

**ORANGE COUNTY  
BOARD OF EDUCATION**  
**AGENDA ITEM ABSTRACT**

Meeting Date: November 12, 2013

AGENDA ITEM No. 13-11-07

ACTION: (Y/N) Y

**SUBJECT:** Graduation Requirements (3460) and Assessing, Grading and Reporting Progress  
(3415) Policy Revisions – First Reading

**INFO. CONTACT:** Dr. Denise Morton **PHONE:** (919)732-8126

**ATTACHMENTS:** 1. Graduation Requirements (3460)  
2. Assessing, Grading and Reporting Progress (3415)

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**PURPOSE:** To have the Board of Education approve on first reading revisions to two policies: Graduation Requirements (3460) and Assessing, Grading and Reporting Progress (3415).

**BACKGROUND:** At their October 2013 meeting, the State Board of Education made revisions to Policy GCS-A-016 – Policy Delineating use of State Designated Assessments for the North Carolina Teacher Evaluation Process. One significant revision impacting two local board policies was:

(e) Public Schools shall use results from all course-specific operational assessments as a minimum of twenty percent (20%) of the student's final grade for each respective course. This requirement does not apply to end-of-year assessments in grades 3-8.

The two Orange County board policies needing revisions in percentage from 25% to 20% are Graduation Requirements and Assessing, Grading and Reporting Progress.

The title of *end-of-course exams* was changed to *North Carolina Final Exams*.

**FINANCIAL IMPACT:** none

**RECOMMENDATION:** The Superintendent recommends that the Board of Education approve on first reading revisions to Graduation Requirements (3460) and Assessing, Grading and Reporting Progress (3415).

# GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

*Date Reviewed/Approved:*

*Policy Number: 3460*

*Rescinds Policy Number: 3460*

*Issued: 12/6/2004, 3/6/2006, 9/18/2006, 6/4/2007,  
5/5/2008, 02/02/2009, 09/08/2009, 05/02/2011,  
02/06/12, 01/28/13*

The board recognizes the importance of setting rigorous graduation requirements in order to help ensure that students are receiving an education that will prepare them for life and work in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

In order to graduate from high school, students must meet the following requirements:

1. successful completion of all course unit requirements mandated by the State Board of Education;
2. beginning with the graduating class of 2014-2015, successful completion of cardiopulmonary resuscitation instruction;  
and
3. successful completion of all other requirements mandated by the board, as provided in this policy.

## STATE REQUIREMENTS

### Ninth Grade Class of 2012-2013

In order to graduate from a North Carolina public high school, students entering the ninth grade for the first time in 2012-2013 and beyond will be required to meet new exit standards and complete all requirements in order to obtain a high school diploma. Students will also be required to take ~~three End-of-Course (EOC) assessments.~~ **NC Final Exams.** ~~The three required EOC courses are Common Core Math I, Biology, and English II.~~

SUBJECT AREA UNITS	COURSES
4 Mathematics Units  Students seeking to complete minimum application requirements for UNC universities must complete four mathematics courses, including a course with Algebra II as a pre-requisite.	Common Core Math I (formerly called Algebra I), Common Core Geometry, Common Core Algebra II  AND  A 4 <sup>th</sup> math course aligned with the student's post high school plans
4 English Units	English I, II, III, IV
4 Social Studies Units	World History American History I American History II Civics and Economics
3 Science Units	Biology An earth/environmental science A physical science
1 Physical Education Unit	Health/Physical Education
Elective Units 12 Units The State requires at least 6 elective units.	Two electives being any combination of Career & Technical Education, Arts Education, or World Languages.  Students seeking to complete minimum application requirements for UNC universities must complete two years of a World Language.

<p><b>*Remaining electives determined by student choice</b></p>	<p><b>Plus Four elective units in a cluster pathway.</b>  Students will complete a four-course cluster pathway focused on student interests and postsecondary goals through a rigorous, in-depth and linked study. In the Orange County Schools, clusters are available to students in the Humanities, World Languages, STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics), Career and Technical Education, Health and Fitness, and International Baccalaureate (IB). Note: The course clusters could also include a student's community college concurrent enrollment through the Career and College Promise.</p> <p>Students seeking to complete minimum application requirements for UNC universities must complete two years of a world language.</p> <p><b>Plus Six elective units of choice</b></p>
<p><b>TOTAL UNITS 28</b></p>	

### Ninth Grade Class of 2009-2010

#### Future-Ready Core Curriculum Graduation Requirements (27 credits required)

Effective with the class entering the ninth grade for the first time in the 2009-2010 school year (Class of 2013), the following units will be required for graduation under the Future-Ready Core. The Occupational Course of study is available for eligible students.

SUBJECT AREA UNITS	COURSES
<p>4 Mathematics Units</p> <p>Students seeking to complete minimum application requirements for UNC universities must complete four mathematics courses, including a course with Algebra II as a pre-requisite.</p>	<p>Algebra I, Geometry, Algebra II  AND  A 4<sup>th</sup> math course aligned with the student's post high school plans  Exemptions  In the rare instance a principal exempts a student from the Future-Ready Core mathematics sequence, except as limited by N.C.G.S. 115C-81(b), the student will be required to pass:  Algebra I and Geometry plus either Applied Mathematics I and Applied Mathematics II or two application-based mathematics courses as determined by the LEA.*  OR  Algebra I and Algebra II plus either Applied Mathematics I and Applied Mathematics II or two application-based mathematics courses as determined by the LEA.</p>
<p>4 English Units</p>	<p>English I, II, III, IV or  English I, II, III, AP English</p>
<p>3 Social Studies Units</p>	<p>World History  US History  Civics and Economics</p>
<p>3 Science Units</p>	<p>Biology  An earth/environmental science  A physical science</p>
<p>1 Physical Education Unit</p>	<p>Health/Physical Education</p>
<p>Elective Units  12 Units  The State requires at least 6 elective units.</p> <p>*Remaining electives determined by student choice</p>	<p>Two electives being any combination of Career &amp; Technical Education, Arts Education, or World Languages and four elective units in a course cluster.</p> <p>Students will complete a four-course cluster focused on student interests and postsecondary goals through a rigorous, in-depth and linked study. In the Orange County Schools, clusters are available to students in the Humanities, World Languages, STEM (science, technology, engineering,</p>

	and mathematics), Career and Technical Education, Health and Fitness, and International Baccalaureate (IB). Note: The course clusters could also include student's community college concurrent enrollment, Learn and Earn, and university dual enrollment.**  Students seeking to complete minimum application requirements for UNC universities must complete two years of a world language.
TOTAL UNITS 27	

\* Exemptions to the mathematics requirement for a particular student require a recommendation and/or request from the parent or school personnel. In that rare instance, the principal will initiate the process of review and consideration of the request through a two-tiered committee process, one at the school level (for review of student information) and one at the district level (for review and decision making) with recommendations being made to the principal for final review and a decision.

\*\* Students can tailor their course cluster to fit their interests and goals while building a strong academic foundation. Under the six total elective units required for graduation, four elective credits (a four course cluster) will be taken from one of the following areas of focus: Career and Technical Education, Arts Education or other designated subject areas (e.g. mathematics, science). The remaining two electives must be any combination from Career and Technical Education, Arts Education or World Languages.

For some students identified as Exceptional Children, the Occupational Course of Study will remain an option. These students should have the Occupational Course of Study identified in their Individualized Education Program.

### LOCAL BOARD REQUIREMENTS

Students also are required to meet all graduation requirements of this board. A student must earn the following credits in order to graduate:

Ninth Grade Classes of 2009-2010/2010-2011/2011-2012 27 Credits

Ninth Grade Class of 2012-2013 and beyond 28 credits

### High School Promotion Standards

Effective with the Freshman Class of 2006:

For classification as a sophomore, a student must have earned 6 credits.

For classification as a junior, a student must have earned 12 credits.

For classification as a senior, a student must have earned 20 credits.

### Final Examinations

- All high school exams will count ~~25%~~ 20% of the final grade.
- Exam Exemption: Only seniors with six or fewer absences and an 'A' average will be exempt from exams.  
**Note: No student may be exempt from a NC Final Exam.**

However, students following the Occupational Course of Study are required to meet a different set of exit standards as outlined in State Board of Education policy HSP-N-004 (16 NCAC 6D.0503).

The principal is responsible for ensuring that parents and students are aware of all graduation requirements. The guidance program should assist students in planning their high school courses to help ensure that students are taking all of the required units and selecting electives consistent with their post-graduate plans. For students who have transferred to the school district during high school, or for other reasons have completed course work outside of the school district, the principal will determine what course work will be applied as credit for graduation.

### **SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES**

The board adopts the following policies to address special circumstances regarding graduation:

#### **1. Honor Graduates**

- Honor graduates may be designated by the principals on the basis of criteria established by the superintendent. Recognition of honor graduates shall be included in graduation programs.
- Calculations for Valedictorian and Salutatorian Honors will be computed after final exams just prior to graduation.

#### **2. Early Graduation**

- The Board supports the right to meet graduation requirements in fewer than the standard four years when specific criteria are met. Allowing early graduation recognizes student differences and fosters self-motivation. Decisions related to early graduation require considerable planning and must be initiated in a timely manner. The student must meet the following criteria:

1. Written notification of intent to graduate early must be submitted to the building level principal no later than the first five (5) days of the academic year the student wishes to be awarded a diploma. Earlier notification is preferred.
2. A transcript reflecting the completion of prerequisite courses and sufficient number of units must be presented to the principal.
3. Passing scores on all ~~End-of-Course Tests~~ **NC Final Exams** as designated by the NC State Board of Education.
4. Parental approval.

After receiving student intent to graduate early within the first five days of the academic year, the principal will certify student eligibility and make appropriate scheduling changes if needed. Early graduation allows the student to participate in any activities related to graduation, i.e. awards programs and graduation ceremonies.

#### **3. General Diploma Requirements**

- Students who meet specific criteria and have the approval of a school-level team, the principal and the superintendent or designee may participate in a General diploma program.
- Students who entered the ninth grade prior to 2012-2013, may graduate with a General Diploma. A student must meet the North Carolina High School Exit Requirements and have earned a minimum of 21 units, including the following:

English I, II, III, and IV	4
Mathematics (including Algebra I and Geometry or Algebra II)	4
Science (Biology, 1 unit of physical science, and 1 unit of an environmental science)	3
Social Studies (U.S. History, civics and economics, and World History)	3
Health and Physical Education	1
Elective Concentration	4
Other Electives	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>21</b>

Beginning with the graduating class of 2014-2015, successful completion of cardiopulmonary resuscitation instruction is a graduation requirement which will be completed through the Health/Physical Education course.

Beginning with the Ninth Grade Class of 2012-2013, to graduate from Orange County Schools with a General Diploma, a student must have earned a minimum of 22 units.

English I, II, III, and IV	4
Mathematics (including Common Core Math I (formerly called Algebra I), and Common Core Geometry or Common Core Algebra II)	4
Science (Biology, 1 unit of physical science, and 1 unit of an environmental science)	3
Social Studies (World History, American History I, American History II, Civics and Economics)	4
Health and Physical Education	1
Elective Concentration	4
Other Electives	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>22</b>

Beginning with the graduating class of 2014-2015, successful completion of cardiopulmonary resuscitation instruction is a graduation requirement which will be completed through the Health/Physical Education course.

The superintendent or designee shall develop procedures to govern the administration of the General Diploma.

#### **4. Graduation Certificate**

The Board of Education shall award a Graduation Certificate to a student who does not earn a high school diploma and shall allow the student to participate in graduation exercises, provided:

- 1) The student has been identified as a "child with a disability" as defined by G.S. 115C-106.3(1); and the student has satisfied all state and local graduation requirements other than the proficiency standards as defined in HSP-N-000 (Student Accountability Standards); or
- 2) The student has been enrolled in the Occupational Course of Study; and the student has passed all the requirements of the Occupational Course of Study other than the 360 hours of competitive employment and the student has passed all state and local graduation requirements other than the standards for proficiency specified in HSP-N-000; or
- 3) Any other student that has satisfied all state and local graduation requirements other than the proficiency standards as defined in HSP-N-000.

Legal References: G.S. 115C-47, -81, -174.11, -276, -288; -407.5, State Board of Education Policies GCS-C-003, GCS-003, GCS-C-031, GCS-N series

**INTRODUCTION**

The goal of assessment and grading is to provide sustained, constructive feedback for students' academic progress and at the same time provide parents/guardians and teachers with a meaningful description of the learner's educational development. Assessment and grading representations of students' academic achievement reflecting their progress toward meeting proficiency standards. Grading and assessment are essential for student learning and for the improvement of the overall instructional program. Meaningful assessment and grading practices also aid the teacher in determining students' strengths and needs, making instructional decisions, and in deciding on promotion or retention.

**ASSESSMENT**

Assessment and evaluation should provide clear information to students, parents/guardians, teachers, and administrators. This information should help students improve performance, help teachers improve instruction, and assist administrators in planning the overall instructional program.

Assessment involves an ongoing examination of a student's performance on specifically defined objectives and standards set by the *North Carolina Standard Course of Study* (criterion-referenced), performance when compared to similar students within her/his developmental range (norm-referenced), and the progression of student achievement within a certain span of time.

Assessment tools are not limited to standardized and teacher-created tests, as they should also include a variety of opportunities to allow students to demonstrate proficiency through such activities as portfolios, projects, peer and self-assessment opportunities, written and oral presentations, labs, and other appropriate measures.

**GRADING**

Grading is directly linked to the *North Carolina Standard Course of Study*. Grades are symbols that represent student performance, growth and progress. The main purpose of grading is to communicate the results of the assessment process to students and parents/guardians. This is accomplished through report cards, interim reports, and conferences.

**GUIDELINES IN GRADING PRACTICES**

Grades are a means of reporting student progress relative to the established curriculum goals and objectives. Teachers use their professional judgment to determine the weight of tests, assignments and daily performance in arriving at the grade a student earns. Grades earned on homework will not solely determine whether a student passes or fails a course/subject. The relative value attached to any activity should be determined by the importance of the activity toward achieving the course objectives. This value should be communicated to the students and parents/guardians before the activity occurs.

1. Grades should be based on multiple assessments and performance samples over time. Failure or success on one test or one assigned task (e.g. a book report or notebook) will not be sufficient basis for failing or passing the course/subject or grading period.
  
2. Grades may be obtained using a combination of sources such as the following:

Tests	Research or library work
Portfolios	Drawings (maps, charts etc.)
Written reports	Class discussions/participation
Oral reports	Group/individual reports
Demonstrations/projects/presentations	Homework
Other classroom performances/activities	Self-evaluation

3. Grades should reflect a student's progress toward a determined level of proficiency that is related to the standards set by the *North Carolina Standard Course of Study*.
4. Grades should reflect the teacher's professional judgment of student achievement in meeting proficiency standards. Daily grades are a function of teacher evaluation and take into account that numerical grades cannot be assigned to every piece of work.
5. Some assignments may not be graded because they are a part of student work in progress. For example, daily homework may be designed to allow practice for students to reinforce a specific skill and to identify areas for additional assistance from the teacher.
6. Grades should indicate actual academic performance; they do not include attendance or behavior.
7. Teachers should be very clear about their grading expectations before assignments are given, especially at the start of each grading period. Middle and high school teachers will provide students and parents with course descriptions and grading practices/standards.
8. Quizzes, tests, examinations, essays, homework, projects, or papers are evaluated and/or graded. They are returned promptly and reviewed with the student before the next related test is administered.
9. Any system or curve which predetermines the distribution of grades should not be used.
10. Performance levels (as indicated on the elementary report card) are related to the proficiency standards set by the *North Carolina Standard Course of Study*.

#### ASSESSING AND GRADING EXCEPTIONAL CHILDREN

The grades of students receiving exceptional education services should reflect the progress of students based on the level of their ability and achievement.

1. Students receiving services through the Exceptional Services Program will be assessed in terms of progress toward meeting objectives stated in the Individual Education Plan (IEP).
2. Whenever appropriate, exceptional education students in regular classes, full-time or part-time, will receive the same report cards as other students. A report of progress based on standards outlined in the IEP will accompany the regular report card each marking period.

Classroom teachers are responsible for issuing grades to students in their classes. It is recommended that the resource teacher collaborate on the grades given and attend the parent/guardian conference.

#### PROCEDURES FOR REPORTING

The Board of Education believes that clear communication between parent/guardian and teacher is critical in the educational process. Student progress will be reported in a manner that is useful and understandable to students and parents/guardians. To maintain positive parent/guardian-student-teacher relationships, reporting contacts between the parent/guardian and teacher should be varied and frequent. All appropriate forms of communication may be utilized, including parent/guardian-teacher conferences, mail, e-mail, telephone, and school visitation by parents/guardians.



1. Elementary report cards indicating the student's academic progress toward state identified proficiency standards, successful learner behaviors, and attendance will be issued at the end of four nine-week grading periods during the school year. The first report card for grades kindergarten through five will be given at a parent/guardian-teacher conference at the end of the first grading period. If the parent/guardian-teacher conference was held just prior to the end of the grading period parents may pick up their child's report card or request that it be sent home with their student.
2. Middle and high school report cards indicating the student's academic progress, conduct and attendance will be issued at the end of each nine-week grading period. The first report card will be issued directly to parents/guardians at the end of the first grading period. If a parent/guardian-teacher conference was held just prior to the end of the grading period, parents may pick up their child's report card or request that it be sent home with their student. Second and third nine weeks report cards will be issued directly to students. Fourth nine weeks report cards will be issued directly to parents/guardians or mailed.
3. District-wide and school dates for report cards, interim reports, parent/guardian conferences, retention/failure notices, waiver recommendations, summer school recommendations and testing will be published in the media and school communications for parents/guardians and teachers.
4. Interim reports (mid-nine weeks) will be sent to parents/guardians of all students in grades K-8 during the first grading period. An interim report will be sent to all students in grades K-5 who are achieving below proficiency expectation or students earning a C or below in grades 6-8 during each of the remaining grading periods. In grades 9-12, all students will receive an interim report at the midpoint (4.5 weeks) of each nine week grading period. More frequent reports will be provided for students at risk of failure with grades below C. The teacher will report to the parents/guardians any marked decline in the quality of student work, regardless of grading period timelines. Parents/guardians may request interim reports at any time during the grading period.
5. Conferences will be held as needed and can be initiated by teachers, parents/guardians, or students. Conferences for positive reinforcement are encouraged as well as conferences relating to decline in achievement or problems in social adjustment. All conferences related to student performance will be documented.
6. A Personalized Education Plan (a written plan with goals for student improvement) will be developed and monitored closely for all K-12 non-proficient students. This plan will be developed and signed by teachers, parents/guardians and students.

#### GRADING SCALE

Grading scales and report cards are designed to be appropriate at each grade level/grade span. Report cards are designed specifically for the following grades or grade spans: K-2 and 3-5 or K-5. Grades are reported in middle and high school through SIMS (computerized Student Information Management System).

1. Grading scales for grades K-2 should reflect the *North Carolina Public Schools Grades K-2 Literacy and Math Assessments*, as well as classroom performance; while scales for grades 3-5 will reflect a student's progress in meeting state proficiency standards in reading, writing, science, and mathematics.
2. Grade scales are consistent system-wide in grades 6-12.
  - A 93-100
  - B 85-92
  - C 77-84
  - D 70-76
  - F 69 and below

3. In grades 9-12, percentage grades will be used on report cards, cumulative folders, and transcripts. Percentage grades will receive the corresponding number of quality points as required by Senate Bill 1028:

96-100%=4.0	90%=3.25	84%=2.50	78%=1.75	70-72%=1.00
95%=3.88	89%=3.13	83%=2.38	77%=1.63	0-69%=0.00
94%=3.75	88%=3.00	82%=2.25	76%=1.50	
93%=3.63	87%=2.88	81%=2.13	75%=1.38	
92%=3.50	86%=2.75	80%=2.00	74%=1.25	
91%=3.38	85%=2.63	79%=1.88	73%=1.13	

4. In grades 9-12, academic course levels will be weighted as follows:
- Standard courses receive standard quality points as outlined above in #3.
  - For honors courses, one quality point is added to standard points earned.
  - For advanced placement courses, two quality points are added to standard points earned. All students enrolled in Advanced Placement courses are expected to take the AP exam.
  - Failing grades of 69 and below will receive no points (weighted or non-weighted).
  - Weighted grades appear on the student's final transcript at the end of the senior year.
5. North Carolina ~~End-of-Course tests~~ **Final Exams** will count ~~25%~~ **20%** of the student's final course grade. **This will also apply to middle school students enrolled in high school courses.**

**RIGHT TO APPEAL ACADEMIC GRADES**

Parents/guardians and students shall have the right to review/appeal any final grade given to a student. Such an appeal should proceed as follows:

1. The student and/or parent/guardian should arrange a conference with the individual teacher whose assessment or evaluation is in question to discuss the teacher's rationale for the grade. If the student or parent/guardian is not satisfied with the outcome of the conference, he/she may appeal to the school principal for a second review of the teacher's assessment and evaluation of the student. A conference shall be arranged with the teacher, parents/guardians, and the student. The principal may include other participants in the conference.
2. The decisions of the principal, based on the findings of such a conference, shall be final.

Legal References: G.S. 115C-47, -81.