

**Instruction****HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS**

The Board of Trustees desires that all students successfully complete the high school course of study, and obtain a diploma that represents their educational achievement and increases their opportunities for postsecondary education and employment.

District students shall complete graduation course requirements as specified in Education Code 51225.3. Unless exempted as provided in this policy, under "Exemptions from District-Adopted Graduation Requirements," District students shall also complete other course requirements adopted by the Board. Students who are exempted from District-adopted graduation requirements shall be eligible to participate in any graduation ceremony and school activity related to graduation in which other students are eligible to participate.

*A student who wishes to take a course from an entity other than the District, for credit to be applied to a District transcript, must obtain prior approval. (See "Granting High School Graduation Credit Earned Through Institutions Avenues Outside of the District," later in this policy.)*

**Course Requirements**

To obtain a high school diploma, students shall complete the following courses in grades 9-12, with each course being one year unless otherwise specified:

1. Four courses in English (Education Code 51225.3)
2. Three courses in mathematics (Education Code 51225.3)

Students shall complete at least one mathematics course that meets the state academic content standards for Algebra I or Mathematics I. Students may complete such coursework prior to grade 9 provided that they also complete three mathematics courses in grades 9-12. (Education Code 51224.5)

- a. Students who completed Algebra I or Mathematics I prior to grade 9 may satisfy one of the two required grade 9-12 mathematics courses by successfully completing an approved Computer Science course that is classified as a "category C" course based on the University of California (UC) and California State University (CSU) "A-G" admission requirements. (Education Code 51225.3, 51225.35)
3. Two courses in science, including biological and physical sciences (Education Code 51225.3)
4. Three courses in social studies, including United States History and Geography; World History, Culture, and Geography; a one-semester course in American Government and Civics; and a one-semester course in Economics (Education Code 51225.3)
5. One course in visual or performing arts, world language, or career technical education (CTE). For purposes of this requirement, a course in American Sign Language shall be deemed a course in world language. (Education Code 51225.3)

**Instruction****HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS**

To be counted towards meeting graduation requirements, a CTE course shall be aligned to the CTE model curriculum standards and framework adopted by the State Board of Education.

6. Two courses in physical education, unless the student has been otherwise exempted pursuant to other sections of the Education Code (Education Code 51225.3)

7. A one-semester course in health

Students may fulfill health course requirements during the regular school year by taking the course in person on a District high school campus, or through the District online program either before school, during tutorial, during lunch, or after school (options vary by site).

Students will be provided multiple flexible options to complete the graduation requirements for health courses. This flexibility includes the ability to take courses over the summer through District Summer School, OCDE Summer School programs, or any other accredited institution. This option is open to all students, not just those with “impacted schedules.” However, students with impacted schedules may be given priority enrollment in District summer school classes due to space limitations. A student who wishes to take a course from an entity other than the District, for credit to be applied to a District transcript, must obtain prior approval.

8. Elective courses are as follows:
  - a. Thirteen (13) semesters of coursework (all high schools except Capistrano Union High School)
  - b. Seven (7) semesters of coursework at Capistrano Union High School
9. For students graduating in the 2029-2030 school year and thereafter, a one-semester course in ethnic studies (Education Code 51225.3)

**Exemptions from District-Adopted Graduation Requirements**

**Because the prescribed course of study may not accommodate the needs of some students, the Board shall provide alternative means for the completion of prescribed courses in accordance with law.**

Prior to the beginning of grade 10, the Individualized Education Program (IEP) team for each student with disabilities shall determine whether the student is eligible for exemption from all coursework and other requirements adopted by the Board, in addition to the statewide course requirements for high school graduation; and if so, shall notify the student's parent/guardian of the exemption. A student with disabilities shall be eligible for the exemption if the student's IEP provides for both of the following requirements: (Education Code 51225.31)

**Instruction****HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS**

1. That the student take the alternate assessment aligned to alternate achievement standards in grade 11, as described in Education Code 60640
2. That the student complete state standards-aligned coursework to meet the statewide coursework specified in Education Code 51225.3

In addition, a foster youth, student experiencing homelessness, former juvenile court school student, child of a military family, or migrant student who transfers into the District or between District schools any time after completing the second year of high school, or a newly arrived immigrant student who is in the third or fourth year of high school, shall be exempted from any graduation requirements adopted by the Board that are in addition to statewide course requirements. This exemption shall not apply if the Superintendent or designee finds that the student is reasonably able to complete the additional requirements in time to graduate by the end of the fourth year of high school.

Additionally, students with IEPs placed by the District in a Non-Public School (NPS) or Residential Treatment Center (RTC) shall be exempted from any graduation requirements adopted by the Board that are in addition to statewide course requirements.

Within 30 days of the transfer into a school by a foster youth, a student experiencing homelessness, a former juvenile court school student, a child of a military family, a migrant student, or a newly arrived immigrant student, or of the commencement of participation in a newcomer program, as applicable, the Superintendent or designee shall notify any eligible student, and others as required by law, of the availability of the exemption from local graduation requirements and whether the student qualifies for the exemption. (Education Code 51225.1)

The Superintendent or designee shall not require or request a foster youth, student experiencing homelessness, former juvenile court school student, child of a military family, migrant student, or a newly arrived immigrant student who is exempted from District-established graduation requirements and who completes the statewide coursework requirements before the end of the fourth year of high school, and would otherwise be entitled to remain in school, to graduate before the end of the student's fourth year of high school. (Education Code 51225.1)

If a foster youth, a student experiencing homelessness, a former juvenile court school student, a child of a military family, a migrant student, or a newly arrived immigrant student was not properly notified of an exemption, declined the exemption, or was not previously exempted, the student or the person holding the right to make educational decisions for the student may request the exemption and the Superintendent or designee shall exempt the student within 30 days of the request. Any such student who at one time qualified for the exemption may request the exemption even if the student is no longer eligible. (Education Code 51225.1)

**Instruction****HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS**

Annually, the Superintendent or designee shall report to the California Department of Education, in accordance with Education Code 51225.1, the number of students graduating from the fourth or fifth year of high school who, for the prior school year, graduated with an exemption from District-established graduation requirements that are in addition to statewide coursework requirements.

**Concurrent Enrollment in California Preparatory Academy**

In an effort to provide students with maximum flexibility, high school students may enroll in single courses offered through the District's California Preparatory Academy if space is available.

Each year, the high school staff will work collaboratively with the California Preparatory Academy staff to create the potential single course offerings based on student needs and course availability.

**Physical Education Credit**

The Superintendent or designee may grant physical education credit for independent study programs. Specifically, only individual sports with national competitive rankings or competitive team sports that meet the criteria and are not offered within the District are eligible for consideration under this provision. The Superintendent or designee shall establish regulations governing independent study physical education requirements. Students participating in independent physical education may enroll in a maximum of 4 semesters or until the student has met the physical education graduation requirement.

The Superintendent or designee may grant physical education credit for participation in District interscholastic athletic programs when a student has been exempted from physical education classes because of this participation, and when such participation entails a comparable amount of time and physical activity.

Students using interscholastic athletics participation to fulfill physical education requirements may be graded on this participation, provided that a teacher credentialed to teach physical education supervises this participation and assigns the grade.

**Retroactive Diplomas**

Any student who completed grade 12 in the 2003-2004 through 2014-2015 school years and met all applicable graduation requirements, other than the passage of the high school exit examination, shall be granted a high school diploma. (Education Code 51413)

In addition, the District may retroactively grant high school diplomas to former students who: (Education Code 48204.4, 51430, 51440)

**Instruction**

**HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS**

1. Were interned by order of the federal government during World War II or are honorably discharged veterans of World War II, the Korean War, or the Vietnam War, provided that they were enrolled in a District high school immediately preceding the internment or military service and did not receive a diploma because their education was interrupted due to the internment or military service in those wars
2. Are deceased former students may be granted a retroactive diploma issued at the time the student would have been expected to graduate to be received by their next of kin upon request
3. Are veterans who entered the military service of the United States while in grade 12 and who had satisfactorily completed the first half of the work required for grade 12 in a District school
4. Were in their senior year of high school during the 2019-2020 school year, were in good academic standing and on track to graduate at the end of the 2019-2020 school year as of March 1, 2020, and were unable to complete the statewide graduation requirements as a result of the COVID-19 crisis.

**Honorary Diplomas**

The Board may grant an honorary high school diploma to: (Education Code 51225.5)

1. An international exchange student who has not completed the course of study ordinarily required for graduation and who is returning to the student's home country following the completion of one academic school year in the district
2. A student who is terminally ill

The honorary diploma shall be clearly distinguishable from the regular diploma of graduation awarded by the District. (Education Code 51225.5)

**Transfers**

To participate in a graduation ceremony and receive a diploma from a District comprehensive high school, a student must have completed the majority of their coursework for their final semester at a District high school and must have successfully completed 25 District credits, or receive approval from the Superintendent or designee.

**Instruction****HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS****Granting High School Graduation Credit Earned Through Institutions Outside of the District**

The Superintendent or designee shall establish regulations under which the District may grant credits toward graduation for college courses and private instruction attended by District students. Credits earned through outside institutions may only count toward elective graduation requirements.

## 1. Instruction from Accredited Non-District Institutions

Credit toward high school graduation for instruction from accredited non-District institutions may be granted, provided that:

- a. Credit toward graduation for courses taken at a different accredited institution, while the student is enrolled in District schools in Grades 9-12, may not exceed 20 credits annually and 40 credits in total.
- b. Parent/guardian applies in writing for the credit prior to enrolling in the outside course. Graduation requirements other than electives must be taken through the District.
- c. The number of credits sought equals at least one semester's work.
- d. Credits are from an institution that has current accreditation status from an accrediting agency such as the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) or a similar organization recognized on the University of California Doorways site as a recognized accreditation agency.

## 2. College Courses

A student may complete a portion of their high school education by attending an accredited college. Graduation requirements, with the exception of electives, may not be taken under this program.

- a. The District maintains a cooperative agreement with South Orange County Community College District (SOCCCD), known as the Concurrent College Studies Program. Under the auspices of the program, a student may enroll in one SOCCCD course per semester. Courses under this program receive high school credit as well as college credit. District graduation requirements other than electives must be taken through the District.
- b. College courses will be equated to high school credits on the following basis: each semester unit of college credit is equal to three and one-third high school credits.
- c. The student receives the same letter grade for the high school credit as is granted by the college. No additional grade point will be added if a student earns an "A" or "B" grade.

**Instruction**

**HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS**

3. High School Equivalency Tests (GED/HiSET)

The Board desires that every student have the opportunity to earn a high school diploma through successful completion of class work and Board-approved competency tests.

Per Education Code 51420, California has approved the use of two high school equivalency tests (GED and HiSET) for students 18 years old and older, and 17 years old in some instances, for the purpose of receiving a California High School Equivalency Certificate.

**Graduation Ceremonies**

The Board does not permit nor recognize any graduation ceremony for District students other than the ceremonies attached to graduation from high school (Grade 12).

1. Students may participate in the graduation ceremony if:
  - a. They qualify for a diploma by meeting all applicable graduation requirements, or
  - b. They qualify for a Certificate of Achievement by meeting all applicable graduation requirements.

Policy

adopted: February 8, 1999

revised: November 8, 2023

revised: August 21, 2024