

TENNESSEE STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

MIDDLE GRADES POLICY

2.102

Middle grades include grades five through eight (5-8) or any combination of grades five through eight (5-8) as determined by the local school board. This policy sets forth the requirements and expectations for students in those grades.

Policy Sections

- I. Coursework Requirements
- II. Plan of Study
- III. Assessment
- IV. Other relevant policies

I. Coursework Requirements

- (1) All students shall have access to a rigorous education that prepares them for high school, postsecondary education, and the workforce. All coursework shall be aligned to the State Board of Education (State Board)-approved Tennessee Academic Standards for that subject and course.
- (2) Students may take coursework, including career and technical education (CTE) courses, for high school credit. 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. If a student attains an industry credential as promoted by the Department of Education while completing the high school course prior to grade nine (9), the industry credential shall be included for student performance, accountability measures, grading, and high school graduation with honors and distinction purposes.
- (3) Each local education agency (LEA) shall inform all students in grades seven through twelve (7-12) of the Juvenile Offender Act compiled in T.C.A. Title 55, Chapter 10, Part 7 in compliance with T.C.A. § 49-6-451.
- (4) Academic Requirements.
 - (a) Each year, all middle grade students shall complete coursework in English, mathematics, science, and social studies.
 - (b) All LEAs shall implement a project-based assessment in civics at least once in grades four through eight (4-8) pursuant to T.C.A § 49-6-1028.
 - 1. “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.

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2. The project-based assessment shall be developed by the LEA, 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 States constitutions.
 3. LEAs shall submit verification of implementation of the project-based assessment to the Department of Education.
- (c) The course of instruction in all public schools for kindergarten through grade eight (K-8) shall include art and music education in pursuant to T.C.A. § 49-6- 1025.
- (d) Pursuant to T.C.A. § 49-6-412 a career interest inventory shall be administered to all students in grade seven (7), grade eight (8), or grade nine (9), the results of which shall be used to inform future course planning decisions and their plan of study.
- (5) High school and middle grades faculty shall collaborate in planning curriculum and the transition between middle grades and high school, especially in relation to coursework expectations and vertical alignment of academic standards.

II. Plan of Study

- (1) At age fourteen (14), or prior to grade nine (9), all students, including students with an Individualized Education Program (IEP) and/or 504 plan, shall develop an initial four (4)-year plan of focused and purposeful high school study. The plan of study 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. Results of various types of assessments will also be used in adjusting the plan of study.
- (2) As part of the of the plan of focused and purposeful high school study, all students shall take a career aptitude assessment during grade seven (7) or grade eight (8) and use the results to inform their plan of study.
- (3) The initial plan of focused and purposeful high school study shall be jointly prepared by the student, parent or guardian, and school counselor or faculty advisor, and the IEP and/or 504 team as appropriate.
- (4) 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);

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- (b) Connect the student’s goals for high school to the courses or training that equip the student with the skills necessary to meet his or her 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 relevant career and technical education (CTE) programs of study, a student’s readiness for specific early post-secondary courses (EPSOs), industry credentials, and 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.

III. Assessment

- (1) The Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program (TCAP) assessment shall be administered annually in the following subjects: English language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies.
- (2) Students shall complete the TCAP assessment during the school year in which they complete the relevant course work.
- (3) Students with disabilities shall be provided appropriate accommodations in accordance with state and federal law and as determined by the IEP team or 504 team. English Learner proficiency level shall also be considered when determining if accommodations are needed. Needed accommodations and supports shall be reviewed at least annually.
- (4) The IEP team shall determine if a student with a disability shall participate in the general assessment with or without accommodations or in the alternate assessment. To participate in an alternate assessment, the IEP team shall determine that alternate assessment is more appropriate than the general assessment and that the student meets all three of the following eligibility requirements:
 - (a) the student has a significant cognitive disability and adaptive skills that result in performance that is substantially below grade-level achievement expectations even with the use of accommodations and modifications;
 - (b) The student is learning content linked to and derived from the Tennessee Academic Standards; and

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- (c) The student requires substantial modifications, adaptations, or supports to meaningfully access the subject area content and requires intensive individualized instruction in order to acquire and generalize knowledge.

- (5) The IEP team shall rule out that the inability to achieve the state grade-level achievement expectations is the result of excessive or extended absences or social, cultural, or economic differences. Participation in the alternate assessment shall be determined at least annually. A student who meets the eligibility criteria and whose IEP team determines participation in the alternate assessment is appropriate shall be assessed in all four content areas: ELA, Math, science, and social studies.

- (6) Results of individual student performance from all administered TCAP examinations shall 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 student TCAP examination scores at least five (5) instructional days before the scheduled end of the course, then the LEA may choose not to include student TCAP examination scores in the students' final course grades. The weight of the TCAP examination on the student's final average shall be determined by the local board of education within a range of zero percent (0%) to no more than twenty five percent (25%) for grades three through five (3-5), and within a range of no less than ten percent (10%) and no more than twenty- five percent (25%) for grades six through eight (6-8) in the 2018-2019 school year and thereafter.

- (7) Pursuant to T.C.A. § 49-6-6007, all LEAs shall annually include in each school's student handbook or other policy guidebook, and post to the district website, a local assessment policy. The assessment policy shall be posted to the district website by July 31 of each year and shall include, at a minimum, the following information:
 - (a) The names of all state- and locally-required assessments that shall be administered in the upcoming school year;
 - (b) The purpose and use of each assessment;
 - (c) Information on how each locally required assessment complements and enhances student instruction and learning and how each local assessment serves a purpose distinct from required state assessments;
 - (d) The grade or class for which the assessment is to be administered;
 - (e) The tentative date or dates on which the assessment shall be administered;
 - (f) The local policy on the inclusion of TCAP scores into a student's grade, including the percentage that TCAP scores shall be weighted for each grade level, the methodology by which the grades shall be calculated for inclusion in student grades, and the policy on excluding TCAP scores if they are not received at least five (5) instructional days before the end of the course;

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- (g) The anticipated timeframe when parents and students shall receive results from the assessment; and
- (h) Information on how parents can access the items on the student's state- required summative standardized assessments and the student's answers.