

Shelby County Board of Education

GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

5004

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Effective: 07/01/13

I. PURPOSE

To identify requirements for graduation for Shelby County Schools.

II. SCOPE

This policy applies to all students seeking graduation from Shelby County Schools.

III. POLICY STATEMENT

The State Board of Education has established minimum standards for graduation from any Tennessee public high school. Any student who meets those requirements shall be awarded the appropriate diploma as specified in the Tennessee State Board of Education Rules, Regulations and Minimum Standards for the Operation of the Public School System.

The Board delegates to the Superintendent the authority to delineate areas that may be substituted for the physical education requirement and to identify areas of elective focus beyond those listed in the State's High School Policy.

IV. RESPONSIBILITY

The Superintendent (or designee) is responsible for administering this policy.

GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

Regular High School Diploma (Ninth grade class beginning with school year 2009-2010)

To earn a regular high school diploma, students must meet the minimum standards established by the State Board of Education and earn the following 22 units of credit:

- English 4 units
- Mathematics 4 units
- Science 3 units
- Social Studies 3 units
- Wellness 1 unit
- Physical Education 0.5 unit
- Personal Finance 0.5 unit
- Electives 3 units
- Foreign Language 2 units
- Fine Arts 1 unit
- Total 22 units

The completion of a capstone experience is encouraged, but not required for graduation. A capstone experience may be completed during the junior or senior year. Options for the capstone experience may include, but are not limited to the following: junior/senior project, virtual enterprise, internship, externship, work-based learning, service learning (minimum of 40 hrs.), or community service (minimum of 40 hrs.).

Graduation with State Honors (Ninth grade class beginning with school year 2009-2010)

Students who score at or above **all** of the subject area readiness benchmarks on the ACT or equivalent score on the SAT will graduate with honors.

Readiness Benchmarks:

English.....	18
Mathematics.....	22
Reading.....	21
Science.....	24

Graduation with State Distinction (Ninth grade class beginning with school year 2009-2010)

Students will be recognized as graduating with “distinction” by attaining a B or better average and completing at least one of the following:

- Earn a nationally recognized industry certification
- Participate in at least one of the Governor's Schools
- Participate in one of the state's All-State musical organizations
- Be selected as a National Merit Finalist or Semi-Finalist
- Attain a score of 31 or higher composite score on the ACT (or equivalent e.g., 1360 on the SAT, if accepted by the State)
- Attain a score of 3 or higher on at least two advanced placement exams
- Successfully complete the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme
- Earn 12 or more semester hours of transcribed postsecondary credit

Shelby County School Designation of Exemplary Recognition (applicable to all qualifying students)

In order to best prepare students for college and an ever more competitive global job market, Shelby County Schools supports, encourages and motivates students to challenge themselves by taking the most rigorous course of study.

Students eligible for the **Designation of Exemplary Recognition** must have earned twelve (12) Honors or Advanced Placement credits (any combination) in Grades 9-12 or a combination of such credits totaling twelve (12), with each Advanced Placement credit equal to 1.5 honors credits. A minimum of two (2) Honors or Advanced Placement courses is required during the senior year.

A qualified graduate will receive a Diploma that indicates the **exemplar** status and **Designation of Exemplary Recognition** will be printed on the Graduate's final high school transcript.

Requirements for Students Entering the Ninth Grade Before School Year 2009-2010

- Before graduation, every student shall [1] achieve specified units of credit; [2] pass the required competency test or make passing scores on the required gateway tests (English II, Algebra I, and Biology¹); and [3] have an opportunity to take an exit exam to assess readiness for the work place or higher education. (ACT, SAT, or Work Keys)²
- Special education students who successfully complete their Individualized Education Plan (IEP) and pass the required competency test or the required gateway test shall be awarded a regular diploma. If the student does not attain a minimum score on the competency or gateway test, he/she shall be awarded a special education diploma upon graduation.³

- Students who successfully complete all graduation requirements will be awarded a regular diploma. Students who complete all graduation requirements but who have not passed the required competency tests or made passing scores on the required gateway tests (English II, Algebra I, and Biology) will be awarded a certificate of attendance.³

Early Graduation Requirements

A public school student may complete an early high school graduation program and be eligible for unconditional entry into a public two-year institution of higher education or conditional entry into a public four-year institution of higher education, if the student meets the requirements below:

- Each student desiring to complete an early graduation program shall indicate to the high school principal the student's intent prior to the beginning of grade nine (9) or as soon thereafter as the intent is known. The intent shall be indicated on a form provided by the department of education and signed by the parent.
- For early graduation and unconditional entry into a public two-year institution or conditional entry into a public four-year institution, a student shall:
 - (1) Achieve a benchmark score as determined by the state board of education for each subject area in which end-of-course examinations are administered;
 - (2) Successfully complete eighteen (18) credits to include:
 - (A) English I, II, III, and IV;
 - (B) Algebra I and II;
 - (C) Geometry;
 - (D) United States history;
 - (E) Two (2) courses in the same foreign language;
 - (F) One (1) course selected from the following: (i) Economics; (ii) Government; (iii) World Civilization; or (iv) World geography;
 - (G) One (1) course selected from the following: (i) History and appreciation of visual and performing arts; or (ii) A standards-based arts course, which may include studio art, band, chorus, dance, or other performing arts;
 - (H) Health;
 - (I) Physical Education;
 - (J) Biology;
 - (K) Chemistry;
 - (3) Have a cumulative grade point average of at least 3.2 on a 4-point scale;
 - (4) Score on either the ACT or the SAT at or above benchmarks set by the Tennessee higher education commission for mathematics and English;
 - (5) Obtain a qualifying benchmark score as determined by the state board of education on a world language proficiency assessment approved by the board; and

(6) Complete at least two (2) courses from the following types of courses:

(A) AP

(B) IB

(C) Dual Enrollment

(D) Dual Credit

The courses specified in the 18 credits may be dual enrollment or dual credit courses, AP or IB courses, or standard courses for which high school credit is granted. Selected courses, as determined by the state board of education, may be completed at the middle school level.

A student in the early graduation program may take two (2) high school English courses in an academic year.

A student who completes the early graduation program in accordance with these requirements qualifies for unconditional admittance to all public two-year institutions of higher education. A public four-year institution may accept a student who completes the early graduation program.

A student pursuing early graduation in accordance with these requirements is exempt from additional graduation requirements established by the state board of education. A student who completes the early graduation program shall be awarded a high school diploma.

The state board of education and the Tennessee higher education commission shall set the required benchmarks at scores that demonstrate exemplary high school performance and are indicative of an ability to perform college-level work.

The state board of education or a local board of education shall not impose graduation requirements that would prohibit a student who is pursuing an early graduation program as outlined above from completing high school in less than four (4) years.

Adjustment of Graduation Requirements – Provisions for Students of Military Parents

SCS shall waive specific courses required for graduation for students of military parents who enroll/transfer into the district if the student has satisfactorily completed similar course work in another district; or SCS shall provide reasonable justification for the denial. If a waiver is not granted to a student who would qualify to graduate from the sending school, SCS shall provide an alternative means of acquiring the required course work.

SCS shall accept the exit or end-of-course exams required for graduation from the sending state, norm-referenced achievement tests, or alternative testing in lieu of testing requirements mandated for graduation by the state of Tennessee or SCS. If alternatives cannot be accommodated by SCS for a student transferring in his/her senior year, SCS and the sending

district shall ensure the receipt of a diploma from the sending district, if the student meets graduation requirements in the sending district.

Additionally, for a student of military parents transferring to SCS at the beginning or during his/her senior year, who is ineligible to graduate after all alternatives have been considered, SCS and the sending district shall ensure the receipt of a diploma from the sending district, if the student meets graduation requirements in the sending district. If the sending district is not a member of the Interstate Commission, SCS shall use best efforts to facilitate the on-time graduation of the student through adjustment of graduation requirements based on course waivers and acceptance of the sending state's examinations/tests or alternative testing.

SPECIAL EDUCATION DIPLOMA

A special education diploma may be awarded at the end of their fourth year of high school to students with disabilities who have (1) not met the requirements for a high school diploma, (2) have satisfactorily completed an individualized education program, and (3) have satisfactory records of attendance and conduct. Students who obtain the special education diploma may continue to work towards the high school diploma through the end of the school year in which they turn twenty-two years old.

EQUIVALENCY HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA (GED)

The equivalency diploma will be issued on the basis of successful completion of the General Educational Development Test, as determined by the Tennessee Department of Education and the Tennessee Department of Labor and Workforce Development.

Pupil Course Work Load

All full time students in grades 9-12 shall be enrolled each semester in subjects that produce a minimum of five units of credit for graduation per year.

Students with hardships and gifted students may appeal this requirement to the local school superintendent and then to the local board of education.

Testing for Credit

Shelby County Schools may offer credit by examination to students who have taken the equivalent of high school level courses. High school credit may not be given by examination in American History.⁵

Legal References:

1. TCA 49-6-6001; TRR/MS 0520-1-3-.06
2. TRR/MS 0520-1-3-.06(3)
3. TRR/MS 0520-1-3-.06(1)(d)
4. TRR/MS 0520-1-3-.03(6)
5. TRR/MS 0520-1-3-.06(1)(b)(2);TRR/MS 0520-1-3-6(2)
6. Title 49, Chapter 12, Part 3 - Part Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children

