Graduation Ceremonies & Activities

Adopted: 06/02/1998 **| Last Revised:** 02/03/2026 **| Last Reviewed**: 02/03/2026

High school graduation ceremonies shall be held to recognize those students who have successfully completed the required course of study, passed all proficiency standards, and thereby earned the right to receive a diploma or certificate. The Board of Education believes that these students deserve a public celebration that recognizes the significance of their achievement and encourages them to continue the pursuit of learning throughout their lives.

The Board of Education recognizes and authorizes the issue of three (3) types of diplomas and/or certificates. They are:

1. The standard high school diploma for students who have fulfilled the requirements outlined in Board Policy 6146.1 (Subject to legislative exceptions)

2. The Adult Education diploma for students meeting all requirements outlined in Board Policy 6200 (Subject to legislative exceptions)

3. The Certificate of Completion for individuals with exceptional needs who, over the course of four years of high school, have met all the requirements of their Individual Education Program (IEP) and taken the requisite coursework. Students recognized in the graduation ceremony may continue to access special education services contingent on their special education eligibility. Graduation ceremony participation will be limited to the conclusion of the fourth year of high school for students receiving a Certificate of Completion.

In order to encourage high standards of student conduct and behavior, the principal may deny a student the privilege of participating in graduation ceremonies and/or activities in accordance with school rules. School rules shall ensure that prior to denial of the privilege(s), the student, and where practicable the student's parent/guardian, is made aware of the ground for such denial and that the student is given an opportunity to respond to the proposed denial. If privilege(s) are to be denied, the student and parent/guardian shall receive written notice of the denied privilege and the means whereby the student may appeal this decision.

Any student participating in a graduation ceremony shall comply with district policies and regulations pertaining to student conduct and the returning, replacing, or reimbursement of school property and/or instructional materials provided for use by students.

The Superintendent or designee may require graduating students to wear ceremonial attire, such as cap and gown, at the ceremony.

However, any graduating student who has completed basic training and is an active member of any branch of the United States Armed Forces may, wear their military dress uniform at the ceremony.

Invocations and/or benedictions shall not be included in graduation ceremonies. Ceremonies or programs involving prayer for graduates may not be sponsored by the school or district.

Students will be recognized for their achievement at high school graduation as:

A. Valedictorian – Highest GPA
B. Highest Honors – 4.0+
C. High Honors – 3.7-3.99
D. Honors – 3.5-3.69

To honor academic achievement, graduation ceremonies shall include recognition of a valedictorian. The Superintendent or designee shall establish procedures that ensure a fair determination of the student(s) who have achieved the highest-grade point average in the graduating class.

A student must be enrolled in a Lodi Unified School at the start of their junior (11th grade) academic year in order to be eligible for valedictorian status.

In addition to academic achievement, the principal shall consider discipline records in the final selection of the valedictorian.

The Superintendent or designee may identify other school-sponsored awards which may be given during graduation exercises. A separate awards program may be held to recognize graduating students receiving other school and non-school awards.

Policy Reference Disclaimer:
These references are not intended to be part of the policy itself, nor do they indicate the basis or authority for the Board to enact this policy. Instead, they are provided as additional resources for those interested in the subject matter of the policy.

Legal References:

STATE
EDUCATION CODE
35183.1 Graduation ceremonies; tribal regalia or recognized object of religious/cultural significance
35183.3 Graduation ceremonies; military dress uniforms
38119 Lease of personal property; caps and gowns
48904 Liability of parent or guardian; withholding of grades, diplomas, transcripts
51225.5 Honorary diplomas; foreign exchange and terminally ill students
51410-51413 Diplomas
MANAGEMENT RESOURCES
CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION PUBLICATION
Pupil Fees, Deposits and Other Charges, Fiscal Management Advisory 17-01, July 28, 2017
COURT DECISIONS
Sands v. Morongo Unified School District (1991) 53 Cal. 3d 863
Santa Fe Independent School District v. Doe (2000) 530 U.S. 290
Workman v. Greenwood Community School Corporation (2010) Case No. 1:2010cv00293
Lee v. Weisman (1992) 505 U.S. 577
Lemon v. Kurtzman (1971) 403 U.S. 602
Cole v. Oroville Union High School District (2000, 9th Cir.) 228 F.3d 1092
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION PUBLICATION
Guidance on Constitutionally Protected Prayer and Religious Expression in Public Elementary and Secondary Schools, May 2023
WEBSITES
CSBA District and County Office of Education Legal Services https://legalservices.csba.org/#
AASA The School Superintendents Association http://www.aasa.org/

Anti-Defamation League https://www.adl.org/
California Department of Education, High School http://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/gs/hs
U.S. Department of Education http://www.ed.gov/

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