



## Connecticut High School Graduation Requirements Unpacked

### Brief 6: District Policy

**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.”

— Public Act No.17-42; Sec. 1(c)

This State statute provides the foundation for high school graduation expectations. While changes to the state-level requirements will cause districts to shift their high school graduation policy, the ultimate authority for setting high school graduation expectations remains with the local district. This brief focuses on the local policy implications of the revised state graduation statute.

When implementing the changes to the graduation statute, local district policy and how it translates into district, building, and classroom practice has the potential to be the biggest mechanism for balancing flexibility and equitable opportunities and outcomes. As has been highlighted several times throughout this series, the most important step in this change process is to collaboratively create a shared vision for graduates from your district.

Answering the question, “What are the essential knowledge and skills every graduate must have in order to be successful in their lives?” will form the guardrails of the system you ultimately build and the framework for your policy revision. For example, if the answer to that question involves specific math standards, then you must design a policy that requires all students to acquire those skills and knowledge regardless of the pathway they pursue. Further, that local policy requirement will have significant practice implications at the building level for teachers and students. Those numerous implications underlie why it is so important to have stakeholders and community members as equal partners in creating an initial shared vision that guides this effort.

The district has the responsibility to implement the flexibility created by the new state high school graduation requirements in a way that increases student choice while ensuring equitable opportunities and outcomes for the students in your district. The state statute provides the foundational expectations, but local communities must define the requirements for a diploma in their district. Local policy serves as the



keeper of the community's vision over time. Even as personnel may change at the building or district levels, local policy can provide stability and help to institutionalize a shared vision.

Your vision may have implications for local policy beyond graduation requirements. Shifting graduation expectations may provide your community with the opportunity to review all of the district's policies, deliberately asking if your policies honestly reflect your shared expectations for your students.

It might also be the case that this statutory shift reveals additional compliance or alignment questions within board policy—a shift in one piece of the policy landscape frequently requires examining multiple policies in your manual. You can look to the [Connecticut Association of Boards of Education](#) for sample policies or support in conducting a review. The Great Schools Partnership also has [sample policies](#) available for districts to use or amend to fit their local context.

## Design Questions for Consideration

1. What is the critical foundation of knowledge and skills that every graduate of your district needs to be successful?
2. What is your shared vision for a learning system that will enable all students to attain these foundational skills and knowledge?
3. How will you engage stakeholders (teachers, students, families, community members, and staff) in the process of crafting district policy that is aligned to your shared vision for graduates?
4. What policies need to be revised based on a shift in the graduation requirements?
5. How will the new graduation requirements be phased in both local policy and practice?
6. How will you collaboratively craft policy that is a support and driver of strong teaching and learning in your classrooms, schools, and community?
7. How will your written policy enable students to follow their passion without creating or exacerbating inequities of both opportunity and outcome?

## Additional Resources

1. [Connecticut Association of Boards of Education](#)
2. [District and School Policy Checklist](#)
3. [District Policy Exemplar: Graduation Requirements](#)
4. [District Policy Exemplar: Multiple Pathways](#)
5. [District Policy Exemplar: Academic Recognition](#)
6. [District Policy Exemplar: Transcripts](#)
7. [District Policy Exemplar: Grading and Reporting System](#)
8. [District Policy Exemplar: Dual Enrollment and Early College](#)
9. [District Policy Exemplar: Academic Eligibility for Athletic and Co-Curricular Participation](#)

10. [District Policy Exemplar: Academic Support](#)
11. [District Policy Exemplar: Demonstration of Learning: Exhibitions, and Capstone Project](#)
12. [District Policy Exemplar: Proficiency-Based Education](#)

### For More Information

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