a public high school shall be recognized at their graduation ceremony. Each local board shall develop a policy prescribing how these students will be noted and recognized.

### **3. PLAN OF STUDY**

Prior to the ninth (9<sup>th</sup>) grade or age fourteen (14), all students will develop an initial four-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.

Policy Implications:

- a. When the student is in the eighth (8<sup>th</sup>) grade, the student, parent/guardian(s), and school counselor or faculty advisor will jointly prepare an initial four (4) year plan of focused, purposeful high school study.
- b. By the end of tenth (10<sup>th</sup>) grade, the student, parent/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. An integral aspect of the planning process is the assumption that the student will be involved in some form of postsecondary education/training. The plan should contain information about career options and long-term goals supported by the plan through the courses to be taken in the eleventh (11<sup>th</sup>) and twelfth (12<sup>th</sup>) grades as well as courses to be taken at the postsecondary level.
- c. The plan of study will 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.
- d. High school and middle grades faculty will collaborate in planning curriculum and the transition between middle grades and high school.
- e. For students with an IEP, the four (4) 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 their 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.

#### 4. WORK-BASED LEARNING FRAMEWORK

Students will have access to a system of structured work-based learning (WBL) experiences that allows them to apply classroom theories to practical problems and to explore career options. The following Work-Based Learning Framework will govern all WBL experiences. The Tennessee Department of Education will provide school systems with a Work-Based Learning Policy Guide and Work-Based Learning Implementation Guide consistent with this framework to address training requirements, program expectations, and legal requirements.

Policy Implications:

- a. **Structure of the Program.** Structured WBL experiences may be paid or unpaid, may occur in public, private, or non-profit organizations, or on-site at the school; they may occur during or outside of school hours and may result in the attainment of academic credit when WBL course standards are met. In all instances, all federal and state labor laws shall be observed.
- b. **Coordination of the Program.** A Work-Based Learning Coordinator, in conjunction with a team of supervising teachers as outlined by the Work-Based Learning Policy Guide and the Work-Based Learning Implementation Guide, will be responsible for (1) the recruitment of appropriate work sites, (2) coordination of ongoing communications with workplace mentors, (3) facilitation of instruction that meets the WBL Framework requirements and WBL course standards where applicable, and (4) all required documentation related to student work, safety training, and job placements as outlined by the Work-Based Learning Policy Guide and the Work-Based Implementation Guide.
- c. **Supervision of Students.** A designated workplace mentor will supervise each student. Regular monitoring will be provided by a dedicated supervising teacher or the WBL Coordinator to ensure WBL Framework requirements are met as outlined in the Work-Based Learning Policy Guide and the Work-Based Learning Implementation Guide.
- d. **Development of Personalized Learning Plans.** A personalized learning plan will be created for each student and will address applicable employability skills, including, but not limited to, (1) the application of academic and technical knowledge and skills, (2) career knowledge and navigation skills, (3) 21<sup>st</sup> Century learning and innovation skills, and (4) personal and social skills. The personalized learning plan will also include safety trainings appropriate to the WBL experience as covered by the supervising teacher, the workplace mentor, or both, and as outlined in the Work-Based Learning Policy Guide and the Work-Based Learning Implementation Guide.
- e. **Student Assessment Using Multiple Measures.** Students must exhibit work readiness, knowledge, attitudes, and skills as determined by the supervising teacher and workplace mentor and consistent with the Work-Based Learning Policy Guide and the Work-Based

Learning Implementation Guide before beginning a WBL experience. During the experience, students will practice the employability skills identified in their personalized learning plan. Students will demonstrate their knowledge and skill attainment through the development of artifacts and/or portfolios that may include, but are not limited to: work products, evaluations, original research, reflections, and presentations as outlined in the Work-Based Learning Policy Guide and Work-Based Learning Implementation Guide.

- f. **Evaluation of Program Quality.** Local boards of education will adopt a process for evaluation and assessment to ensure WBL experiences are of high quality for the student. Recommended evaluation tools are provided in the Work-Based Learning Implementation Guide.

## 5. ASSESSMENT

The assessment program is consistent with legislative intent as specified in the accountability provisions of the state *Education Improvement Act* (1992) and the federal *Every Student Succeeds Act* (2015). The assessment program focuses on enabling all students to succeed in challenging coursework by beginning with use of results of the seventh (7<sup>th</sup>) and eighth (8<sup>th</sup>) grade Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program (TCAP) for diagnostic purposes to determine the appropriate educational experience for entering ninth (9<sup>th</sup>) grade students. School systems will determine the appropriate array of programs; schools will incorporate strategies into their school improvement process. The focus must be on providing high quality instruction, sometimes over extended periods of time, so that all students can be successful. Schools will also use examinations administered in high school for diagnostic purposes.

Policy Implications:

- a. **Rationale for Assessment.** The purposes to be served and the rationale for testing include the following:
  - i. **Improvement of Student Learning in Major Content Areas.** The examinations will align with the state standards and will include both content knowledge and critical thinking skills.
  - ii. **Preparation for Further Learning.** Examinations occurring early in the student's high school program of study will help prepare them for success in subjects taken later.
  - iii. **Diagnostic Information.** The examinations will help students to improve their performance and help prepare them for the ACT, SAT, and successful entry into postsecondary educational programs.
  - iv. **School and Program Improvement.** The examinations will provide data that can be used to improve the effectiveness of the instructional delivery system at the school and the school system.
  - v. **Accountability.** The examinations will provide for teacher, school, and school system accountability. To provide for school and school system accountability, the proposed program provides for examinations in four areas: English language arts, mathematics,

science, and social studies. These academic areas are important for the successful transition to work and postsecondary study. Students will take the examinations in the year they complete the relevant content standards and course work or at the earliest available test administration.

- b. **End of Course Examinations.** End of Course examinations will be administered in the following subjects: English I, English II, English III, Algebra I, Geometry, Algebra II, Integrated Math I, Integrated Math II, Integrated Math III, U.S. History, Biology I, and Chemistry.
- i. The state will report scores for schools and school systems for academic achievement and academic gain.
  - ii. Students will take the examinations in the semester they complete the relevant course work or at the earliest available test administration. Only students who are enrolled in a course with an associated End of Course examination shall take the End of Course examination. Students enrolled in a substituting course without an End of Course examination explicitly tied to the State Board of Education approved content standards of that course shall not take an End of Course examination. This exemption applies to all substituting courses, including, but not limited to Advanced Placement, Cambridge AICE, International Baccalaureate, local and statewide dual enrollment, and local and statewide dual credit courses.
  - iii. Students enrolled in a course with an associated End of Course examination must take the examination to receive credit for the course.
  - iv. Students will not be required to pass any one (1) examination, but instead students must achieve a passing score for the course in accordance with the State Board of Education's Uniform Grading Policy.
  - v. Results of individual student performance from all administered end-of-course examinations will be provided in a timely fashion to facilitate the inclusion of these results as part of the student's grade. If an LEA does not receive its students' End of Course examination scores at least five (5) instructional days before the scheduled end of the course, then the LEA may choose not to include its students' End of Course examination scores in the students' second semester average. The weight of the End of Course examination on the student's second semester average is twenty-five percent (25%).
- c. **11<sup>th</sup> Grade Assessment.** As a strategy for assessing student readiness for postsecondary education, every student enrolled in a Tennessee public school during their eleventh (11<sup>th</sup>) grade year shall take either the ACT or SAT. To receive a regular high school diploma, all students enrolled in a Tennessee public school during their eleventh (11<sup>th</sup>) grade year must take either the ACT or SAT.

- d. **United States Civics Test.** Beginning January 1, 2017, all high school students shall be given a United States civics test.
- i. The LEA shall prepare the civics test. The test shall be comprised of at least twenty-five (25) questions and no more than fifty (50) questions. Questions shall be selected from the one hundred (100) questions that are set forth within the civics test administered by the United States citizenship and immigration services to persons seeking to become naturalized citizens. The LEA may prepare multiple versions of the test for use in different schools and at different times.
  - ii. A student shall pass the test if the student correctly answers at least seventy percent (70%) of the questions. The LEA may provide students with the opportunity to take the test as many times as necessary.
  - iii. A student who has an individualized education program (IEP) under which the civics test is determined to be an inappropriate requirement for the student shall not be required to take the civics test.
  - iv. A school all of whose seniors receiving a regular diploma, make a passing grade on the United States civics test shall be recognized on the Tennessee Department of Education's web site as a United States civics all-star school for that school year. A passing grade is not a condition of receiving a regular diploma.
- e. **Project-based Civics Assessment.** All LEAs shall implement a project-based assessment in civics at least once in grades nine through twelve (9-12).
- i. The project-based assessment must be developed by the LEA and must measure the civics learning objectives contained in the social studies standards and allow students to demonstrate understanding and relevance of public policy, the structure of federal, state and local governments and both the Tennessee and the United State constitutions.
  - ii. "Project-based" means an approach that engages students in learning essential knowledge and skills through a student-influenced inquiry process structured around complex authentic questions and carefully designed products and tasks.
  - iii. LEAs must submit verification of implementation of the project-based assessment to the department of education.
- f. **Adult Students.** Adult students from high school graduating classes 1988-2012, who have not received a diploma, but have met all graduation requirements with the exception of the requirement for a diploma assessment, have two options to complete the requirements for a diploma:
- i. Adult students may choose to take the Gateway assessment. If these students achieve a passing score on the relevant Gateway assessment, they may receive a diploma.

- ii. If an adult student does not wish to take the diploma assessment, or if they require additional courses to complete the course work for graduation, they may enroll in an adult high school. Upon enrollment, they will be required to take and pass all courses required under the current diploma guidelines. Students who have enrolled in an adult high school and are meeting current diploma requirements are not required to take an End of Course examination or the Gateway assessment.

## 6. CREDIT RECOVERY

Credit recovery is a course-specific, skill-based extended learning opportunity for students who have previously been unsuccessful in mastering content or skills required to receive course credit or earn promotion. Credit recovery programs, in general, have a primary focus of helping students stay in school and graduate on time.

Local boards of education shall develop credit recovery program rules, regulations, and processes (referred to as “credit recovery policies” throughout). These policies shall be formally adopted by the local board of education, posted to the district’s website, and provided in writing to any participating students, parents, or legal guardians. At a minimum, credit recovery policies must address the following standards for admission and removal, instruction, content and curriculum, and grades.

Policy Implications:

- a. **Admission and Removal.** Local board of education credit recovery policies for admission to and removal from credit recovery programs may include but not be limited to attendance, discipline, availability of coursework, availability of space, appropriate progress, and grades.
  - i. No LEA shall admit or otherwise enroll students in credit recovery courses unless all of the following are true:
    - 1. The student’s parent or legal guardian gives written consent for the student to enroll in the proposed credit recovery course. Parents/guardians should be informed that not all postsecondary institutions will accept credit recovery courses for credit and that the NCAA Clearinghouse will not accept credit recovery courses for credit.
    - 2. The student has previously taken an initial, non-credit recovery section of the proposed course and received a grade of not less than fifty percent (50%). Students who receive a grade of below fifty percent (50%) in the non-credit recovery section of the course must re-take the course.
  - ii. If a student is seeking to recover credit for the first semester of a two-semester course, the student may not receive the full credit for the course until they have enrolled in and passed the second semester of the course and taken any applicable End of Course examinations.

- iii. Local boards of education shall track and designated students enrolled in credit recovery courses as directed by the Tennessee Department of Education.
- b. **Instruction**
- i. Credit recovery teachers of record must be endorsed and certified in any content area(s) for which they teach or otherwise facilitate credit recovery courses.
  - ii. Credit recovery teachers of record must work closely with credit recovery facilitators on class content and instruction.
  - iii. Local boards of education shall ensure that credit recovery facilitators receive training pertaining to the credit recovery course organization, online instruction management, and related technology.
  - iv. LEAs shall ensure that all credit recovery courses:
    - 1. Align with Tennessee’s current academic standards for the relevant course content area, as approved by the State Board of Education.
    - 2. Are able to differentiate instruction to address individual student growth needs based on diagnostic assessment or End of Course data.
  - v. Credit Recovery content may be delivered through instructional technology.
  - vi. Students in Credit Recovery programs:
    - 1. Shall complete a course skill-specific diagnostic to determine skill-specific goals.
    - 2. Shall meet individual skill-specific goals in a flexible time frame as established by identified student need.
    - 3. Shall master all individualized skill-specific goals as established by the diagnostic process in order to earn credit.
- c. **Grades**
- i. Local boards of education shall establish a grading formula for credit recovery courses that includes the original failing grade in the calculation of the final credit recovery grade and denotes that the credit was attained through credit recovery. The original failing grade may be listed on the transcript. Grades awarded in credit recovery courses shall adhere to the State Board of Education’s Uniform Grading Policy.