Merchantville Board of Education 130 South Centre Street Merchantville, NJ 08109	File Code : 5127 Proposed : 07/14/2009 Adopted : 08/11/2009 Revised : 03/25/2014 Reviewed : 06/03/2024

Commencement Activities

The board endorses graduation activities and ceremonies. The date of graduation shall annually be recommended by the chief school administrator and approved by the board.

Graduation shall not occur prior to completion of the required 180 days of pupil instruction.

Guidelines for Graduation Year Activities

Pupil participation in special graduation year activities will require conduct of the highest caliber in all school situations.

Criteria for exclusion from these activities concern consistent behavioral patterns and shall include, but not be limited to:

A. Consistent involvement in disciplinary action(s);

B. Suspension;

The final decision shall be made by the chief school administrator.

Pupils and parents/guardians shall be given advance notification of these criteria.

Voting Information and Registration

Prior to graduation, the board of education shall provide a voter registration form and material describing the role of a citizen and the importance of voting to each eligible high school pupil.

Graduation Procedures and Ceremonies

No pupil shall be barred from participation in graduation ceremonies for arbitrary or discriminatory reasons. A pupil who may be prevented from participation and his/her parents/guardians shall be so notified in advance and no later than 14 days prior to he close of the school year.

When a pupil or his/her parents/guardians experiences financial hardship and is unable to pay the costs of participation in graduation ceremonies, the board shall assume the costs of the following items:

A. Rental or purchase of cap and gown;

B. One year book;

C. Other, as may be determined by the board.

Financial hardship shall be defined by eligibility standards for free and reduced price meals under the state school lunch program.

The board reserves the right to deny participation in graduation activities when extreme circumstances warrant it. Such denial shall be treated in the same manner as a suspension and the pupil so affected shall be afforded the rights of review provided in policies of this board.

The board reserves the right to withhold a diploma and transcripts until all fines are paid.

Awarding of Diplomas

A board member shall present a copy of the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution of the United States and the amendments thereto, and the Constitution of the State of New Jersey and the amendments thereto to each pupil upon graduation from elementary school.

The president of the board of education and/or another designated member of the board shall award the diplomas. Board members and former board members shall be afforded the opportunity to award diplomas to their own children.

The board shall not prevent, or otherwise deny participation in, constitutionally protected prayer in any district school, consistent with guidance issued by the United States Department of Education and applicable judicial decisions interpreting the religion clauses of the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution.

Key Words

Commencement Activities, Graduation Ceremonies

Legal References:

N.J.S.A. 18A:7C-5.1	Boards of education prohibited from excluding students from graduation ceremony or from obtaining yearbook for inability to pay fees
N.J.S.A. 18A:11-1	General mandatory powers and duties
N.J.S.A. 18A:36-18	Books containing organic laws at graduation
N.J.S.A. 18A:37-2	Causes for suspension or expulsion of pupils
N.J.S.A. 18A:54-20	Powers of board (county vocational schools)
N.J.A.C. 6A:8-5.1 et seq.	Implementation of Graduation Requirements
N.J.A.C. 6A:16-7.1 et seq.	Student Conduct

Ballato v. Long Branch Board of Education, 1990 S.L.D. (August 20)

Lee v. Weisman, 112 S.Ct. 2649 (1992)

R.L. v. Kingsway Regional Board of Education, 95 NJAR2d (EDU) 296

D.C. v. Parsippany Troy Hills Board of Education, 96 NJAR2d (EDU) 697

DO'G v. Ridgefield Park Board of Education, 96 NJAR2d (EDU) 820

R.F. v. Park Ridge Board of Education, 97 NJAR2d (EDU) 1

American Civil Liberties Union v. Blackhorse Pike Regional Board of Education, 84 F.3d 1471 (3d Cir. 1996)

Possible Cross References:

*5113	Absences and excuses
*5114	Suspension and expulsion
*5126	Awards for achievement
*5131	Conduct/discipline
*6111	School calendar
*6115	Ceremonies and observances
*6141.2	Recognition of religious beliefs and customs
*6146	Graduation requirements

*Indicates policy is included in the Critical Policy Reference Manual.

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