



Connecticut High School Graduation Requirements Unpacked

Brief 3: Flexible and Multiple Pathways

New Graduation Requirements: “(c) Commencing with classes graduating in 2023, and for each graduating class thereafter, no local or regional board of education shall permit any student to graduate from high school or grant a diploma to any student who has not satisfactorily completed a minimum of twenty-five credits, including not fewer than: (1) Nine credits in the humanities, including civics and the arts; (2) nine credits in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics; (3) one credit in physical education and wellness; (4) one credit in health and safety education, as described in section 10-16b; (5) one credit in world languages, subject of the provisions of subsection (g) of this section; and (6) a one credit mastery-based diploma assessment.”

“(d) Commencing with classes graduating in 2023, and for each graduating class thereafter, local and regional boards of education shall provide adequate student support and remedial services for students beginning in grade seven.”

“(g) Only courses taken in grades nine to twelve, inclusive, and that are in accordance with the state-wide subject matter content standards, adopted by the State Board of Education pursuant to section 10-4, as amended by this act, shall satisfy the graduation requirements set forth in this section, except that a local or regional board of education may grant a student credit (1) toward meeting the high school graduation requirements upon the successful demonstration of mastery of the subject matter content described in this section achieved through educational experiences and opportunities that provide flexible and multiple pathways to learning, including cross-curricular graduation requirements, career and technical education, virtual learning, work-based learning, service learning, dual enrollment and early college, courses taken in middle school, internships and student-designed independent studies, provided such demonstration of mastery is in accordance with such state-wide subject matter content standards”

“(j) For the school year commencing July 1, 2012, and each school year thereafter, each local and regional board of education shall create a student success plan for each student enrolled in a public school, beginning in grade six. Such student success plan shall include a student’s career and academic choices in grades six to twelve, inclusive.”

— Public Act No.17-42; Sec. 1(c)(d)(g)(j)



This brief explores how the statute's move away from specific course requirements and toward broader content area requirements can provide increased flexibility for students. This flexibility also enables schools and districts to think more expansively about the learning experiences available to students. As we have explored throughout this series, two of the major changes to this statute are around increasing flexibility for course requirements and strengthening the language about demonstrating mastery through multiple pathways. The statute intends to support the demonstration and achievement of learning standards through a variety of learning activities in a range of settings.

This flexibility provides an opportunity for increased student engagement and ownership, creating structures that enable students to pursue their passions in ways that have not always been possible given the specificity of previous graduation requirements. At the same time, the increased flexibility could enable, create, or enhance inequities. While the statute requires that all courses and learning experiences must be aligned to state standards, it does not detail a specific set of courses, learning expectations, or standards that all students must experience in order to graduate. It is the district's responsibility to set the expectations of the core skills and knowledge every student needs in order to graduate, regardless of the pathway they pursue.

While pathways may differ student to student, schools must use their local graduation requirements as the mechanism to ensure that all students graduate with the skills and knowledge they need to lead successful lives. Pathways allow for personalized experiences but districts must simultaneously ensure that all students are held to common graduation expectations. It is those common expectations for all students that enable all pathways to be equitable. Balancing the need for equity and the requirement for more flexibility requires districts and schools to be diligent and strategic about ensuring flexible and varied learning experiences while holding all students to common expectations.

The three samples below depict a wide range of learning experiences and opportunities. All of the courses and learning experiences highlighted below are aligned to state-wide subject matter content standards. The transcripts below show students who pursued learning experiences of interest while simultaneously gaining the foundational set of knowledge and skills in every content area that was required in their local district. These sample transcripts range from fairly traditional learning experiences and course-sequences to unique and student designed pathways, providing food for thought as you think about the opportunities within your own district.

Transcript A

Forest Lake High School
 Student Name: Lola Yvonne

9 th Grade		
English 9	A	1
Algebra I	B+	1
Earth Science	C-	1
Spanish I	D	1
Health	A	1
PE	A	1
World History	B-	1
Band	C	1

10 th Grade		
English 10	A	1
Geometry	B+	1
Biology	C	1
Spanish II	D	1
U.S. History I	C+	1
Band	B	1
Art I	B	1

Learning Experience

Final Grade

Credits

11 th Grade		
English 11	B+	1
Algebra II	B	1
Chemistry	B-	1
U.S. History II	C+	1
Spanish III	C-	1
Band	B+	1
Photography	A	1

12 th Grade		
Senior English	A-	1
AP Psychology	B-	1
Physics	C+	1
MBDA	B+	1
Trigonometry	B	1
Computer Science	C	1

Academic Summary		
Humanities	English 9, English 10, English 11, Senior English, World History, U.S. History I, U.S. History II, Psychology, Art I	9 credits
STEM	Algebra I, Earth Science, Geometry, Algebra II, Chemistry, Biology, Physics, Trigonometry, Computer Science	9 credits
World Languages	Spanish I, Spanish II	3 credits
MBDA	MBDA	1 credit
PE + Health	PE, Health	2 credit
Electives	Band	2 credits
		26 credits

Transcript A shows a student's path through high school meeting the updated graduation requirements through a fairly traditional course sequence. The statute dictates the broad content areas students must take for twenty-two credits, which requires that students (at a minimum) acquire an additional three credits through the content areas of their choosing. This student met the minimum number of twenty-five state-required credits through additional world language classes and band. Her course sequence throughout high school does not indicate any cross-content courses, work-based learning, service learning, or any of the other pathways specifically named in the statute.

Transcript B

Forest Lake High School

Student Name: Dexter Franklin

9 th Grade		
Humanities I	A	2
STEM I	B	2
Academic Support	B+	1
Arabic I	C	1
PE	A-	1
Health	B	1

10 th Grade		
Health I (CTE)	B	1
Humanities II	B+	2
STEM II	B	2
Arabic II	C+	1
Art I	A-	1

Learning Experience

Final Grade

Credits

11 th Grade		
Health II	B+	1
Humanities III	A-	2
Student Designed Writing Course	A-	1
Biology II	B	1
Art II	B+	1

12 th Grade		
Health III-CNA	A	1
Apprenticeship at the hospital	B+	2
MBDA	B	1
AP Biology	B-	1

Academic Summary		
Humanities	Humanities I, Humanities II, Humanities III, Art I, Art II, Student Course	9 credits
STEM	Health I, Health II, Health III (CNA), Apprenticeship, STEM I, STEM II, Biology II, AP Biology	11 credits
World Languages	Arabic I, Arabic II	2 credits
MBDA	MBDA	1 credit
PE + Health	PE, Health	2 credit
Electives	Academic Support	1 credit
		26 credits

Transcript B shows a student who pursued additional credits in STEM, world languages, and an academic support elective. The academic support elective provides credits toward graduation and serves as a support and remedial service for Dexter. In this transcript, we see that the school offered (and the student pursued) cross-curricular courses in humanities and STEM. He acquired credit through a hospital-based apprenticeship and an academic support program. In addition to pursuing a STEM pathway, AP biology, and a hospital-apprenticeship, he also acquired additional credits in Arabic. This school has an academic support program that provides students with interventions, extensions, and credits for that time.

Transcript C

Forest Lake High School
 Student Name: William Washington

9 th Grade		
Humanities I	C	2
Algebra I	B-	1
Earth Science	A	1
Spanish I	A-	1
Art I	A	1

10 th Grade		
Humanities II	C	2
STEM I	A-	2
STEM Support/Lab	A	1
PE	A	1
Health	A-	1
Spanish II	B+	1

Learning Experience

Final Grade

Credits

11 th Grade		
Humanities III	C	2
STEM II	B	2
Internship at hospital	B+	1
AP Biology	B+	1

12 th Grade		
MBDA	A	1
Student-Designed Exchange to Spain	B	5
College Spanish 101	B+	1
Online Cartography	B	1

Academic Summary		
Humanities	Humanities I, Humanities II, Humanities III, Art I, Spain,	9 credits
STEM	Algebra I, Earth Science, STEM II, STEM I Lab, STEM II, Internship, AP Biology,	9 credits
World Languages	Spanish I, Spanish II, Spain, College Spanish 101	6 credits
MBDA	MBDA	1 credit
PE + Health	PE, Health	2 credit
Electives	Online Cartography	1 credit
		28 credits

Transcript C shows the path through high school of a student who exceeded the state credit requirements. This student focused deeply on studying Spanish and designed a unique and self-directed course of study. William enrolled in cross-curricular humanities and STEM courses, designed an exchange to Spain, and enrolled in both college-level and online courses. He had both the flexibility and support to follow his passion, while the graduation requirements provided guardrails to ensure he acquired a foundational set of skills and knowledge in all content areas.

As you begin implementing the updated graduation requirements, you will want to focus on ways of increasing flexibility within the structures and programs that already exist within your schools. At the same time, you will want to examine course-taking patterns and pathways data, considering how you can remove barriers to access and create opportunities for all students to engage in rigorous deeper learning experiences driven by their own interests and aspirations. The current iteration of the statute retains the requirement that all students (beginning in grade six) maintain [student success plans](#), but allows students more flexibility to create new learning experiences and for schools to design integrated experiences that can guide student learning. Throughout the process of examining your pathway options and as you work collaboratively to expand learning opportunities for students, use the questions below to both prompt and push your thinking.

Design Questions for Consideration

1. What are the opportunities within your schools and district for students to personalize their learning experiences?
2. How do the pathways in your high school(s) promote rigorous and complex learning that result in equitable outcomes?
3. How are you ensuring that all the pathways and learning experiences offered in your schools and district are aligned to state-wide subject matter content standards?
4. Are all available pathways open and accessible to all students?
5. Are all available pathways aligned to shared beliefs and practices in your schools and districts?
6. Are pathways integrated into your programs and culture?

Additional Resources

1. [Student Success Plans](#)
2. [Assessment Pathways as a Means to Ensure Equity, Rigor, and Personalization for All Students](#)
3. [Assessment Pathways: Evidence of Learning](#)
4. [Designing Personalized Learning Pathways: Best Practices from Vermont](#)
5. [Video: Flexible Pathways to Graduation: Six Vermont High School Students](#)
6. [Scoring Criteria: Design Guide](#)

For More Information

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