

5460 HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION

The Board of Education will recognize the successful completion of the secondary school instructional program by the award of a State-endorsed diploma certifying the student has met all State and local requirements for high school graduation in accordance with N.J.A.C. 6A:8-5.1 et seq. The Board will annually certify to the Executive County Superintendent each student who has been awarded a diploma and has met the requirements for graduation.

As defined in N.J.A.C. 6A:8-1.3, “credit” means the award for the equivalent of a class period of instruction, which meets for a minimum of forty minutes, one time per week during the school year or as approved through N.J.A.C. 6A:8-5.1(a)2 and A.1.b. below.

A. High School Graduation Requirements – N.J.A.C. 6A:8-5.1

1. For a State-endorsed diploma, the Board of Education shall develop, adopt, and implement graduation requirements that prepare students for success in post-secondary degree programs, careers, and civic life in the 21st century, and that include the following:
 - a. A graduating student must have earned a minimum of 120 credits in courses designed to meet all of the New Jersey Student Learning Standards (NJSLS), including, but not limited to, the following credits:
 - (1) At least twenty credits in English language arts (ELA) aligned to grade nine through twelve standards;
 - (2) At least fifteen credits in mathematics, including Algebra I or the content equivalent; geometry or the content equivalent; and a third year of mathematics that builds on the concepts and skills of algebra and geometry and that prepares students for college and 21st century careers;
 - (3) At least fifteen credits in science, including at least five credits in laboratory biology/life science or the content equivalent; one additional laboratory/inquiry-based science course, which shall include chemistry, environmental science, or physics; and one additional laboratory/inquiry-based science course;



- (4) At least fifteen credits in social studies, including satisfaction of N.J.S.A. 18A:35-1 and 18A:35-2; five credits in world history; and the integration of civics, economics, geography, and global content in all course offerings;
 - (5) At least two and one-half credits in financial, economic, business, and entrepreneurial literacy;
 - (6) At least five credits in health, safety, and physical education during each year of enrollment, distributed as one hundred fifty minutes per week, as required by N.J.S.A. 18A:35-5, 7, and 8;
 - (7) At least five credits in visual and performing arts;
 - (8) At least five credits in world languages or student demonstration of proficiency as set forth in N.J.A.C. 6A:8-5.1(a)2ii(2) and A.1.b.(2)(b) below;
 - (9) Technological literacy, consistent with the NJSLs, integrated throughout the curriculum;
 - (10) At least five credits in 21st century life and careers, or career-technical education; and
 - (11) Electives as determined by the high school program sufficient to total a minimum of 120 credits.
- b. The 120-credit requirement set forth in N.J.A.C. 6A:8-5.1(a)1. and in A.1.a. above may be met in whole or in part through program completion of a range of experiences that enable students to pursue a variety of individualized learning opportunities, as follows:
- (1) The district shall establish a process to approve individualized student learning opportunities that meet or exceed the NJSLs.
 - (a) Individualized student learning opportunities in all NJSLs areas include, but are not limited to, the following:
 - (i) Independent study;



- (ii) Online learning;
 - (iii) Study abroad programs;
 - (iv) Student exchange programs; and
 - (v) Structured learning experiences, including, but not limited to, work-based programs, internships, apprenticeships, and service learning experiences.
- (b) Individualized student learning opportunities based upon specific instructional objectives aimed at meeting or exceeding the NJSLs shall:
- (i) Be based on student interest and career goals as reflected in the Personalized Student Learning Plans;
 - (ii) Include demonstration of student competency;
 - (iii) Be certified for completion based on the district process adopted according to N.J.A.C. 6A:8-5.1(a)2.ii. and A.1.b.(2) below; and
 - (iv) Be on file in the school district and subject to review by the Commissioner of Education or designee.
- (c) Group programs based upon specific instructional objectives aimed at meeting or exceeding the NJSLs shall be permitted and shall be approved in the same manner as other approved courses.
- (2) The district shall establish a process for granting of credits through successful completion of assessments that verify student achievement in meeting or exceeding the NJSLs at the high school level, including standards achieved by means of the individualized student learning opportunities enumerated at N.J.A.C. 6A:8-5.1(a)2 and A.1.b. above. Such programs or assessments may occur all or in part prior to a student's high school enrollment; no such locally administered assessments shall preclude or exempt student participation in applicable Statewide assessments at grades three through twelve.



- (a) The district shall choose assessments that are aligned with or exceed the NJSLs and may include locally designed assessments.
- (b) The district shall choose from among the following assessment options to determine if students have achieved the level of language proficiency designated as Novice-High as defined by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) and recognized as fulfilling the world languages requirement of the NJSLs:
 - (i) The Standards-based Measurement of Proficiency (STAMP) online assessment;
 - (ii) The ACTFL Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI) or the Modified Oral Proficiency Interview (MOPI); or
 - (iii) New Jersey Department of Education-approved locally designed competency-based assessments.
- (3) The district shall establish a process to approve post-secondary learning opportunities that may consist of Advanced Placement (AP) courses, College-Level Examination Program (CLEP), or concurrent/dual enrollment at accredited higher education institutions.
 - (a) The district shall award credit for successful completion of an approved, accredited college course that assures achievement of knowledge and skills that meets or exceeds the NJSLs.
- c. Local student attendance requirements;



- e. Any statutorily mandated requirements for earning a high school diploma;
 - f. The requirement that all students demonstrate proficiency by achieving a passing score on the ELA and mathematics components of the State graduation proficiency test or through the alternative means at N.J.A.C. 6A:8-5.1(h) and A.6. below, if applicable, or for students who take the State graduation proficiency test but do not achieve a passing score through the alternative means set forth at N.J.A.C. 6A:8-5.1(g) and (i) and A.5. and A.7. below.
 - g. For students who have not demonstrated proficiency on the ELA and/or mathematics components of the State graduation proficiency test, the opportunity for the following will be provided:
 - (1) Remediation, pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:7C-3.; and
 - (2) One or more additional opportunities to demonstrate proficiency on the State graduation proficiency test, pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:7C-6; and
 - h. Students graduating from an adult high school shall demonstrate proficiency in the ELA and mathematics components of the State graduation proficiency test, or through alternative means set forth at N.J.A.C. 6A:8-5.1(g) through (i) and A.5. through A.7. below.
2. In the development of Personalized Student Learning Plans according to N.J.A.C. 6A:8-3.2(a), the district shall actively encourage all students who have otherwise met the requirements for high school graduation according to N.J.A.C. 6A:8-5.1(a)1 through 3 and A.1.a. through A.1.c. above, to include in their programs of study the following additional credits:
- a. Five credits in mathematics during each year of enrollment, aimed at preparation for entrance into post-secondary programs or 21st century careers;
 - b. Five credits in a laboratory science during each year of enrollment, aimed at preparation for entrance into post-secondary programs or 21st century careers;



- c. Five credits in social studies during each year of enrollment, aimed at preparation for entrance into post-secondary programs or 21st century careers; and
 - d. Five credits in world languages during each year of enrollment, aimed at preparation for entrance into post-secondary programs or 21st century careers.
3. The district shall provide to the Executive County Superintendent the district's graduation requirements each year they are evaluated through Quality Single Accountability Continuum (QSAC) and update the district's filed copy each time the graduation policy is revised.
4. The district shall provide each student entering high school and their parents with a copy of the district's requirements for a State-endorsed diploma and the programs available to assist students in attaining a State-endorsed diploma, in accordance with N.J.S.A. 18A:7C-5.
5. For students in the graduating classes of 2023, 2024, and 2025, the alternative means referenced at N.J.A.C. 6A:8-5.1(a)6 and A.1.f. above shall be as follows:
 - a. Achieve a passing score, as determined by the Commissioner of Education and approved by the New Jersey State Board of Education, on a corresponding substitute competency test in ELA and/or mathematics, as applicable; and/or
 - b. Demonstrate proficiency through the portfolio appeals process, pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:7C-3.
6. All multilingual learners (ML) shall satisfy the requirements for high school graduation, except MLs may demonstrate they have attained State minimum levels of proficiency through passage of the portfolio appeals process in their native language, when available, and passage of a New Jersey Department of Education-approved, English fluency assessment.
7. Students, including students with disabilities as defined in N.J.A.C. 6A:14-1.3 or eligible under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act who participate in the alternative assessment for students with disabilities, are not required to participate in repeated administrations of high school assessment components required at N.J.A.C. 6A:8-4.1(c).



B. High School Diplomas – N.J.A.C. 6A:8-5.2

1. The Board of Education shall award a State-endorsed high school diploma to prospective graduates who have met all of the requirements adopted in accordance with N.J.A.C. 6A:8-5.1(a), (c), or N.J.A.C. 6A:8-5.2(d) and A.1 above, C.1. below, or B.4. below.
2. The Board shall not issue a high school diploma to any student not meeting the criteria specified in the rule provisions referenced in N.J.A.C. 6A:8-5.2(a) and B.1. above.
 - a. The district shall provide students exiting grade twelve without a diploma the opportunity for continued high school enrollment to age twenty or until the requirements for a State-endorsed diploma have been met, whichever comes first.
 - b. The district shall allow any out-of-school individual to age twenty who has otherwise met all State and local graduation requirements but has failed to pass the State proficiency test to demonstrate proficiency through alternative means as set forth at N.J.A.C. 6A:8-5.1(a)6 through N.J.A.C. 6A:8-5.1(i) and in A.1.f. through A.7. above, as applicable, pursuant to the standards applicable to the student's graduating class. Upon certification of passing the test applicable to the student's class in accordance with N.J.A.C. 6A:8 and this Policy, a State-endorsed diploma shall be granted by the high school of record.
3. Pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A:20-1.4, the Commissioner of Education shall award a State-issued high school diploma based on achieving the Statewide standard score on the General Education Development test (GED) or other adult education assessments to individuals age sixteen or older who are no longer enrolled in school and have not achieved a high school credential.
4. The Commissioner shall award a State-issued high school diploma to individuals age sixteen or older and no longer enrolled in high school based on official transcripts showing at least thirty general education credits leading to a degree at an accredited institution of higher education. Included in the thirty general education credits must be a minimum of fifteen credits with at least three credits in each of the five general education categories as follows: English; mathematics; science; social science; and the humanities.



5. The Board shall award a State-endorsed high school diploma to any currently enrolled student, regardless of grade level, who:
 - a. Has demonstrated proficiency in the State graduation proficiency test, pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A:8-5.1(a)6 and A.1.f. above, or as set forth at N.J.A.C. 6A:8-5.1(g) and A.5. above.
 - b. Has presented official transcripts showing at least thirty general education credits leading to a degree at an accredited institution of higher education; and
 - c. Has formally requested such early award of a State-endorsed high school diploma.

6. Pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:7C-7 and 18A:7E-3, the Superintendent shall report annually to the Board at a public meeting not later than September 30, and to the Commissioner:
 - a. The total number of students graduated;
 - b. The number of students graduated under the substitute competency test process;
 - c. The number of students graduated under the portfolio appeals process;
 - d. The number of students receiving State-endorsed high school diplomas as a result of meeting any alternate requirements for graduation as specified in their individualized education programs (IEP);
 - e. The total number of students denied graduation from the twelfth grade class; and
 - f. The number of students denied graduation from the twelfth grade class solely because of failure to pass the New Jersey Department of Education-approved high school end-of-course assessments, the State graduation proficiency test, substitute competency tests, or portfolio appeals process based on the provisions of N.J.A.C. 6A:8.



- C. Students with Disabilities – N.J.A.C. 6A:8-5.1(c) and N.J.A.C. 6A:14-4.11
1. Through the IEP process set forth at N.J.A.C. 6A:14-3.7 and pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A:14-4.11, the Board may specify alternate requirements for a State-endorsed diploma for individual students with disabilities as defined at N.J.A.C. 6A:14-1.3.
 - a. The district shall specifically address any alternate requirements for graduation in a student’s IEP, in accordance with N.J.A.C. 6A:14-4.11.
 - b. The district shall develop and implement procedures for assessing whether a student has met the specified alternate requirements for graduation individually determined in an IEP.
 2. The IEP of a student with a disability who enters a high school program shall specifically address the graduation requirements. The student shall meet the high school graduation requirements pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A:8-5.1 and A. above, except as specified in the student’s IEP. The IEP shall specify which requirements would qualify the student with a disability for the State-endorsed diploma issued by the Board responsible for the student’s education.
 3. Graduation with a State-endorsed diploma is a change of placement that requires written notice pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A:14-2.3(f) and (g).
 - a. As part of the written notice, the parent shall be provided with a copy of the procedural safeguards statement published by the NJDOE.
 - b. As with any proposal to change the educational program or placement of a student with a disability, the parent may resolve a disagreement with the proposal to graduate the student by requesting mediation or a due process hearing prior to graduation.
 - c. In accordance with N.J.A.C. 6A:14-3.8(d), a reevaluation shall not be required.
 - d. When a student graduates or exceeds the age of eligibility, the student shall be provided a written summary of their academic achievement and functional performance prior to the date of the student’s graduation or the conclusion of the school year in which the student exceeds the age of eligibility. The summary shall include recommendations to assist the student in meeting their postsecondary goals.



4. If a student attends a school other than that of the school district of residence that is empowered to grant a diploma, the student shall have the choice of receiving the diploma of the school attended or the diploma of the school district of residence.
 - a. If the school the student is attending declines to issue a diploma to the student, the Board of the school district of residence shall issue the student a diploma if the student has satisfied all State and local graduation requirements, as specified in the student's IEP.
 5. If the Board grants an elementary school diploma, a student with a disability who fulfills the requirements of their IEP shall qualify for and receive a diploma.
 6. Students with disabilities who meet the standards for graduation according to N.J.A.C. 6A:14-4.11 and Section C. of this Policy shall have the opportunity to participate in graduation exercises and related activities on a nondiscriminatory basis.
- D. Financial Aid Application Graduation Requirement
1. Beginning with the 2023-2024 grade eleven class, and for two school years thereafter, the Board shall require a student, and the student's parent, if applicable, to complete and submit a financial aid application in a form prescribed by the Higher Education Student Assistance Authority (Authority) as a prerequisite to the student receiving a high school diploma unless a waiver is submitted to the district as set forth in P.L.2023 c.295 and D.1.a. below.
 - a. A student shall be exempt from the requirement in P.L.2023 c.295 and D.1. above if the student or the student's parent submits to the district a waiver form signed by the parent, or by the student if the student is at least eighteen years of age, requesting the exemption from the requirement.
 - b. If the student is under eighteen years of age and a form signed by the parent cannot be reasonably obtained, the student's school counselor may authorize the waiver as permitted by regulations promulgated by the State Board of Education pursuant to P.L.2023 c.295.
 2. The district shall annually notify students and the parents of the requirement established pursuant to P.L.2023 c.295 and Section D.



3. No adverse action shall be taken by a Board against any student due to a student's receipt of an exemption from the requirement to complete and submit a financial aid application pursuant to D.1.a. above.
 4. Nothing in P.L.2023 c.295 and this Policy shall be construed as requiring school counselors, or any other school employee, to assist students in completing the financial aid application. Nothing in P.L.2023 c.295 and this Policy shall be construed as creating a private right of action against the district or the State upon compliance or noncompliance with the provisions of P.L.2023 c.295 and this Policy.
- E. State Seal of Biliteracy – N.J.A.C. 6A:8-5.3
1. The Board of Education may award a State Seal of Biliteracy to any student who has met all requirements in N.J.A.C. 6A:8-5.2 and B. above and demonstrates proficiency in the following:
 - a. One or more world languages via an approved assessment pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A:8-5.3(f) and E.6. below during the student's next to last or final year of high school; and
 - (1) Pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:7C-15, a foreign language other than English also shall include, but not be limited to, American Sign Language, Latin, and Native American languages.
 - b. ELA as set forth in N.J.A.C. 6A:8-5.1(a)6 and A.1.f. above.
 2. A Board that chooses to award the State Seal of Biliteracy shall incorporate the process into the developed, adopted, and implemented Policy 5460 – High School Graduation pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A:8-5.1(a) and A.1. above, denoting participation in the voluntary program. A Board choosing to participate shall submit, in accordance with N.J.A.C. 6A:8-5.1(d) and A.3. above, a copy of this Policy that reflects the option for students to participate in the State Seal of Biliteracy.
 3. The Board shall charge a fee to the student for related assessments and transcript insignias.



4. The Board shall do the following:
 - a. Provide the NJDOE with information regarding students who qualify for the State Seal of Biliteracy pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A:8-5.3(a) and E.1. above;
 - b. Present each student who qualifies pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A:8-5.3(a) and E.1. above with a New Jersey Department of Education-issued certificate;
 - c. Include the Commissioner of Education-developed insignia on the student's transcript; and
 - d. Maintain appropriate records to identify students who have earned the State Seal of Biliteracy.
5. The Board shall not award a State Seal of Biliteracy to any student who does not meet the criteria in N.J.A.C. 6A:8-5.3(a) and E.1. above and shall not include the Commissioner of Education-developed insignia on the student's transcript.
6. A list of New Jersey Department of Education-approved, nationally recognized assessments and the Statewide scores necessary for a student to satisfy requirements for the State Seal of Biliteracy shall be set by a resolution approved by the New Jersey State Board of Education.
 - a. If an approved assessment, pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A:8-5.3(f) and E.6. above, does not exist for a particular language, the Board may administer a NJDOE-approved, locally designed proficiency-based assessment.]

N.J.S.A. 18A:7C-3; 18A:7C-5; 18A:7C-6, 18A:7C-7; 18A:7C-15; 18A:7E-3

18A:35-1; 18A:35-2; 18A:35-5; 18A:35-7; 18A:35-8

N.J.A.C. 6A:8-1.3; 6A:8-5.1 et seq.; 6A:14-1.3; 6A:14-2.3; 6A:14-3.7

6A:14-3.8; 6A:14-4.11; 6A:20-1.4

P.L.2023 c.295

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