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INTRODUCTION

On April 20, 2006, Governor Jennifer M. Granholm signed into law one of the most comprehensive sets of high school graduation requirements in the nation called the *Michigan Merit Curriculum*. This law is a result of an extraordinary partnership between Governor Granholm, the State Board of Education, the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, the Legislature, and numerous education associations who worked together to better prepare students for greater success and to secure the economic future of our state.

As a result, a high school diploma in Michigan will soon say a lot more about the graduate whose name it bears. It will tell employers that our students have mastered the reading, writing, and math skills required for success in the workplace. It will tell college and university admissions officers and career and technical schools the student is ready for the rigors of post-secondary education. It will tell the world -- Michigan is committed to having the best-educated workforce.

The Michigan Merit Curriculum defines a common set of required credits for graduation and provides educators with a common understanding of what student's should know and be able to do for credit. It also provides students the learning opportunity, knowledge and skills they need to succeed in college or the workplace.

Michigan Merit Curriculum

The Michigan Merit Curriculum requires students entering 8th grade in 2006, to obtain a minimum of 16 credits for graduation, which could be met using alternative instructional delivery methods such as alternative course work, humanities course sequences, career and technology courses, industrial technology or vocational education courses, or through a combination of these programs.

The new law also requires students to have an online course or learning experience. For a student to meet this requirement, the student must meet either of the following, as determined by the school district or public school academy: 1) Has successfully completed at least 1 course or learning experience that is presented online, as defined by the Michigan Department of Education (MDE); and 2) The student's school district or public school academy has integrated an online experience throughout the high school curriculum by ensuring that each teacher of each course that provides the required credits of the Michigan merit curriculum has integrated an online experience into the course.

In addition, students entering the 3rd grade in 2006 will need to complete two credits of a language other than English in grades 9-12; OR an equivalent learning experience in grades K-12 prior to graduation. High School Content Expectations and Course/Credit Content Expectations and Guidelines are available on the Michigan Department of Education's high school web page at www.mi.gov/highschool.

Michigan Merit Curriculum High School Graduation Requirements <i>Effective Beginning with Students</i> <i>Entering 8th Grade in 2006 (Class 2011)</i>	
MATHEMATICS - 4 Credits	
Algebra I Algebra II	Geometry One math course in final year of high school
ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS - 4 Credits	
English Language Arts 9 English Language Arts 10	English Language Arts 11 English Language Arts 12
SCIENCE - 3 Credits	
Biology Physics or Chemistry	One additional science credit
SOCIAL STUDIES - 3 Credits	
.5 credit in Civics U.S. History and Geography	.5 credit in Economics World History and Geography
PHYSICAL EDUCATION & HEALTH - 1 Credit	
VISUAL, PERFORMING AND APPLIED ARTS - 1 Credit	
ONLINE LEARNING EXPERIENCE Course, Learning or Integrated Learning Experience	
WORLD LANGUAGE - 2 Credits In grades 9-12; OR an equivalent learning experience in grades K-12 <i>Effective Beginning with Students</i> <i>Entering 3rd Grade in 2011 (Class of 2016)</i>	

MICHIGAN MERIT CURRICULUM

Questions & Answers

3. Q: What's the difference between the state's current graduation requirements and the new Michigan Merit Curriculum high school graduation requirements?

A: Prior to the passage of the Michigan Merit Curriculum, the state of Michigan required only one semester of Civics for high school graduation. The new law, which goes into effect beginning with students entering the 8th grade in 2006, is designed for the 21st Century student. The curriculum is required of each and every student. It supports the need for personalization, acceleration, and innovation in an atmosphere of high expectations and high support for students.

The Michigan Merit Curriculum is crafted around the philosophical belief that all students will need extended learning opportunities for extended learning beyond high school. As the learning skills for college and the workplace have merged, this curriculum will prepare students with the skills and knowledge needed to be successful in our global economy and workplace.

4. Q: Don't most school districts already have similar graduation requirements?

A: While most districts have adopted graduation requirements, the number and type of credits vary widely throughout the state. The Michigan Merit Curriculum will provide all students a common set of credit requirements for graduation and will provide educators with a common understanding of what students should know and be able to do for credit.

5. Q: How does the Michigan Merit Curriculum compare with other states' graduation requirements?

A: Michigan's new high school graduation requirements are regarded as among the best in the nation. In addition to requiring students to earn a full complement of math, science, English and other credits to receive their diplomas, Michigan is the first state to require students to have an online learning experience to prepare them for postsecondary education and the workplace. In addition, in order to work in our global economy, students entering 3rd grade in 2006 and beyond will also need to complete two credits of languages other than English or equivalent K-12 experience prior to graduation.

6. Q: Does the Michigan Merit Curriculum allow decisions to be made by local school districts?

A: Yes. Local school districts will continue to issue diplomas, align curriculum, determine what constitutes a credit, establish a credit award system, identify assessments, set school calendars, select and purchase textbooks, etc. Local school boards and districts will continue to have flexibility to determine "how" to implement these new graduation requirements and when students have earned the credits. The Michigan Department of Education will continue to develop content expectations and guidelines to determine "what" students should know and be able to do to receive Michigan Merit Curriculum high school graduation credit.

Local boards of education also will continue to establish additional graduation requirements beyond those in the Michigan Merit Curriculum and the total number of credits required for graduation. However, a district cannot establish lesser requirements.

7. Q: Different school districts have varying ways in which they schedule their high school class day. Will these new requirements force districts to change their high school class day schedules?

A: No. The requirements allow districts the flexibility to maintain their current scheduling system or to develop other systems to meet the individual needs and desires of each district.

8. Q: Will the Michigan Merit Curriculum reduce the number of electives students may take?

A: The Michigan Merit Curriculum continues to allow districts to determine the number of electives offered to their students. It also provides students the flexibility to select additional electives and/or earn graduation credit through online courses, by testing out, attending summer school, and other local options.

9. Q: Why can't we take longer to implement new graduation requirements – it feels like we are rushing toward this change?

A: Michigan's economic future is on the line. Today, far too many students are graduating from high school without the knowledge and skills they need to be successful in college or the workplace. The implementation of this new curriculum will not only help students, but will benefit the state as a whole. If we implement this change with next year's 9th graders, we will still be four years away from preparing 100% of Michigan students for work and postsecondary education in the 21st Century.

10. Q: Will this push some struggling students to drop out rather than attempt to meet the demands of a harder curriculum?

A: Research tells us that students do not drop out because they have a more rigorous curriculum and/or are asked to work harder. Rather, studies show students of all abilities are more likely to pass high-level courses than low-level courses, graduate from school, get better grades, succeed in college without requiring remedial education classes, be better prepared for the workforce, and earn higher wages. For more information, go to <http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ovae/pi/hsinit/papers/highex.doc>

11. Q: Don't you think that making the high school credit requirements so rigorous is an invitation to return to "tracking" kids?

A: On the contrary. The Michigan Merit Curriculum is intended to provide all students with the same rigorous curriculum and credit content.

ALTERNATIVE AND ADULT EDUCATION (UPDATED 9.07)

What the Michigan Merit Curriculum Law Says on Alternative Education

380.1278(b)(7) Requires the Michigan Department of Education to develop and make available material to assist school districts and public school academies in implementing the Michigan Merit Curriculum requirements. This shall include developing guidelines for alternative instructional delivery methods.

380.1278(b)(3)(e) The board of a school district or board of directors of a public school academy that operates a high school shall ensure that each pupil is offered the curriculum necessary for the pupil to meet the Michigan Merit Curriculum requirements. The board or board of directors may provide this curriculum by using alternative instructional delivery methods such as alternative course work, humanities course sequences, career and technical education, industrial technology courses, or vocational education, or by a combination of these. School districts and public school academies that operate career and technical education programs are encouraged to integrate the credit requirements into those programs.

Questions & Answers

1. Q: Will students attending alternative education programs have to meet all of these requirements to receive a diploma?

A: While alternative schools often have alternative methods to deliver the high school curriculum, the law requires that all students, beginning with those in 8th grade in 2006, meet the Michigan Merit Curriculum requirements to receive a high school diploma. If the alternative education program leads to a high school diploma (and not a GED) and the student was in 8th grade or an earlier grade in 2006, the student attending the program is expected to meet the Michigan Merit Curriculum credit requirements.

Alternative and Adult Education 6/07 Additions

2. Q: Are you aware of any changes that will be made to the requirements pertaining to Alternative Education students?

A: There are two recent developments pertaining to students in Alternative Education programs. First, the Michigan Department of Education has applied to the U.S. Department of Education for permission, on a case by case basis, to count as high school graduates students in alternative high schools that are enrolled for a fifth year and graduate after that fifth year. This will provide districts with additional flexibility to ensure students in this setting have additional time to make up credits or obtain the appropriate support necessary to graduate.

Secondly, there are discussions regarding a change to the law to allow a district to continue to receive state aid for a student who is still 21 years old by September 1st. Currently, the law will not provide funding for students 20 years of age by September 1st.

3. Q: How do the new graduation requirements apply to Adult Education students?

A: The new requirements are effective for all students who were in the 8th grade during the 2006-07 school year or later. Adult education students who entered 8th grade during the 2005-06 school year or earlier are not subject to the new Michigan Merit Curriculum state high school graduation requirements. These students qualify for a high school diploma under the conditions and requirements in effect in the programs in which they are enrolled.

Adult education programs, beginning in 2010 or 2011 (when it might be expected that an 8th grader this year would not have finished high school and might be enrolling in adult education) should maintain separate records for students to whom the new requirements apply and older students to whom they do not.

4. Q: How do the new graduation requirements apply to the GED?

A: They do not. The General Educational Development (GED) is an equivalency diploma issued by the U. S. government and is subject to its own criteria.

ASSESSMENT

What the Michigan Merit Curriculum Law Says (from various sections of law)

380.1278(a)(4)(b) A school district or public school academy shall base its determination of whether a pupil has successfully completed the subject area content expectations or guidelines developed by the department that apply to a credit at least in part on the pupil's performance on the assessments developed or selected by the department or on 1 or more assessments developed or selected by the school district or public school academy that measure a pupil's understanding of the subject area content expectations or guidelines that apply to the credit.

380.1278(a)(4)(c) A school district or public school academy shall also grant a pupil a credit if the pupil earns a qualifying score, as determined by the department, on the assessments developed or selected for the subject area by the department or the pupil earns a qualifying score, as determined by the school district or public school academy, on 1 or more assessments developed or selected by the school district or public school academy that measure a pupil's understanding of the subject area content expectations or guidelines that apply to the credit.

380.1278(a)(3) The requirements for a high school diploma are in addition to any local requirements imposed by the board of a school district or board of directors of a public school academy. The board of a school district or board of directors of a public school academy, as a local requirement for a high school diploma, may require a pupil to complete some or all of the subject area assessments, the Michigan Merit Examination, or MI Access assessments, if appropriate for the pupil.

380.1278(b)(1)(d) Not later than 3 years after the effective date of this section, develop or select and approve assessments that may be used by school districts and public school academies to determine whether a pupil has successfully completed a credit required under the Michigan merit standard under subsection (1) or section 1278a(1)(a). The assessments for each credit shall measure a pupil's understanding of the subject area content expectations or guidelines that apply to the credit. The department shall develop or select and approve assessments for at least each of the following credits: algebra I, geometry, algebra II, Earth science, biology, physics, chemistry, grade 9 English, grade 10 English, grade 11 English, grade 12 English, world history, United States history, economics, and civics.

What the Michigan Merit Exam Law Says (Updated 1/08)

388.1704b Michigan merit examination.

Sec. 104b (1) Beginning in the 2006 calendar year, in order to receive state aid under this act, a district shall comply with this section and shall administer the state assessments under section 1279 or the Michigan merit examination to pupils in grade 11 as provided in this section, as follows:

(a) For pupils in grade 11 in the 2005-2006 school year, the provisions concerning state assessments under section 104a apply to all pupils in grade 11 and the Michigan merit examination shall be administered to a sample of pupils in grade 11 statewide, as identified by the department. The pupils to be included in this sample shall be determined by the department as the department determines necessary to seek the approval of the United States department of education to use the Michigan merit examination for the purposes of the federal no child left behind act of 2001, Public Law 107-110.

(b) Subject to subdivision (c), for pupils in grade 11 in the 2006-2007 school year and subsequent school years, the Michigan merit examination shall be offered to all pupils in grade 11.

What the Michigan Merit Exam Law Says (continued)

(c) If the United States department of education has not approved the use of the Michigan merit examination for the purposes of the federal no child left behind act of 2001, Public Law 107-110, by December 31, 2006, all of the following apply:

(i) The provisions concerning state assessments under section 104a shall continue to apply to all pupils in grade 11 until the next calendar year that begins after that approval occurs.

(ii) The Michigan merit examination shall be offered to all pupils in grade 11 beginning in the next calendar year that begins after that approval occurs.

(iii) If it is necessary as part of the process of continuing to seek the approval of the United States department of education to use the Michigan merit examination for the purposes of the federal no child left behind act of 2001, Public Law 107-110, the department may again provide for the administration of both the state assessments under section 104a and the Michigan merit examination to a sample of pupils in grade 11 statewide as described in subdivision (a).

388.1704b Michigan merit examination.

(2) The department shall take all steps necessary, including, but not limited to, conducting a content alignment study and statistical analyses, to obtain the approval of the United States department of education to use the Michigan merit examination for the purposes of the federal no child left behind act of 2001, Public Law 107-110, by not later than December 31, 2006 or as soon thereafter as possible.

(3) For the purposes of this section, the department of management and budget shall contract with 1 or more providers to develop, supply, and score the Michigan merit examination. The Michigan merit examination shall consist of all of the following:

(a) Assessment instruments that measure English language arts, mathematics, reading, and science and are used by colleges and universities in this state for entrance or placement purposes.

(b) One or more tests from 1 or more test developers that assess a pupil's ability to apply reading and mathematics skills in a manner that is intended to allow employers to use the results in making employment decisions.

(c) A social studies component.

(d) Any other component that is necessary to obtain the approval of the United States department of education to use the Michigan merit examination for the purposes of the federal no child left behind act of 2001, Public Law 107-110.

(4) In addition to all other requirements of this section, all of the following apply to the Michigan merit examination:

(a) The department of management and budget and the superintendent shall ensure that any contractor used for scoring the Michigan merit examination supplies an individual report for each pupil that will identify for the pupil's parents and teachers whether the pupil met expectations or failed to meet expectations for each standard, to allow the pupil's parents and teachers to assess and remedy problems before the pupil moves to the next grade.

(b) The department of management and budget and the superintendent shall ensure that any contractor used for scoring, developing, or processing the Michigan merit examination meets quality management standards commonly used in the assessment industry, including at least meeting level 2 of the capability maturity model developed by the software engineering institute of Carnegie Mellon university for the first year the Michigan merit examination is offered to all grade 11 pupils and at least meeting level 3 of the capability maturity model for subsequent years.

(c) The department of management and budget and the superintendent shall ensure that any contract for scoring, administering, or developing the Michigan merit examination includes specific deadlines for all steps of the assessment process, including, but not limited to, deadlines for the correct testing materials to be supplied to schools and for the correct results to be returned to schools, and includes penalties for noncompliance with these deadlines.

What the Michigan Merit Exam Law Says (continued)

(d) The superintendent shall ensure that the Michigan merit examination meets all of the following:

(i) Is designed to test pupils on grade level content expectations or course content expectations, as appropriate, in all subjects tested.

(ii) Complies with requirements of the no child left behind act of 2001, Public Law 107-110.

(iii) Is consistent with the code of fair testing practices in education prepared by the joint committee on testing practices of the American psychological association.

(iv) Is factually accurate. If the superintendent determines that a question is not factually accurate and should be removed from an assessment instrument, the state board and the superintendent shall ensure that the question is removed from the assessment instrument.

(5) Beginning with pupils completing grade 11 in 2006, a district shall include on each pupil's high school transcript all of the following:

(a) For each high school graduate who has completed the Michigan merit examination under this section, the pupil's scaled score on each subject area component of the Michigan merit examination.

(b) The number of school days the pupil was in attendance at school each school year during high school and the total number of school days in session for each of those school years.

(6) The superintendent shall work with the provider or providers of the Michigan merit examination to produce Michigan merit examination subject area scores for each pupil participating in the Michigan merit examination, including scaling and merging of test items for the different subject area components. The superintendent shall design and distribute to districts, intermediate districts, and nonpublic schools a simple and concise document that describes the scoring for each subject area and indicates the scaled score ranges for each subject area.

(7) The Michigan merit examination shall be administered each year after March 1 and before June 1 to pupils in grade 11. The superintendent shall ensure that the Michigan merit examination is scored and the scores are returned to pupils, their parents or legal guardians, and districts not later than the beginning of the pupil's first semester of grade 12. The returned scores shall indicate at least the pupil's scaled score for each subject area component and the range of scaled scores for each subject area. In reporting the scores to pupils, parents, and schools, the superintendent shall provide standards-specific, meaningful, and timely feedback on the pupil's performance on the Michigan merit examination.

(8) A pupil who does not qualify for a Michigan merit award scholarship under the Michigan merit award scholarship act, 1999 PA 94, MCL 390.1451 to 390.1459, and who wants to repeat the Michigan merit examination may repeat the Michigan merit examination in the next school year on a designated testing date. The first time a pupil repeats the Michigan merit examination under this subsection shall be without charge to the pupil, but the pupil is responsible for paying the cost of any subsequent repeat.

(9) The superintendent shall ensure that the length of the Michigan merit examination and the combined total time necessary to administer all of the components of the Michigan merit examination are the shortest possible that will still maintain the degree of reliability and validity of the Michigan merit examination results determined necessary by the superintendent. The superintendent shall ensure that the maximum total combined length of time that schools are required to set aside for administration of all of the components of the Michigan merit examination does not exceed 8 hours.

(10) A district shall provide accommodations to a pupil with disabilities for the Michigan merit examination, as provided under section 504 of title V of the rehabilitation act of 1973, 29 USC 794; subtitle A of title II of the Americans with disabilities act of 1990, 42 USC 12131 to 12134; the individuals with disabilities education act amendments of 1997, Public Law 105-17; and the implementing regulations for those statutes. The provider or providers of the Michigan merit examination and the superintendent shall mutually agree upon the accommodations to be provided under this subsection.

What the Michigan Merit Exam Law Says (continued)

(11) To the greatest extent possible, the Michigan merit examination shall be based on grade level content expectations or course content expectations, as appropriate.

(12) A child who is a student in a nonpublic school or home school may take the Michigan merit examination under this section. To take the Michigan merit examination, a child who is a student in a home school shall contact the district in which the child resides, and that district shall administer the Michigan merit examination, or the child may take the Michigan merit examination at a nonpublic school if allowed by the nonpublic school. Upon request from a nonpublic school, the superintendent shall direct the provider or providers to supply the Michigan merit examination to the nonpublic school and the nonpublic school may administer the Michigan merit examination. If a district administers the Michigan merit examination under this subsection to a child who is not enrolled in the district, the scores for that child are not considered for any purpose to be scores of a pupil of the district.

(13) In contracting under subsection (3), the department of management and budget shall consider a contractor that provides electronically-scored essays with the ability to score constructed response feedback in multiple languages and provide ongoing instruction and feedback.

(14) The purpose of the Michigan merit examination is to assess pupil performance in mathematics, science, social studies, and English language arts for the purpose of improving academic achievement and establishing a statewide standard of competency. The assessment under this section provides a common measure of data that will contribute to the improvement of Michigan schools' curriculum and instruction by encouraging alignment with Michigan's curriculum framework standards and promotes pupil participation in higher level mathematics, science, social studies, and English language arts courses. These standards are based upon the expectations of what pupils should learn through high school and are aligned with national standards.

(15) As used in this section:

(a) "English language arts" means reading and writing.

(b) "Social studies" means United States history, world history, world geography, economics, and American government.

Background Information (NEW)

Under the new law outlined above, the Michigan Department of Education must develop or select and approve assessments for at least each of the following credits: Algebra I, Geometry, Algebra II, Earth Science, Biology, Physics, Chemistry, World History and Geography, United States History and Geography, Economics, Civics, and English in Grades 9 through 12. The assessments for each credit must measure a student's understanding of the content expectations or guidelines for that credit.

Status (NEW)

Currently, the Department is in the process of creating Secondary Credit Assessments, which includes summative assessments in 17 course content areas.

As of May 2007, the Department has developed prototypes of Secondary Credit Assessments in two areas: Algebra I and Geometry. These exams were written by Michigan educators in the summer of 2006 and were pilot-tested in Michigan classrooms in January 2007. They represent a first attempt to create instruments that schools can use. They cannot at this time be considered the official state Secondary Credit Assessment but are being provided at the request of districts who would like some state instrument to verify the rigor of their classes or, in some cases, to use for purposes of student assessment. These prototypes are now available to download in Adobe Acrobat PDF format on the OEAA secure website at <https://oeaa.state.mi.us/meap/>.

No testing services (printing of test booklets and answer documents, assessment administration services, scoring and reporting) are available. Districts, however, may print, use, and score the prototype exams to assess students who have taken these course/credit areas and/or to help gauge the extent to which current course content is aligned with the High School Content Expectations for Algebra I and Geometry. The Department indicated a recommended passing score for earning credit when the tests were posted on the web.

Guidelines for the use of Secondary Credit Assessments are still under development. At this time, however, the Department strongly advises that where a Secondary Credit Assessment is used as the final exam for a student taking a class or course (as opposed to "testing out" without having taken the class), the score on the Secondary Credit Assessment should not count for more than 20-25% of the student's final grade in the class.

In addition, the Department has requested funding to begin the development of the assessments for the other course/credit areas. If provided by the legislature, this funding would permit the Department to begin the development of some of the assessments in summer/fall, 2007. Our priority areas are course/credit areas that freshman or sophomores would typically take, including Algebra I, Geometry, Biology, and English 9. If funds permit, assessments would also be created in Chemistry and English 10. (Updated 10.07)

Questions & Answers

1. Q: Who determines the type of secondary course/credit assessment a district could choose?

A: The local district has the flexibility to determine when an assessment(s) is given, as well as develop or select district or state assessments that measure students' understanding of the content expectations for credit.

2. Q: Who determines the score a student or students must meet to pass or meet the assessment requirements?

A: A district can select or develop a local assessment for which it establishes a passing score. Alternatively, the district can elect to use a state assessment, in which case the state determines a passing or cut score.

3. Q: What if the student has passed the class, but fails the assessment? Does the student fail the course?

A: Districts continue to have authority to establish policy on this issue. While the law requires a district to base a student's successful completion, at least in part, on student performance on subject area assessments, the amount the assessment counts toward a student's total grade is up to the district. Therefore, awarding credit is a local district decision. The department strongly urges, however, that when a district or state Secondary Credit Assessment is used as a "final exam" in the course, the exam not count more than 20-25% of the student's final grade. This is to honor and respect the student's performance on other aspects of the course: the teacher's assessments, homework, assignments or class projects, class participation, etc. (Updated 8/07)

4. Q: Will the state be developing credit assessments?

A: The information previously included has been updated and may now be found in the Background and Update information in this document outlined prior to the Questions and Answer section.

5. Q: Will assessments be created for integrated math sequences and integrated science sequences?

A: Not at this time. These sequences are optional versus mandated in the Michigan Merit Curriculum. Therefore, districts using an integrated math approach should determine at what point in the integrated math sequence students are ready to be assessed on the Course Content Expectations for Algebra I, etc. Districts also will be responsible for selecting the credit assessment to measure a student's understanding of the content expectations for credit. The goal of creating interim assessments (sometimes referred to as "testlets" or "modular tests") is to permit students who are receiving integrated or applied instruction to be assessed on the state's Secondary Credit Assessments. Districts would need to determine how the Secondary Credit Assessments would be divided among the grade levels and courses.

Assessment 8/07 Additions

6. Q: How will the testing out option be equitable when each school determines the criteria? Or, how will the state ensure that Algebra I Course Content Expectations (and the content expectations for all other courses) are being learned by all students in Michigan in the absence of a state developed test?

A: All schools will determine their requirements for student proficiency in the subject area content expectations. Schools using their own Secondary Credit Assessments will need to verify to themselves that the assessments used produce reliable and valid information, are aligned to and cover the content expectations for the credit area, and that the cut score they select is valid for the assessment. (Updated 10.07)

7. Q: What assessments will schools use until all the summative assessments are complete in 2009?

A: There are various assessments schools may use. Here are some examples, not intended to be comprehensive: (a) A series of shorter tests, used by the teacher over the course of the class which, taken together, cover the content expectations; (b) an assessment consisting of the end-of-unit examinations used by the teacher which, combined, provides coverage of the content expectations; (c) a written assessment plus a demonstration, performance, or participation element; (d) a "portfolio, performance, paper, project, or presentation" (380.1279b).

8. Q: Doesn't the ACT test cover all the HSCes?

A: The ACT covers only some of the High School Content Expectations (and only those appropriate through the end of Grade 11), so it is necessary each year for the Department to determine which content is not covered by the ACT so that augmented assessments can be provided to ensure full alignment with State content expectations. (Updated 10.07)

9. Q: When will the Department's Secondary Credit Assessments be ready?

A: Prototype summative assessments for Algebra I and Geometry have been developed piloted and are available on the MEAP secure testing site. Prototype unit and/or summative assessments are being developed for Biology and English 9 for release in May 2008. (Updated 10.07)

10. Q: Will there be requirements suggested for testing out options that exceed a paper/pencil test as many of the HSCE/ELA proficiencies cannot be measured in that way?

A: The state does not intend at this time to develop requirements or guidelines for assessments districts use for "testing out" purposes. Districts have the option of determining these and may include things beyond a paper-and-pencil Secondary Credit Assessments. Here are some examples, not intended to be comprehensive: (a) A written assessment plus a demonstration, performance, or participation element; or (b) a "portfolio, performance, paper, project, or presentation" (380.1279b).

11. Q: Does the MDE plan on offering professional development once the assessments are ready?

A: The Office of Educational Assessment and Accountability plans to offer workshop sessions at their Fall Conferences and at the Michigan School Testing Conference in February of each year.

12. Q: What districts are developing or working on benchmark and secondary credit assessments?

A: Several Intermediate School Districts (ISDs) and local educational agencies have been working on benchmark and secondary credit assessments, including Monroe ISD, Oakland Schools, Calhoun ISD, Bay-Arenac ISD, Ann Arbor Public Schools and others.

13. Q: Will 8th graders take the new test in 2010?

A: Yes. Students who were in the 8th grade in 2006-07 will be required to take assessments to verify that they have gained the knowledge and skills needed to earn credit for course content. This will not necessarily be a single test, but a series of assessments taken over the course of the students' high school years. These assessments may be developed or approved by the local district, and may indeed be the assessments teachers are already using if these can be demonstrated to cover all the new course/credit content expectations. The law states that the award of credit must be based "in part" on assessments developed by the district or the state.

14. Q: Is the formula for determining high school graduation rate in Michigan changing? If so, how?

A: Yes. In 2005, governors of all 50 states signed the National Governor's Association (NGA) Graduation Counts Compact, committing the states to a common method for calculating graduation rate. In 2008, Michigan will report its graduation rate publicly according to the Compact formula. The State will use the Single Record Student Database (SRSD), which is able to track students as they move from school to school within the State, making the graduation rate very accurate. For more information, visit <http://www.nga.org/files/pdf/0608GRADPROGRESS.PDF> .

15. Q: What is the plan, status and timeline for the Secondary Credit Assessments for each content area?

A: Over the next four years, the OEAA plans to offer interim and summative assessments for all 17 required course content areas, provided that funds are available. The proposed schedule is shown on the following page.

Proposed SCAS Development Schedule (Updated 3.05.08)

Year	English	Math	Science	Social Studies
2007-08	English 9	Algebra I Geometry	Biology	
2008-09	English 10		Chemistry Earth Science	US & World History plus Geography
2009-10	English 11	Algebra II Statistics & Probability	Physics	World History plus Geography
2010-11	English 12	Pre-Calculus	Earth Science	Civics Economics

16. Q: We need further guidance about assessments: When will draft documents become available and how is MDE envisioning they will be implemented?

A: The Department plans to release assessment blueprints as each of the 17 course area assessments are developed.

17. Q: Will the Michigan Department of Education be providing short cycle formative assessments or summative assessments for the High School Content Expectations in the four core content areas?

A: The Department plans to offer interim benchmark (unit) and Secondary Credit Assessments as resources permit. In addition, the Department will offer assistance to local educators in how to implement meaningful formative assessment.

18. Q: What does the wraparound portion of the Michigan Merit Exam (MME) look like? Will the HSCEs make more sense to teachers once they have seen the actual assessment?

A: The Michigan portions of the MME will look like earlier versions of the MEAP. There is no plan currently to release any of the items from the MME, since ACT and WorkKeys are secure assessments and the Michigan portions are very resource consuming to produce.

19. Q: When will MDE make specific MME item analysis data available at the high school level?

A: There are no plans to make item analysis available, since it would not be meaningful in the absence of released items. In addition, ACT will not release the ACT or WorkKeys tests.

CAREER/TECHNICAL EDUCATION AND EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLANS

What the Michigan Merit Curriculum Law Says

380.1278b(7) *The board of a school district or board of directors of a public school academy that operates a high school shall ensure that each pupil is offered the curriculum necessary for the pupil to meet the Michigan Merit Curriculum. The board or board of directors may provide this curriculum by providing the credits by using alternative instructional delivery methods such as alternative course work, humanities course sequences, career and technical education, industrial technology courses, or vocational education, or by a combination of these. School districts and public school academies that operate career and technical education programs are encouraged to integrate the credit requirements into those programs.*

Educational Development Plan

380.1278b(11) *The board of a school district or board of directors of a public school academy shall ensure that each pupil in grade 7 is provided with the opportunity to develop an educational development plan, and that each pupil has developed an educational development plan before he or she begins high school. An educational development plan shall be developed by the pupil under the supervision of the pupil's school counselor or another designee qualified under section 68H380.1233 or 69H380.1233a selected by the high school principal and shall be based on a career pathways program or similar career exploration program.*

Questions & Answers

1. **Q: The description of the new graduation requirements implies some academic credit could be earned in Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs. How can this be done?**
(Updated 8/07)

A: On June 12, 2007, the State Board of Education was presented with the "Guidelines on Awarding Academic Credit." The document was developed over many months with input from MDE staff, the Office of Career and Technical Preparation, and practicing educators in Career and Technical Education. In the spring of 2007, CTE Administrators from around the state provided input to the document. The guidelines are posted on the Michigan Department of Education website.

These guidelines provide a format for using teacher work teams in each local district to examine the CTE curriculum and determine the amount of academic credit to award based on a crosswalk with the content expectations. Local districts are encouraged to use the guidelines for awarding academic credit in ways other than CTE as well. The process will help to legitimize that academic standards can be taught using a variety of delivery models and will hopefully inspire creativity and encourage teachers to include other teaching techniques, such as thematic units, project-based learning, portfolios and other strategies to provide the best possible learning options for students.

2. **Q: Can students earn credit through a CTE program?**

A: Yes. Career and Technical courses may be used to help students earn the necessary credits in a variety of required credit areas. For example, a district may allow a student to receive credit for Algebra or Geometry in building trades classes, if the district determines that the building trades program covers the required high school content expectations for those subjects. It is also possible for Career and Technical Education courses to be used to help students in an electronics class earn credit for the "one additional math or math-related" credit required in the Michigan Merit Curriculum. In addition, students, have the flexibility to earn merit core credits through online courses, testing out, summer school, and other local options.

Work is underway to align the CTE career cluster curriculum with the high school content expectations to identify the level of credit that can be awarded in each cluster for each core curriculum area.

3. Q: How will a CTE student demonstrate proficiency in the Michigan Merit Curriculum required course/credit?

A: A local district continues to have the authority to develop a method for determining and tracking student proficiency in meeting one or more course/credit content expectations for partial or full credit.

4. Q: Are CTE teachers required to be “highly qualified” to teach CTE courses that are subject to NCLB?

A: Yes. If the courses will be used to meet the course/content standards required for high school graduation, the CTE teacher must be highly qualified in the subject area OR participate in collaborative teaching with a highly qualified academic teacher. The CTE instructor also must be highly qualified and appropriately endorsed in the CTE subject area in which he/she are teaching. To see the “Guidelines for Award of Academic Credit document presented to the State Board of Education on June 12, 2007 visit [Guidelines on Awarding Academic Credit in Career and Technical Education, Humanities and Other Delivery Models](http://www.mi.gov/highschool) at www.mi.gov/highschool.

5. Q: Will the Michigan Merit Curriculum requirements impact the scheduling of regional Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs?

A: No. However, forward planning will be key. Students who wish to participate in regional Career and Technical programs should be able to schedule these for a full two-year sequence. Generally, students need one-half of the 6-period day (or three hours) for class instructional time and travel time to and from a center.

The graphic on the following page illustrates how students can participate in the two-year CTE program. It will be important, however, for students entering the 9th grade to know in advance that they will enroll in a CTE program in their junior and senior years and include this in their four-year high school plan. In addition, CTE classes may be able to meet some of the credit requirements in mathematics, science, English language arts, and social studies. After conducting alignment studies, districts may choose to offer special classes to supplement core content in CTE classes.

Additional information may now be found on at www.mi.gov/highschool under Guidelines on Awarding Academic Credit in Career and Technical Education, Humanities and Other Delivery Models.

SAMPLE CTE STUDENT SCHEDULES

Career and Technical Education

	Grade 9	Grade 10	Grade 11	Grade 12
Period 1	English 9	English 10	English 11	English 12
Period 2	Algebra 1	Geometry	Algebra II	Math-Related
Period 3	World History & Geography	US History & Geography	Gov/Econ	Science
Period 4	Biology	Chemistry	CTE	CTE
Period 5	Health/PE	Visual, Performing, and Applied Arts (VPAA)		
Period 6	Language Other Than English	Language Other Than English		

A similar schedule could be developed for students who are interested in the Visual and Performing Arts, outlined below.

Sample Student Schedule - Instrumental Music Emphasis

	Grade 9	Grade 10	Grade 11	Grade 12
Period 1	English 9	English 10	English 11	English 12
Period 2	Algebra I	Geometry	Algebra II	Math-Related
Period 3	World History	US History	Government/Economics	Science
Period 4	Biology	Chemistry or Physics	Language Other Than English	Elective/Elective
Period 5	Health/PE	Language Other Than English	Elective/Elective	Elective/Elective
Period 6	Band	Band	Band	Band

Many schools have expanded student course offerings with little or no additional costs, by going to an alternative schedule like:

- 4x4 or A/B Block A modified
- 6-period block
- Trimester
- Zero and 7th hour (modified staff reporting time)

EFFECT ON HIGH SCHOOL SCHEDULING

Questions & Answers

- 1. Q: Different school districts have varying ways in which they schedule their high school class day. Will these new requirements force districts to change their high school class day schedules?**

A: No. There is flexibility provided to school districts to maintain their current scheduling system or develop other systems to meet the individual needs and desires of each district. Sample scheduling options may be found on the following page.

Sample 7 Period Day Schedule

	Grade 9	Grade 10	Grade 11	Grade 12
Period 1	English 9	English 10	English 11	English 12
Period 2	Algebra I	Geometry	Algebra II	Math-Related
Period 3	Earth Science	Biology	Chemistry or Physics	CTE or Elective
Period 4	World History & Geography	US History & Geography	Government/Economics	CTE or Elective
Period 5	Health/PE	Visual, Performing and Applied Arts	CTE or Elective	CTE or Elective
Period 6	Language Other Than English	Language Other Than English	CTE or Elective	CTE or Elective
Period 7	Elective/ Elective	Elective/ Elective	CTE or Elective	CTE or Elective

Sample 4 x 4 Block / AB Block Schedule

First Semester or A Schedule

	Grade 9	Grade 10	Grade 11	Grade 12
Block 1	English 9	English 10	English 11	English 12
Block 2	Algebra 1	Geometry	Algebra II	Math-Related
Block 3	Health/PE	Language Other Than English	CTE or Elective	CTE or Elective
Block 4	Elective	Elective	CTE or Elective	CTE or Elective

Second Semester or B Schedule

	Grade 9	Grade 10	Grade 11	Grade 12
Block 1	World History & Geography	US History & Geography	Physics	Govt/Economics
Block 2	Biology	Chemistry	CTE or Elective	CTE or Elective
Block 3	Visual, Performing and Applied Arts	Elective	CTE or Elective	CTE or Elective
Block 4	Elective	Elective	CTE or Elective	CTE or Elective

Sample Trimester Schedule (Note: To provide educators ample time to cover all required content expectations in typical trimester schedule, longer class periods, which provide students with additional class time, may be required.)

Trimester 1	Grade 9	Grade 10	Grade 11	Grade 12
Period 1	English 9 A	English 10 A	CTE or Elective	CTE or Elective
Period 2	Biology A	US History & Geography A	CTE or Elective	CTE or Elective
Period 3	World History & Geography A	Elective	CTE or Elective	CTE or Elective
Period 4	Visual/Performing Arts A	Elective	English 11 A	English 12 A
Period 5	Algebra 1 A	Elective	Algebra II A	Math-Related A

Trimester 2	Grade 9	Grade 10	Grade 11	Grade 12
Period 1	Health/PE A	Elective	CTE or Elective	CTE or Elective
Period 2	Biology B	Elective	CTE or Elective	CTE or Elective
Period 3	Algebra 1 B	Chemistry A	CTE or Elective	CTE or Elective
Period 4	Visual/Performing Arts B	Geometry A	Algebra II B	math-Related B
Period 5	Language Other Than English 1A	Language Other Than English 2B	Economics	science A

Trimester 3	Grade 9	Grade 10	Grade 11	Grade 12
Period 1	English 9 B	English 10 B	CTE or Elective	CTE or Elective
Period 2	Health/PE B	US History & Geography B	CTE or Elective	CTE or Elective
Period 3	World History & Geography B	Chemistry B	CTE or Elective	CTE or Elective
Period 4	Language Other Than English 1B	Geometry B	Government	English 12 B
Period 5	Elective	Elective	English 11 B	Science B

DUAL ENROLLMENT, ADVANCED PLACEMENT AND INTERNATIONAL BACCALAUREATE

What the Michigan Merit Curriculum Law Says

380.1278b(14) This law does not prohibit a pupil from satisfying or exceeding the credit requirements of the Michigan Merit Curriculum through advanced studies such as accelerated course placement, advanced placement, dual enrollment in a postsecondary institution, or participation in the International Baccalaureate program or an early college/middle college program.

What the Postsecondary Enrollment Options Act 160 of 1996 Says

388.511(1) This act shall be known and may be cited as the "postsecondary enrollment options act".

388.512 Purpose of act. MCL 388.512 Purpose of act.

Sec. 2.

The purpose of this act is to provide a wider variety of options to high school pupils by encouraging and enabling qualified pupils to enroll in courses or programs in eligible postsecondary institutions.

388.513 Definitions; rules; scope.

Sec. 3.

(1) As used in this act:

(a) "Community college" means a community college established under the community college act of 1966, 1966 PA 331, MCL 389.1 to 389.195, or under part 25 of the revised school code, 1976 PA 451, MCL 380.1601 to 380.1607, or a federal tribally controlled community college located in this state that is recognized under the tribally controlled community college assistance act of 1978, 25 USC 1801 to 1852, and is determined by the department to meet the requirements for accreditation by a recognized regional accrediting body.

(b) "Department" means the department of education.

(c) "Eligible charges" means tuition and mandatory course fees, material fees, and registration fees required by an eligible institution for enrollment in an eligible course. Eligible charges also include any late fees charged by an eligible postsecondary institution due to the school district's failure to make a required payment according to the timetable prescribed under this act. Eligible charges do not include transportation or parking costs or activity fees.

(d) "Eligible course" means a course offered by an eligible postsecondary institution that is not offered by the school district in which the eligible student is enrolled, or that is offered by the school district but is determined by the board of the school district to not be available to the eligible student because of a scheduling conflict beyond the eligible student's control; that is an academic course not ordinarily taken as an activity course; that is a course that the postsecondary institution normally applies toward satisfaction of degree requirements; that is not a hobby craft or recreational course; and that is in a subject area other than physical education, theology, divinity, or religious education. However, until the 2006-2007 school year, for an eligible student who has not achieved state endorsement in all subject areas under section 1279 of the revised school code, 1976 PA 451, MCL 380.1279, an eligible course is limited to a course in a subject area for which he or she has achieved state endorsement, a course in computer science or foreign language not offered by the school district, or a course in fine arts as permitted by the school district. Beginning with eligibility to participate under this act during the 2006-2007 school year, for an eligible student who has not achieved a qualifying score in each subject area on a readiness assessment or the Michigan merit examination, as applicable for the student, an eligible course is limited to a course in a subject area for which he or she has achieved a qualifying score, a course in computer science or foreign language not offered by the school district, or a course in fine arts as permitted by the school district.

(e) "Eligible postsecondary institution" means a state university, community college, or independent nonprofit degree-granting college or university that is located in this state and that chooses to comply with this act.

(f) "Eligible student" means, except as otherwise provided in this subdivision, a student enrolled in at least 1 high school class in at least grade 11 in a school district in this state, except a foreign exchange pupil enrolled in a school district under a cultural exchange program. Until the 2006-2007 school year, to be an eligible student a student must have achieved state endorsement in all subject areas under section 1279 of the revised school code, 1976 PA 451, MCL 380.1279, and, subject to subsection (2), the student shall not have been enrolled in high school for more than 4 school years including the school year in which the student seeks to enroll in an eligible course under this act. However, if the student has not achieved state endorsement in all subject areas under that section, the student is an eligible student only for the limited purpose of enrolling in 1 or more eligible courses under this act in a subject area for which he or she has achieved state endorsement, in computer science or foreign language not offered by the school district, or in fine arts as permitted by the school district. Beginning with eligibility to participate under this act during the 2006-2007 school year, to be an eligible student a student who has not taken the Michigan merit examination must have achieved a qualifying score in all subject areas on a readiness assessment and a student who has taken the Michigan merit examination must have achieved a qualifying score in all subject areas on the Michigan merit examination, and, subject to subsection (2), the student shall not have been enrolled in high school for more than 4 school years including the school year in which the student seeks to enroll in an eligible course under this act. However, if the student has not achieved a qualifying score in all subject areas on a readiness assessment or the Michigan merit examination, as applicable for the student, the student is an eligible student only for the limited purpose of enrolling in 1 or more eligible courses under this act in a subject area for which he or she has achieved a qualifying score, in computer science or foreign language not offered by the school district, or in fine arts as permitted by the school district. For the purposes of determining the number of years a pupil has been enrolled in high school, a pupil who is enrolled in high school for less than 90 days of a school year due to illness or other circumstances beyond the control of the pupil or the pupil's parent or guardian is not considered to be enrolled in high school for that school year.

(g) "Intermediate school district" means that term as defined in section 4 of the revised school code, 1976 PA 451, MCL 380.4.

(h) "Michigan merit examination" means that examination developed under section 1279g of the revised school code, 1976 PA 451, MCL 380.1279g.

(i) "Qualifying score" means a score on a readiness assessment or the Michigan merit examination that has been determined by the superintendent of public instruction to indicate readiness to enroll in a postsecondary course in that subject area under this act.

(j) "Readiness assessment" means assessment instruments that are aligned with state learning standards; that are used nationally to provide high school students with an early indication of college readiness proficiency in English, mathematics, reading, social studies, and science and may contain a comprehensive career planning program; and that are approved by the superintendent of public instruction for the purposes of this act.

(k) "School district" means that term as defined in section 6 of the revised school code, 1976 PA 451, MCL 380.6, a local act school district as defined in section 5 of the revised school code, 1976 PA 451, MCL 380.5, or a public school academy as defined in section 5 of the revised school code, 1976 PA 451, MCL 380.5.

(l) "State university" means a state institution of higher education described in section 4, 5, or 6 of article VIII of the state constitution of 1963.

(2) The superintendent of public instruction shall promulgate rules establishing criteria and procedures under which a student who has been enrolled in high school for more than 4 years but not more than 5 years may be considered to be an eligible student. The rules shall address special circumstances under which a student may qualify to be considered an eligible student under this subsection and may limit the number of courses in which a student who qualifies under this subsection may enroll. For the purposes of determining the number of years a pupil has been enrolled in high school, a pupil who is enrolled in high school for less than 90 days of a school year due to illness or other circumstances

beyond the control of the pupil or the pupil's parent or guardian is not considered to be enrolled for that school year.

388.513a Readiness assessment; duties of superintendent of public instruction.

Sec. 3a.

(1) Not later than July 1, 2005, the superintendent of public instruction shall do both of the following:

(a) Approve 1 or more readiness assessments that may be used for the purposes of determining eligible students beginning with participation in the 2006-2007 school year. Readiness assessments shall be aligned with state learning standards and shall provide high school students with an early indication of proficiency in the subject areas of English, mathematics, reading, social studies, and science and contain a comprehensive career planning program.

(b) Determine qualifying scores for each subject area component of a readiness assessment that indicate readiness to enroll in a postsecondary course in that subject area under this act.

(2) Not later than July 1, 2006, the superintendent of public instruction shall determine qualifying scores for each subject area component of the Michigan merit examination that indicate readiness to enroll in a postsecondary course in that subject area under this act.

(3) Unless the school district in which the student is enrolled elects to pay these costs, a student who takes a readiness assessment for the purposes of this act is responsible for paying all costs for taking and obtaining qualifying scores on a readiness assessment for the purposes of this act. This state is not responsible for any of these costs.

388.514 Student eligibility; letter signed by student's principal; application for enrollment; notice to be sent by postsecondary institution; bill detailing eligible charges; payment by school district; late fee; attendance verification; refund; availability of correspondence; books as school property; section inapplicable to certain courses; transportation and parking costs not required.

Sec. 4.

(1) The school district in which an eligible student is enrolled shall provide to the eligible student a letter signed by the student's principal indicating the student's eligibility under this act.

(2) An eligible student may apply to an eligible postsecondary institution to enroll in 1 or more eligible courses offered by that eligible postsecondary institution and, if accepted, may enroll in 1 or more of those courses.

(3) Within a reasonable time after registration, the eligible postsecondary institution shall send written notice to the eligible student and his or her school district. The notice shall indicate the course or courses and hours of enrollment of that eligible student. The eligible postsecondary institution shall notify the eligible student about tuition, fees, books, materials, and other related charges, as determined by the postsecondary institution, in the customary manner used by the eligible postsecondary institution, and shall notify the eligible student of the estimated amount of the eligible charges that will be billed to the school district under subsection (4).

(4) Unless otherwise agreed between the eligible postsecondary institution and the school district, after the expiration of the institution's drop/add period for the course, an eligible postsecondary institution shall send a bill to the eligible student's school district detailing the eligible charges for each eligible course in which the student is enrolled under this act.

(5) Upon receiving the bill under subsection (4), the school district shall cause to be paid to the eligible postsecondary institution on behalf of the eligible student an amount equal to the lesser of the amount of the eligible charges or the prorated percentage of the state portion of the foundation allowance paid on behalf of that particular eligible student under section 20 of the state school aid act of 1979, Act No. 94 of the Public Acts of 1979, being section 388.1620 of the Michigan Compiled Laws, with the proration based on the proportion of the school year that the eligible student attends the postsecondary institution. A school district may pay more money to an eligible postsecondary institution on behalf of an eligible student than is required under this act, and may use local school operating revenue for that purpose. The

eligible student is responsible for payment of the remainder of the costs associated with his or her postsecondary enrollment that exceed the amount the school district is required to pay under this act and that are not paid by the school district. As used in this subsection, "local school operating revenue" means that term as defined in section 20 of Act No. 94 of the Public Acts of 1979.

(6) An eligible postsecondary institution shall not charge a late fee to an eligible student or a school district for a payment that is made in compliance with the timetable prescribed under this act even if the payment would otherwise be considered late by the postsecondary institution.

(7) A school district may require an eligible student to provide, on a form supplied by the school district, reasonable verification that the eligible student is regularly attending a postsecondary course.

(8) If an eligible student enrolled in an eligible course under this act does not complete the eligible course, and if the school district has paid money for the course on behalf of the student, the postsecondary institution shall forward to the school district any funds that are refundable due to noncompletion of the course. The school district shall then forward to the student any refunded money in excess of the amount paid by the school district for the course on behalf of the student.

(9) A school district shall make available to an eligible student enrolled in the school district copies of all correspondence in the possession of the school district regarding the eligible student's participation in postsecondary enrollment under this act. Correspondence described in this subsection shall be kept by the school district for at least 1 year.

(10) If a school district pays for books for an eligible student for a postsecondary course under this section, the books are the property of the school district and shall be turned over to the school district after the eligible student completes the course.

(11) This section does not apply to any postsecondary courses in which an eligible student is enrolled in addition to being enrolled full-time in that eligible student's school district; to a postsecondary course an eligible student is retaking after failing to achieve a satisfactory grade; or to a course contrary to the eligibility provisions of this act. In determining full-time enrollment in a school district under this act or full-time equated membership under Act No. 94 of the Public Acts of 1979, being sections 388.1601 to 388.1772 of the Michigan Compiled Laws, for pupils enrolled in a postsecondary institution under this act, the pupil's enrollment in both the school district and the postsecondary institution shall be counted as enrollment in the school district and a pupil shall not be considered to be enrolled in a school district less than full-time solely because of the effect of the pupil's postsecondary enrollment, including necessary travel time, on the number of class hours provided by the school district to the pupil.

(12) This act does not require a school district to pay or otherwise provide financial support for transportation or parking costs necessary for an eligible student to participate in postsecondary enrollment under this act. A school district is not liable for any injury incurred by an eligible student that is related to transportation necessary for the eligible student to participate in postsecondary enrollment under this act.

388.515 Participation in intercollegiate athletics prohibited.

Sec. 5.

An eligible student enrolled in a postsecondary institution under this act shall not participate in intercollegiate athletics at the postsecondary institution while he or she is enrolled under this act. An eligible student who violates this subsection forfeits his or her eligibility under this act.

388.516 Priority of students.

Sec. 6.

An eligible postsecondary institution may give priority to its postsecondary students when enrolling eligible students in postsecondary courses under this act for high school credit only. Once an eligible student has been enrolled in a postsecondary course under this act, the postsecondary institution shall not displace the eligible student with another student.

388.517 Academic credit.

Sec. 7.

(1) An eligible student may enroll in, and receive payment by the school district under section 4(5) of all or part of eligible charges for, an eligible course under this act for high school credit or postsecondary credit, or both. At the time an eligible student enrolls in a postsecondary course under this act, he or she shall designate whether the course is for high school or postsecondary credit, or both, and shall notify both his or her high school and the postsecondary institution of that designation. An eligible student taking more than 1 postsecondary course under this act may make different credit designations under this subsection for different courses. An eligible student shall not audit a postsecondary course in which he or she is enrolled under this act.

(2) A school district shall grant academic credit to an eligible student enrolled in an eligible course for high school credit under this act if he or she successfully completes the course, as determined by the eligible postsecondary institution. The amount of high school credit granted by a school district for a postsecondary course completed under this act shall be determined by the school district.

(3) The high school credits granted to an eligible student under this act shall be counted toward the graduation requirements and subject area requirements of the school district. Evidence of successful completion of each course and high school credits granted shall be included in the eligible student's high school record. Subject to section 438 of subpart 2 of part C of the general education provisions act, title IV of Public Law 90-247, 20 U.S.C. 1232g, commonly referred to as the family educational rights and privacy act of 1974, an eligible postsecondary institution shall provide the school district with a copy of the eligible student's grade in each course taken for high school credit under this act. Upon the request of an eligible student, his or her high school record and transcript shall also include evidence of successful completion and postsecondary credits granted for a course taken for postsecondary credit under this act. In either case, the eligible student's high school record and transcript shall indicate that the credits were earned at an eligible postsecondary institution and identify the postsecondary institution.

(4) If a student enrolls in an eligible postsecondary institution after leaving high school, the eligible postsecondary institution, in accordance with institutional policy, shall award postsecondary credit for postsecondary courses successfully completed by that student for high school credit under this act at that eligible postsecondary institution. An eligible postsecondary institution shall not charge a student for credit awarded under this subsection.

388.518 Enrollment without tuition or fee support.

Sec. 8.

This act does not restrict the ability of an eligible student or any other pupil to enroll in any postsecondary institution without tuition and fee support under this act.

388.519 Information and counseling services.

Sec. 9.

(1) Each school district shall provide information to all high school students on the postsecondary enrollment options under this act, including enrollment eligibility; the institutions and types of courses that are eligible for participation; the decision making process for granting academic credits; an explanation of eligible charges that will be paid by the school district and of financial arrangements for eligible charges and for paying costs not paid for by the school district; eligibility for payment of all or part of eligible charges by the school district under this act; an explanation that, if the student qualifies for payment of all or part of eligible charges by the school district under this act, the school district will pay that support directly to the postsecondary institution upon being billed by the postsecondary institution and that the student is not responsible for that payment but is responsible for payment of costs not paid for under this act; available support services; the need to arrange an appropriate schedule; consequences of failing or not completing a postsecondary course in which the eligible student enrolls; the effect of enrolling in a postsecondary course on the eligible student's ability to complete the required high school graduation requirements; and the academic and social responsibilities that must be assumed by the eligible student and his or her parent or guardian.

(2) To the extent possible, a school district shall provide counseling services to an eligible student and his or her parent or guardian before the eligible student enrolls in postsecondary courses under this act to ensure that the eligible student and his or her parent or guardian are fully aware of the benefits, risks, and possible consequences of enrolling in a postsecondary course. The person providing the counseling shall encourage the eligible student and his or her parent or guardian to also use available counseling services at the eligible postsecondary institutions before the quarter or semester of enrollment to ensure that anticipated plans are appropriate. A school district may provide the counseling required under this section in a group meeting if additional personalized counseling is also made available.

(3) Before enrolling in an eligible course at an eligible postsecondary institution under this act, an eligible student and his or her parent or guardian shall file with the eligible postsecondary institution a signed form provided by the eligible student's school district stating that the student is an eligible student and has received the information and counseling specified in subsections (1) and (2) and that the student understands the responsibilities that must be assumed in enrolling in the course. Upon request, the department shall provide technical assistance to a school district and to an eligible postsecondary institution in developing appropriate forms and counseling guidelines for purposes of this section.

388.520 General information.

Sec. 10.

By May 1, 1996, and by March 1 of each succeeding year, a school district shall provide general information about the postsecondary enrollment options under this act to all pupils in grade 8 or higher.

388.521 Annual comprehensive financial report; summary annual report.

Sec. 11.

(1) Each intermediate school district annually shall collect from each of its constituent school districts and provide to the department at the same time that it submits the annual comprehensive financial report required under section 18 of the state school aid act of 1979, Act No. 94 of the Public Acts of 1979, being section 388.1618 of the Michigan Compiled Laws, information for the immediately preceding school year on all of the following:

(a) The amount of money expended by the school district for payments required under this act.

(b) The number of eligible students who were enrolled in the school district and the number of those eligible students who enrolled in 1 or more postsecondary courses and received payment of all or part of eligible charges under this act, both in the aggregate and by grade level.

(c) The percentage of the school district's enrollment represented by the eligible students described in subdivision (b), both in the aggregate and by grade level.

(d) The total number of postsecondary courses for which the school district made payment under this act, the number of those courses for which postsecondary credit was granted, the number of those courses for which high school credit was granted, and the number of those courses that were not completed by the eligible student.

(2) Not later than March 1 of each year, the department shall prepare and submit to the house and senate fiscal agencies and the department of management and budget a summary annual report on the information received under subsection (1).

388.522 Rules.

Sec. 12.

(1) The department may promulgate rules it considers necessary to implement this act. Rules shall be promulgated under the administrative procedures act of 1969, Act No. 306 of the Public Acts of 1969, being sections 24.201 to 24.328 of the Michigan Compiled Laws.

(2) If the Michigan supreme court rules that sections 45 and 46 of the administrative procedures act of 1969, Act No. 306 of the Public Acts of 1969, being sections 24.245 and 24.246 of the Michigan Compiled Laws, are unconstitutional and a statute requiring legislative review of administrative rules is not enacted within 90 days after the Michigan supreme court ruling, the department may not promulgate rules under this section.

POSTSECONDARY DUAL ENROLLMENT CRITERIA FOR FIFTH-YEAR HIGH SCHOOL PUPILS

Filed with the Secretary of State on July 2, 2007

These rules become effective immediately upon filing with the Secretary of State unless adopted under section 33, 44, or 45a(6) of 1969 PA 306. Rules adopted under these sections become effective 7 days after filing with the Secretary of State.

(By the authority conferred on the superintendent of public instruction by sections 513 and 522 of 1996 PA 160, MCL 388.513 and MCL 388.522 and by authority conferred on the department of labor and economic growth in consultation with the superintendent of public instruction by sections 1903 and 1912 of 2000 PA 258, MCL 388.1903 and MCL 388.1912)

R 388.151, R 388.152, R 388.153, R 388.154, and R 388.155 of the Michigan Administrative Code are added to the Code as follows:

R 388.151 Applicability of rules.

Rule 1. These rules apply to criteria and procedures for postsecondary dual enrollment for fifth-year high school pupils in postsecondary or career and technical preparation courses.

R 388.152 Definitions.

Rule 2. As used in these rules:

(a) "Acts" means the postsecondary enrollment options act of 1996 PA 160, MCL 388.511 to MCL 388.524 and the career and technical preparation act of 2000 PA 258, 67HMCL [388.1901](#) to MCL 388.1913.

(b) "Early college high school" or "middle college" means a public high school designed to allow a pupil to earn a high school diploma and an associate's degree or up to 2 years of transferable college credits.

(c) "Fifth-year high school pupil" means a pupil who is enrolled in high school for more than 4 years pursuant to MCL 388.513(2) or MCL 388.1903(2) of the acts.

R 388.153 Eligible fifth-year high school pupils.

Rule 3. (1) Fifth-year high school pupils enrolled and in attendance at a school district, intermediate school district or public school academy including pupils enrolled and in attendance in an alternative education program operated by a school district, intermediate school district or public school academy may enroll in postsecondary dual enrollment courses under the acts if both of the following are met:

(a) The pupil has not met all of the necessary requirements to be eligible to receive a high school diploma.

(b) The pupil is enrolled in not more than 2 postsecondary dual enrollment courses taken at any given time and not more than 4 postsecondary enrollment courses taken during the school year.

(2) A fifth-year high school pupil enrolled and in attendance at an early college high school or middle college may enroll in postsecondary dual enrollment courses under the acts if the pupil has not met all of the necessary requirements to be eligible to receive a high school diploma.

R 388.154 Procedures.

Rule 4. The pupil shall have a plan on file at the district to complete district graduation requirements within the academic year, including postsecondary dual enrollment options. The plan shall be signed by the principal or designee, the parent or legal guardian, and the pupil. If the pupil is at least age 18 or is an emancipated minor, the pupil may act on his or her behalf under this rule.

R 388.155 Compliance; postsecondary enrollment options act and career and technical preparation act.

Rule 5. (1) In addition to the requirement of these rules, the district shall comply with all requirements under the acts.

(2) The acts do not prohibit a district from supporting any pupil regardless of eligibility under those acts. A district may elect to support college level courses or career preparation courses for any pupil if it is in the

Questions & Answers

1. Q: How will these new graduation requirements affect advanced learners?

A: For many students including advance learners who already have chosen a rigorous curriculum, the new state graduation requirements will be similar and should not result in a substantial change. For example, Advanced Placement (AP) courses in required subject areas such as mathematics, science, English language arts, social studies, or Visual, Performing and Applied Arts will satisfy the new state graduation requirements.

Michigan schools offering the International Baccalaureate (IB) program also would provide students the opportunity to meet the new graduation requirements since the IB program covers the credit areas listed in the requirements.

Students who are "dual-enrolled" in community college or university classes in the credit areas specified in the graduation requirements also would meet these requirements.

In addition, students who successfully complete a credit-earning online class through the Michigan Virtual High School, another provider of online courses, a community college, or a university (in a required graduation credit area, for example, US History & Geography) would be considered as having met the particular graduation requirement. In addition, by successfully completing the online course, the student also would be considered to have met the online requirement (for credit or not for credit) or learning experience. (Updated 8/07)

2. Q: Is a student allowed to count a math class taken through dual enrollment at a 2-year or 4-year institution for a mathematics credit required under the Michigan Merit Curriculum?

A: Yes. If the district determines the class meets the Michigan Merit Curriculum course/credit content expectations for that credit or the district's requirements for a 4th math credit. In addition, all students, regardless of where the credit is offered, should be held to the same level of proficiency (passing standards). This could be accomplished by working with the two-year or four-year institution to align its content and assessment to the credit content expectations. A district also could establish a policy requiring a student who successfully completed a credit at a two-year or four-year institution to take the credit assessment to earn credit.

Dual Enrollment Additions 9/07

3. Q: What is the law that governs early college credit opportunities for students?

A: The Postsecondary Enrollment Options Act (PSEOA) or Public Act 160 of 1996, provides for payment from a school district's state aid foundation grant for enrollment of certain eligible high school students in postsecondary courses of education. The law establishes eligibility criteria for students, institutions, and courses; requires eligible charges (tuition, mandatory course or material fees, and registrations fees) to be billed to a school district; establishes enrollment and credit requirements; requires school districts to provide counseling and information to eligible students and their parents; and requires intermediate school districts to report to the Department of Education.

Note: This law has been included at the beginning of this Dual Enrollment document.

4. Q: Must districts offer college level equivalent courses?

A: The Michigan State Board of Education approved recommendations in June 2006 that urge local high school districts to offer at least two college credit earning opportunities for the 2007-2008 school year to their students, with one of the opportunities being an Advanced Placement course. For the 2008-2009 school year, four such opportunities are recommended with at least two being Advanced Placement courses.

5. Q: Which postsecondary schools may students attend?

A: The law states that support is available to students attending any Michigan public or private, degree-granting postsecondary institution that chooses to participate. The Michigan Virtual High School, The Michigan Virtual AP Academy, and the Michigan Virtual University also are recognized by the state as accredited institutions.

6. Q: Are districts required to inform students of early college credit opportunities?

A: Yes. By March 1 of each school year, school districts are legally required to provide general information about postsecondary enrollment opportunities such as Advanced Placement (AP), dual enrollment, early and middle college high schools, career and technical preparation enrollment options, etc., to all students in grade 8 or higher.

Districts also are required to send all students in grades 11 and 12 who have taken the Michigan Merit Exam or other state approved readiness assessment, regardless of score, a letter, signed by the student's principal, indicating their eligibility.

To assist schools in this effort, the Michigan Department of Education has developed an informational brochure for schools and parents. This brochure is available in two formats and can be found on the MDE high school web site at www.mi.gov/highschool.

7. Q: Which students are eligible to participate in postsecondary options?

A: The law mandates that all eligible students wishing to dual enroll MUST be allowed the postsecondary opportunity. To be eligible, students must:

- Be enrolled in a high school class in a school district in this state
 - Be in at least 11th grade or if in a lower grade be approved by the district
 - Have taken and achieved a qualifying score in:
 - All subject areas of the Michigan Merit Exam or other state approved readiness assessment
- Or**
- In the subject area of the eligible course a student would like to take
 - Eligible students may take courses in subjects for which there are no endorsements such as history, political science, psychology, computer science or foreign language, as long as they have taken all sections of the MME, ACT PLAN, or College Board PSAT. State endorsement is not required in any specific area for this participation.
 - Not be enrolled in high school for more than 4 school years. Under the law, adult education students are not eligible.

Approved Assessments and Qualifying Scores

Michigan Merit Exam - Students who score at levels 1 or 2 (Exceeded the Standard or Met the Standard) will be eligible for dual enrollment.

- ✓ Mathematics Level 1 or 2 (Meets or Exceeds Standard)
- ✓ Reading Level 1 or 2 (Meets or Exceeds Standard)
- ✓ Writing Level 1 or 2 (Meets or Exceeds Standard)
- ✓ Science Level 1 or 2 (Meets or Exceeds Standard)

ACT & PLAN Assessment

- ✓ Mathematics 18
- ✓ Reading 17
- ✓ Science 19
- ✓ English 21

PSAT Assessment

- ✓ Critical Reading 44
- ✓ Writing Skills 49
- ✓ Math 45

Currently, the Michigan Department of Education is working to expand this list of approved assessments to include college placement tests such as COMPASS or ACCUPLACER.

8. Q: What are the courses students may take?

A: Eligible courses include:

- A course offered by an eligible postsecondary institution that is not offered by the school district including Advance Placement and online courses
- A course offered by the school district but is determined by the board of the school district to not be available to the eligible student because of a scheduling conflict beyond the eligible student's control

In addition, the state's Career and Technical Preparation Act provides a wider variety of options to high school students by encouraging and enabling qualified students to enroll in courses or programs in career and technical preparation programs at eligible postsecondary education institutions. For more information on these options visit www.mi.gov/dualenrollment.

9. Q: Are there any limitations regarding which courses a student may take at a postsecondary institution?

A: Yes. Courses that are a hobby, craft, recreational or a course that is in the areas of physical education, theology, divinity, or religious education, are not eligible for tuition support.

10. Q: Do students have to "exhaust" the high school's curriculum before they are eligible for postsecondary enrollment?

A: No. State law requires the postsecondary course(s) eligible for tuition support be course(s) not offered by the district, but does not require students to take all available high school courses before enrolling in postsecondary courses. However, if the district offers college level equivalent courses (Advanced Placement or IB), these courses have precedence over an entry-level postsecondary course with similar content. Also, high school credits granted to a student under this Act shall be counted toward the graduation and subject area requirements of the school district.

11. Q: May students dual enroll in more than one course at a postsecondary institution?

A: Yes. State law does not set limitations on the number of college courses in which a student may enroll. The only stipulations are that the student be enrolled in both the district and postsecondary institution during the district's regular academic year, and be enrolled in at least one high school course.

12. Q: May students attend college classes in the evening?

A: Yes. Students may elect to take college courses during the school day, in the evening, or on weekends. Courses should be taken on campus or through a virtual university. If a public school pupil successfully completes a college level equivalent course that is offered by electronic means, including, but not limited to, the Internet, digital broadcast, or satellite network, and if offered by a regionally accredited college or university, or the Michigan Virtual High School described in Section 1481, the district is required to:

- Grant appropriate high school credit for completion of the course;
- Count that credit toward the graduation and subject area requirements of the state, school district or public school academy.

13. Q: Who decides what type of credit a student will receive for postsecondary enrollment?

A: The law requires a student to designate whether the course is for high school or postsecondary credit, or both at the time of enrollment. Students also are required to notify the high school of his/her decision. Students taking more than one postsecondary course may make different credit designations for different courses.

14. Q: Should districts accept the grade a student receives in a college course and incorporate it into the student's high school grade point average (GPA)?

A: The language does not address the issue of grades. However, in its Guide for the College Bound Student Athlete, the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) requires that all core courses used for collegiate athletic eligibility must indicate a grade and be calculated in to the student's high school GPA. This requirement only pertains to Division I or II collegiate athletes. It is of great importance that students are informed of these regulations and offered the opportunity to request a grade on their transcripts.

15. Q: How much high school credit must a district grant a student for completion of a postsecondary course?

A: The language states that a school district must grant academic credit if the student receives credit from the postsecondary institution. The high school credits granted to a student must be counted toward the graduation requirements and subject area requirements of the school district and/or the state of Michigan.

16. Q: What issues should high school counselors address when they meet with students considering dual enrollment?

A: Counseling is critical. Students capable of college-level curricula are not automatically knowledgeable about college course selection and enrollment process. To the extent possible, districts shall provide counseling services to each eligible student and his or her parent or guardian of the benefits, risks, and possible consequences of enrolling in a postsecondary course. A district may provide the counseling in a group meeting if additional individual counseling is also made available.

17. Q: Is a parent required to go through their child's school or district to enroll and pay their student to take a course at a community college?

A: No. A parent may at any time enroll and pay for their child to take a college course. However, to enroll a student will need to meet the entrance requirements of the post secondary institution. The issue of having the student receive high school credit for this course is up to the discretion of the district and should be coordinated directly with the student's school.

18. Q: Exactly what costs are school districts required to pay?

A: State law requires that all school districts must pay a student's tuition and mandatory course fees, including technology fees, materials fees, registration fees, and any late fees charged by the postsecondary institution. Eligible charges do not include books, transportation, parking costs, or most activity fees. However, under the law, the total amount of tuition and fee support shall not exceed either of the following:

- The total amount of the tuition and fees for the course(s)
- The sum of the state portion of the district's foundation allowance, per membership pupil, adjusted for the proportion of the school year that the student attends the postsecondary institution

For example:

Student's State Portion of the Foundation Allowance for 2007-2008 school year might be \$6,000 per year and \$3,000 per semester. If the high school has a 6-hour day, each hour would equate to \$500.00 per course ($\$3,000 \div 6$). Therefore, the local district would be responsible for the actual charge for tuition and fees for the college courses up to the amount of \$500.00, or the actual amount charged by the postsecondary institution, whichever is less. FTE calculations are based on the total number of both high school and college courses, equaling 100 percent of enrolled time, or Full Time Equivalency (FTE).

Should the total number of both high school and college courses not equal 100 percent of enrolled time (including travel and course lab time), the per course rate would be adjusted accordingly.

19. Q: Is the payment for which school districts are responsible based on the number of credits a student is taking or the number of courses involved?

A: No. The number of courses. State law requires that school districts must pay tuition, registration fees, materials fees, and required course fees for the postsecondary course(s) of the dually enrolled pupil.

20. Q: Can students receive Postsecondary Enrollment Options Act tuition/fee support for college courses taken during the summer?

A: The language states that students may receive support for courses during the school district's regular academic year. However, many postsecondary institutions offer a spring term, which begins during a district's academic year and ends during the summer. If 50 percent or more of the college class/term falls within the local district's regular academic year (calendar), students must be allowed to enroll and receive tuition/fee support.

21. Q: Can local districts provide a greater amount of tuition/fee support to students than is required in the Postsecondary Enrollment Options Act and the Section 21b language?

A: Yes. The law requires districts to pay an amount not to exceed the lesser of the actual charges for tuition and mandatory course fees, materials fees, and registration fees, or the state portion of the district's foundation allowance, adjusted for the proportion of the school year that the student attends the postsecondary institution.

However, districts may provide a larger amount, including books, transportation, parking and activities fees. If districts elect to pay for books under this section, the books are the property of the district and should be turned over to the district to be used as it sees fit upon completion of the course. Districts may elect to use the local school operating revenue for this purpose.

22. Q: Can districts stipulate that dually enrolled students must “successfully” complete college courses before tuition and fee support is paid?

A: No. The language states that if a student provides the postsecondary institution with written proof of eligibility, the postsecondary institution will transmit a bill to the district detailing the eligible charges for each eligible course. The language also states that if a dually enrolled pupil does not complete the postsecondary course, the postsecondary institution shall forward to the district any funds that are refundable due to non-completion of the course. In traditional classes, students are not reimbursed when students fail or stop participating. If they were, the district would not be eligible for that portion of the foundation grant.

23. Q: How does this legislation interface with existing arrangements between local districts and postsecondary institutions: For example, districts that contract with community colleges for vocational-technical courses?

A: Programs such as these are the decision of the local school districts and participating postsecondary institutions, and are usually funded with vocational-technical education monies or through arrangements with the local district. They are not considered as dual enrollment, but as a component of the high school curriculum, and are not affected by this legislation.

24. Q: How should districts count students involved in postsecondary enrollment in terms of full-time equated membership?

A: The language stipulates that for students enrolled in a postsecondary institution under this Act, the student’s enrollment in both the school district and the postsecondary institution shall be counted as enrollment in the school district. A student shall not be considered to be enrolled in a district less than full-time solely because of the effect of the student’s postsecondary enrollment, including necessary travel time. College courses requiring lab time and offering more than four hours of credit are counted as two high school course credits for the purpose of FTE.

25. Q: How should local districts process PSEOA payments on their budget breakdowns?

A: Districts should use Function Code 113: High School Instructional Costs under Purchased (Contractual) Services.

26. Q: How will districts report to the Department of Education?

A: School districts report the following information as required by Section 18(3):

- Total dollars expended for students involved in postsecondary enrollment
- Number of students eligible for postsecondary enrollment
- Number of pupils involved in postsecondary enrollment during the preceding school year (aggregate and by grade level)
- The percentage of the district’s enrollment represented by students involved in postsecondary enrollment
- The number of postsecondary courses paid for by the district under this Act
- The number of postsecondary courses for which college credit was granted;
- The number of postsecondary courses for which high school credit was granted
- The number of postsecondary courses that were not completed by students

27. Q: What is the definition of a College Level Equivalent Course (CLEC)?

A: CLEC is defined to mean a course offered in high school, such as the International Baccalaureate (IB) and Advanced Placement (AP) offerings, for which a student receives high school credit and may receive college credit, if the student successfully passes a college level equivalent credit examination.

28. Q: Must districts comply with this legislation?

A: Yes. The law states that districts and public school academies “shall” use funds allocated under the State School Aid Act to support participation in postsecondary options of eligible high school students at postsecondary institutions. Thus, districts and public school academies must comply.

29. Q: What is the Michigan Virtual High School?

A: The Michigan Virtual High School is a development of the Michigan Virtual University and was designed to expand curricular offerings for high schools across the state, create a statewide instructional model using interactive multimedia tools, and provide pupils and teachers with opportunities to develop skills through online learning. In order to expand the options of qualified high school students, the Michigan Virtual University also has developed the Michigan Virtual AP Academy. The goal of the Academy is to make Advanced Placement courses available to all qualified students within the State of Michigan. For more information, visit their website at www.mivu.org.

30. Q: Can a district establish dual enrollment requirements such as a 3.0 Grade Point Average (GPA) beyond those required by law?

A: No. A district may only use the eligibility criteria outlined in state law and may not establish additional requirements which would prohibit a pupil from satisfying or exceeding the credit requirements of the Michigan Merit Curriculum through advanced studies such as advanced placement courses, dual enrollment in a postsecondary institution, participation in the International Baccalaureate program or early or middle college high school programs.

EARNING CREDIT

What the Michigan Merit Curriculum Law Says

380.1278(a)(4)(a) A student is considered to have completed a credit if the student successfully completes the subject area content expectations or guidelines developed by the Michigan Department of Education that apply to the credit. A school district or public school academy shall base its determination of whether a student has successfully completed the subject area content expectations or guidelines developed by the department that apply to a credit at least in part on the student's performance on the assessments developed or selected by the Department or on 1 or more assessments developed or selected by the school district or public school academy that measure a student's understanding of the subject area content expectations or guidelines that apply to the credit.

380.1278a(4)(c) A school district or public school academy also must grant a credit if the student earns a qualifying score, as determined by the Department, on the assessments developed or selected for the subject area by the Department or the student earns a qualifying score, as determined by the school district or public school academy, on 1 or more assessments developed or selected by the school district or public school academy that measure a student's understanding of the subject area content expectations or guidelines that apply to the credit.

380.1278b(2) If a student successfully completes 1 or more of the high school credits required in the Michigan Merit Curriculum before entering high school, the student shall be given high school credit for that credit.

Background Information

The Michigan Merit Curriculum lays out a new foundation for "credit" by requiring that credit be awarded not by the commonly used Carnegie unit, which is based on seat time, but based on a student's demonstration that he or she has successfully met the content expectations for the credit area.

The Michigan Merit Curriculum content expectations can be met in various learning settings such as career and technical education; work-based learning programs; integrated sequences such as humanities (e.g., combining English, social studies, and art); integrated math and science classes; project-based learning; college credit opportunities like dual enrollment; advancement placement and International Baccalaureate programs; and online learning. Regardless in what setting, students must demonstrate they have met the subject area content expectations for that credit area.

Questions & Answers

1. Q: What is a credit?

A: A credit is a completed unit of study as measured by proficiency in a predetermined set of content expectations (e.g., Algebra 1, Biology, English Language Arts 12, etc.). Students earn credit -- students take a course.

2. Q: How can a student earn credit? (Updated 8/07)

A: Students may earn credit if they successfully demonstrate mastery of subject area content expectations or guidelines for the credit. The assignment of credit must be based, at least in part, on student performance on subject area assessments, which measure the extent to which they meet the credit expectations and guidelines.

Beyond earning credit through a traditional course setting, a student may earn a credit in a variety of ways, including, but not limited to:

- A related course(s) in which content standards are embedded (e.g., math standards embedded in a career-technical program, industrial technology course, or vocational course, a humanities program, etc.) (Updated 8/07)

- Non-traditional course work
- Independent teacher-guided study
- Testing out

In addition, the district may allow students to satisfy credit requirements through:

- Dual Enrollment
- Advanced Placement Courses
- International Baccalaureate or other “early college” experiences or programs
- An on-line class

3. Q: Do students have to earn credits in the Michigan Merit Curriculum in a particular sequence?

A: No. The law provides local districts and students with the flexibility to establish the sequence and pace of instruction.

4. Q: Is a student allowed to receive high school credit for coursework prior to high school?

A: Yes. The law states if a student successfully completes one or more high school credits before entering high school, the student **must be given graduation credit** for that credit if the district: 1) determines a student has met Michigan Department of Education high school course/credit content expectations; and, 2) uses an assessment to certify that the student is proficient in the course/credit content expectations, and the expected level of proficiency is the same as for high school. While a student must receive graduation credit for credit earned prior to high school, a district continues to have the ability to establish graduation requirements beyond the Michigan Merit Curriculum.

In other words, if middle school students meet the same expectations and proficiency level as high school students, they must receive credit. This is true even if textbooks and other resources are different. The key is mastering the course content expectations, being measured by the same assessment(s) as in high school, and performing at the same level of proficiency (passing standards) as in high school. (Updated 8/07)

5. Q: Must a school provide students with the opportunity to take all required Michigan Merit credits/classes? For example, if a district is able to offer only Chemistry and is not able to offer Physics, may the district require all students to take Chemistry without the option of choosing Physics? What if a school is not able to hire enough teachers trained in these areas?

A: Under the law, a district should make every effort to offer the curriculum necessary for the student to meet the Michigan Merit Curriculum credit requirements. However, the law provides districts with a great deal of flexibility to meet credit requirements, including, but limited to: alternative instructional delivery methods such as teaching certain subjects in certain years, district partnerships, online courses, dual enrollment, community college partnerships, etc.

If a district is still unable to meet all curricular or other requirements outlined in the law, a district may apply to the Michigan Department of Education for permission to phase in one or more requirements. To apply, the school district must submit a proposed phase-in plan to the Department, which outlines its strategy to make satisfactory progress toward full implementation of the requirements. If the plan is not approved, the Department must work with the school district to develop a satisfactory plan. If a school district demonstrates to the Department it is unable to hire enough highly qualified teachers, the Department will work with the school district to develop a plan to hire enough highly qualified teachers to meet the requirements. However, for a high school to be accredited, it is required to ensure all curriculum credit requirements are made available to the affected students. For a definition of “Highly Qualified,” see page 39.

6. Q: Will districts be allowed to give ½ credits?

A: Yes. The sequence, pace, and "packaging" of credits is the prerogative of the district. Districts may award credit units even smaller than ½, if appropriate.

7. Q: How can students receive credit without passing a class?

A: A student may demonstrate proficiency in the credit area by testing out (passing a test or battery of assessments approved by a district), which measures a student's understanding of the content expectations for that credit.

8. Q: Does the content and assessment for a credit offered in both middle and high school need to be the same?

A: Yes. While the textbook and other resources may vary, students are required to learn the same content, be assessed by the same assessment(s), and be held to the same level of proficiency whether they earn the high school graduation credit in middle or high school. (Updated 8/07)

EARNING CREDIT 8/07 additions

9. Q: Can a district simply say no to kids earning high school graduation credit for classes passed prior to high school? If a student successfully completes Algebra I in the 8th grade, can I just check off the Algebra I box on his list of requirements, but not give him or her an actual credit?

A: No. The new law REQUIRES high school graduation credit must be awarded for classes taken before high school, which meet the following conditions:

- The class must cover the same content as the high school class, in other words, high school level material. School districts have one year following state approval of each Michigan Merit Curriculum Course/Credit Expectations to align courses and assessments. Therefore, during the 2006-2007 school year, districts may use their current high school curriculum to assign credit. By the 2007-2008 school year, all expectations and assessments should be aligned with the exception of social studies expectations which must be aligned one year following final approval by the State Board of Education
- Proficiency must be assessed using the same assessment(s) (e.g. end-of-course exam or combination of assessments) used at the high school.
- The level of proficiency expected in order to "pass" (e.g. 80%) must be the same as at the high school.

10. Q: Our school district has traditionally awarded high school credit to students who successfully completed Algebra I in the 8th grade. Although we have been working this year to align Algebra I and other classes with the new high school content expectations, we have not completed that task. May we award high school credit to this year's 8th graders successfully completing Algebra I, even though our high school and middle school Algebra I programs are not yet fully aligned with the content expectations.

A: Yes, you may do so for this year only, 2006-07. The law requires that a high school have in place all the opportunities necessary for a 9th grader entering in the fall of 2007 to earn the graduation requirements. This essentially has given schools the current 2006-2007 school year to align with the content expectations the programs/courses/classes that are available to freshmen next fall. You may therefore award high school credit for 8th grade Algebra this year based on the benchmarks and standards that your district has in place currently for Algebra I.

This would NOT apply to a district that, up to now, has not been awarding high school credit for Algebra I in 8th grade and now wishes to take advantage of doing so this year under the old benchmarks. In order for this permission to apply, the district must have had a history of awarding such credit.

11. Q: Can a district require the student to take four math classes sometime during his four years at high school?

A: Yes. The new law sets the floor, not the ceiling. The law explicitly allows local districts to set graduation requirements above and beyond those in the law. Therefore, a district could mandate that, as a local graduation requirement a student is required to take four years of math in high school, even if they have satisfied some math graduation requirements in middle school. Moreover, a local graduation requirement could require that a student be in attendance for 8 semesters, and define "attendance in a semester" as being enrolled in a minimum number of credits. However, additional requirements could impact the number of student electives and early college credit opportunities through Advanced Placement classes, dual enrollment, etc.

12. Q: If a student is in the Class of 2010 (ninth grade in 2006/07) and, due to failures, does not earn enough credits to progress with his/her class and, technically, is now in the Class of 2011, do the new graduation requirements apply to this student?

A: No, they don't. The actual graduation legislation does not mention "graduation class of 2011." The law states the new requirements apply to the students who are in 8th grade in 2006. Therefore, a student in 9th grader during the 2006-2007 school year, who graduates with class of 2011 instead of the class of 2010, is not subject to the new graduation requirements. Such a student would graduate under the requirements in effect for that student when he/she entered the 9th grade.

13. Q: If a student fails a class as a result of not meeting district attendance policy, for example, but passes the end of course exam, does the student get credit?

A: Yes. Once a student registers for and attends a class, he or she agrees to the district's requirements for earning a grade in the class, including attendance, homework, etc. However, the district must grant credit if a student passes an exam or series of exams used for testing out, which the district has determined measures a student's proficiency in meeting the Michigan Merit course/credit content expectations.

Districts are responsible for determining the assessments, which can be used for testing out purposes. The assessments could include the Michigan Department of Education's Secondary Credit Assessment or other assessments aligned with the Michigan Merit course/credit content expectations. Assessments may also include one or more elements in addition to paper-and-pencil exams for testing out purposes, including but not limited to paper, project, presentation, performance, demonstration or participation elements. (Updated 11.07)

14. Q: Currently our district is thinking of assessments, which are EXACTLY the same for all teachers of a particular subject and contain the HSCEs. So this means that exams are the same and unit tests are the same. Is this correct or can you give me some more information?

A: This is certainly acceptable and a good way to unify standards in a district. To earn the required credit, students must meet the expectations. The law states that the assignment of credit must be based, at least in part, on assessments designed to determine if students have met the expectations. Common assessments designed to match the instructional model (units, topics, skills, knowledge) and to assess the expectations will allow you to determine if students have met the expectations while offering some assurance that you are using the same standard for assignment of credit for all sections of a course or series of courses.

A district may determine a need for offering opportunities to meet the expectations that differ in instructional model from other courses/sections designed to meet the same expectations. The

assessments for those courses/sections will probably differ from those described above as your "common" assessments in that they will align with your instructional model while still assessing whether students have met the same expectations. An example might be that in most Algebra I sections, students are expected to answer problems on a paper and pencil assessment in which the students independently read and complete all portions of the assessment. In another section, students may perform the same problems posed in an applied setting in which the teacher gives them a number of scenarios and information and asks them to independently solve problems to show that they have met the expectations. This is one issue special educators are working hard to develop.

15. Q: What accommodations are allowable to assist English Language Learners (ELL) students in obtaining credit?

A: For all students -- ELL, special education, and others -- earning credit means meeting the expectations. The expectations can be met in a variety of ways and the assessments used to determine whether students have met the expectations should match the instructional model while still assessing whether the students have actually met the expectations. The texts to be read and the discussions that take place may be designed to accommodate the language skills of the student.

16. Q: How does an ELL student, especially one with very low English skills, meet the requirements of our English 9, 10, 11, and 12 or can they have their own class and assessments, which could have the High School Content Expectations built into them?

A: While these are district decisions, a district may consider students to have met the requirements who can communicate orally, attend regular classes in which they have the same discussions as others and are exposed to the same instruction coupled with a support class in which they receive help with meeting the requirements for reading, writing, and preparation for discussions.

17. Are there any circumstances in which a student could receive more than 1 credit for one class meeting two or more Course/Credit Content Expectations? For example, if a student signs up for a graphic communications course which meets the state's Visual, Performing and Applied Arts (VPAA) credit requirement and is approved by the district as containing sufficient math for the state's 4th math credit, could he or she receive 1 credit each for both for a total of 2 credits?

A: No. While a district has the discretion to grant 2 or more credits for non-state required courses, a district may not grant a student more than 1 credit per course for a course/credit area required under the Michigan Merit Curriculum, with the exception on Algebra II, which the law explicitly allows to be delivered over two years.

18. Q: Is a district allowed to pass a residency rule, requiring students to be fully enrolled for six or eight semesters to graduate after satisfying the requirements of the MMC?

A: Yes. A district may establish residency rules. If a district does so, however, the district should consider how to provide early-college, college-level work, to students who would otherwise be ready to go on. One of the primary reasons the new graduation requirements refer to credits not courses or classes is to provide Michigan high school students a more challenging and relevant curriculum and to increase college-level opportunities. While this is a local district decision, a school residency rule should be flexible to allow and encourage these opportunities.

19. Q: How can a district determine when to grant a student transferring in from a different state or country credit for Michigan Merit Curriculum requirements?

A: Districts have the flexibility to establish Michigan Merit Curriculum credit policies and procedures. The law does require students to be proficient in the course/credit content expectations and that this proficiency be measured, at least in part, by an assessment that evaluates a student's understanding of the expectations. The law however, does not require an assessment be given prior to placement.

Therefore, in some circumstances, students could simply test out of a credit. While in others, if a student's transcript shows they have completed Algebra I, for example, a district could elect to place a student in Algebra II and use one or more assessments given in Algebra II to verify the student's proficiency and grant credit for Algebra I.

20. Q: How should districts award students transitioning from home schools credit for Michigan Merit Curriculum requirements in areas like Algebra I, Biology, etc?

A: Districts have the flexibility to establish Michigan Merit Curriculum credit policies and procedures. To ensure a student is scheduled in the appropriate sequence of courses that will allow him/her to meet the MI graduation requirements, districts may determine that some assessment(s) will be necessary, such as an assessment used for testing out purposes (for example, an end-of-course exam). Whatever the district decision, the policy should have uniform application.

21. Q: Is a student who is unable to complete the Michigan high school graduation requirements in a regular four-year sequence, eligible to attend high school for a fifth year?

A: Yes. However, these requirements were developed to provide schools and students with ample time to support student success during a four-year sequence. From a funding standpoint, a student who has not yet graduated may continue in high school and be eligible for state aid up to the point where they are 19 years old by Sept. 1. If they are 20 by Sept. 1, they are ineligible for state aid.

22. Q: If students master only part of a required subject's High School Content Expectations, how will districts document that that students have completed the remaining HSCE in other courses such as CTE?

A: Given most districts have a unique data collection system, this new law continues to provide districts with the flexibility to integrate and manage data about which expectations students have mastered in which settings.

23. Q: Are you considering ways to share resources and lesson plans with schools and ISDs?

A: Yes. The Michigan Department of Education, in partnership with ISDs, local districts, Institutions of Higher Education and professional organizations will continue to collaborate on providing professional development, resources and promising practices. For example, the Department's School Improvement conferences to be held in November and April will include a "Panorama of Promising Practices." In addition, there will be sharing of information on the Michigan Educator Resources site on the Michigan Electronic Library (MEL) and MVU Learnport.

HIGHLY QUALIFIED TEACHERS AND PERSONNEL

Questions & Answers

1. Q: Do teachers need to be highly qualified to teach Michigan Merit Curriculum Requirements?

A: Yes. Districts are required under the federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) to now have 100% of their teachers of core academic subjects highly qualified. This means that in addition to holding state certification, the teacher must hold a major or the equivalent of a major in the content, or pass the Michigan Test for Teacher Certification (MTTC) subject area content exam, or complete one of the High Objective Uniform State Standards of Evaluation (HOUSSE) options for demonstrating that he/she is highly qualified.

Long before NCLB was passed, Michigan law required that teachers be appropriately assigned to teach within the grade level and subject area endorsement(s) indicated on their teaching certificates. For example, only a teacher with a secondary certificate with endorsements in Mathematics and Biology (grades 7-12) should be assigned to teach Math and/or Biology courses in grades 7-12. It would be inappropriate to assign this teacher to teach Chemistry, Physics, or General Science.

In order to assist local districts in the appropriate placement of teachers, the Michigan Department of Education has developed a document entitled "Classes Which Can Be Taught by Holders of Various Endorsements as Impacted by NCLB." This document is available at the following URL: http://www.michigan.gov/documents/What_can_be_taught_composite_TQ_C107355_A112320_7_1234_36_7.doc

2. Q: Does a middle school teacher have to be "highly qualified" at the high school level in order for students to receive high school credit?

A: In order for a student to receive credit, a teacher must be appropriately endorsed and highly qualified in the subject, whether elementary or secondary certificated. The secondary teaching certificate authorizes a person to teach in subject area endorsements in grades 6-12, and the elementary certificate authorizes a person to teach in grades K-5 (all subjects) and grades 6-8 in subject area endorsements. For example, a teacher endorsed with an elementary math certificate could teach 8th grade Algebra I for high school credit, but could not teach 9th grade Algebra I for credit without a secondary teaching certificate.

3. Q: Does a teacher, teaching a math-related class such as Accounting need to be highly qualified in mathematics for students to receive their 4th math-related credit?

A: No. If the accounting or other math-related class is to be counted as a student's 4th math-related credit, the teacher does not need to be highly qualified in Mathematics. However, the school through their internal record keeping system should record that the student has fulfilled their 4th Math credit, given that the student's transcript would list the Accounting course

If a student wants to take a math course like Pre-Calculus and have it count as their 4th credit, the teacher would need to be highly qualified in Mathematics.

4. Q: Will there be enough highly qualified teachers available to meet the need in required course credit areas?

A: While schools currently have math and science teachers and require various math and science credits for graduation, the new law requires all students to complete specific math, science, and social studies credits. Hiring and scheduling continue to remain the responsibility of local schools and districts.

In addition, post-baccalaureate individuals enrolled in alternative preparation programs who can demonstrate competency in the content by holding a major in the content or passing the MTTC content examination can be employed to teach the merit curriculum. Such individuals would have three years to complete their teacher preparation programs and still be considered highly qualified under NCLB.

Teachers who are currently assigned to teach mathematics or science classes who need additional training to teach the more rigorous content can take advantage of professional development opportunities offered by various entities and programs such as Michigan Virtual University, Teacher-to-Teacher, Title II A(3) Higher Education Professional Development Grant projects, and courses offered online through institutions of higher education.

HIGHLY QUALIFIED TEACHER 8/07 ADDITIONS

5. Q: What types of technology-based programs are allowable in a classroom if the teacher is certified but not “highly qualified” in the area(s) he/she is teaching or facilitating.

A: The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) permits students to take courses online and does not require the online teacher to be highly qualified in the subject area being taught. It is therefore possible for a student in a public school classroom, technology lab, resource center, media center, etc. to be taking an online course or a multiple number of such courses for high school credit. The online teacher does not need to be “highly qualified” in the subject area(s) in which students are being instructed. .

For state aid purposes, there are some conditions under which online learning could occur and still be eligible for state aid. Please refer to the department’s *Pupil Accounting Manual* for additional information. A copy of this can be accessed online at the department’s website: www.michigan.gov/mde. In the column of options on the left, click on “Offices” than “State Aid and School Finance” and the document appears on the main page.

6. Q: Is there certification for foreign language at the elementary level for highly qualified teachers?

A: Yes. Certification to teach a foreign language is subject specific, and grade-level specific. If a teacher is certified to teach Japanese in grades K-12, for example, and that is all she/he is teaching, then the teacher would be considered highly qualified if she/he has a major in Japanese or has passed the MTTC content test in Japanese. If the teacher is certified in the language in grades 6-12, then she/he is not certified nor highly qualified to teach in any grade below grade 6.

7. Q: If a teacher does not have a major or minor in Earth Science, college level coursework, or prior teaching experience in Earth Science, can the teacher become HQ by simply taking and passing the General Sciences (DX) or the Earth Science Certification Tests?

A: No. A teacher, in addition to holding state certification, must have a major or the equivalent of a major in the content, or pass the Michigan Test for Teacher Certification (MTTC) subject area content exam, or complete one of the High Objective Uniform State Standards of Evaluation (HOUSSE) options for demonstrating that he/she is highly qualified.

8. Q: Will there be any lessening of the HQ requirements with reduced staff because of budget cuts?

A: No, at present we do not anticipate any waiver of federal requirements regarding highly qualified teachers.

9. Q: What are the guidelines (including Highly Qualified) for the collaborative teaching model that will allow delivery of the new state high school graduation requirement within CTE programs?

A: This information has been included in Guidelines for Awarding Credit in Career and Technical Education (CTE), Humanities and Other Delivery presented and approved by the State Board of Education, June 12, 2007. These guidelines are available on the Michigan Department of Education web site at www.mi.gov/highschool.

NON-PUBLIC AND HOME SCHOOL REQUIREMENTS

Questions & Answers

1. Q: Do the new graduation requirements apply to home schools, private schools, and parochial schools?

A: No, the legislature did not specifically require this as a condition to earn a high school diploma in a non-public Michigan school. However, currently the requirement for one semester credit in Civics/Government does apply to all public and non-public schools in Michigan.

Currently, many private and parochial schools choose to follow the Michigan Merit Curriculum in order for their students to qualify for the Michigan Merit Award and succeed in being ready for college and workplace demands.

PERSONAL CURRICULUM

What the Michigan Merit Curriculum Law Says (Updated 12.07)

380.1278b(5) The parent or legal guardian of a pupil may request a personal curriculum for the pupil that modifies certain of the Michigan merit standard requirements under subsection (1) or section 1278a(1)(a). If all of the requirements under this subsection for a personal curriculum are met, then the board of a school district or board of directors of a public school academy may award a high school diploma to a pupil who successfully completes his or her personal curriculum even if it does not meet the requirements of the Michigan merit standard required under subsection (1) and section 1278a(1)(a). All of the following apply to a personal curriculum:

(a) The personal curriculum shall be developed by a group that includes at least the pupil, at least 1 of the pupil's parents or the pupil's legal guardian, and the pupil's high school counselor or another designee qualified to act in a counseling role under section 1233 or 1233a selected by the high school principal. In addition, for a pupil who receives special education services, a school psychologist should also be included in this group.

(b) The personal curriculum shall incorporate as much of the subject area content expectations of the Michigan merit standard required under subsection (1) and section 380.1278a(1)(a) as is practicable for the pupil; shall establish measurable goals that the pupil must achieve while enrolled in high school and shall provide a method to evaluate whether the pupil achieved these goals; and shall be aligned with the pupil's educational development plan developed under subsection (11).

(c) Before it takes effect, the personal curriculum must be agreed to by the pupil's parent or legal guardian and by the superintendent of the school district or chief executive of the public school academy or his or her designee.

(d) The pupil's parent or legal guardian shall be in communication with each of the pupil's teachers at least once each calendar quarter to monitor the pupil's progress toward the goals contained in the pupil's personal curriculum.

(e) Revisions may be made in the personal curriculum if the revisions are developed and agreed to in the same manner as the original personal curriculum.

(f) The English language arts credit requirements of subsection (1)(a) and the science credit requirements of subsection (1)(b) are not subject to modification as part of a personal curriculum under this subsection.

(g) Except as otherwise provided in this subdivision, the mathematics credit requirements of section 1278a(1)(a)(i) may be modified as part of a personal curriculum only after the pupil has successfully completed at least 2-1/2 credits of the mathematics credits required under that section and only if the pupil successfully completes at least 3-1/2 total credits of the mathematics credits required under that section before completing high school. The requirement under that section that a pupil must successfully complete at least 1 mathematics course during his or her final year of high school enrollment is not subject to modification as part of a personal curriculum under this subsection. The algebra II credit required under that section may be modified as part of a personal curriculum under this subsection only if the pupil has successfully completed at least 2 credits of the mathematics credits required under section 1278a(1)(a)(i) and meets 1 or more of the following:

(i) Has successfully completed the same content as 1 semester of algebra II, as determined by the department.

(ii) Elects to complete the same content as algebra II over 2 years, with a credit awarded for each of those 2 years, and successfully completes that content.

(iii) Enrolls in a formal career and technical education program or curriculum and in that program or curriculum successfully completes the same content as 1 semester of algebra II, as determined by the department.

What the Michigan Merit Curriculum Law Says (continued)

(h) The social science credit requirements of section 1278a(1)(a)(ii) may be modified as part of a personal curriculum only if all of the following are met:

(i) The pupil has successfully completed 2 credits of the social science credits required under section 1278a(1), including the civics course described in section 1166(2).

(ii) The modification requires the pupil to complete 1 additional credit in English language arts, mathematics, or science or 1 additional credit in a language other than English. This additional credit must be in addition to the number of those credits otherwise required under subsection (1) and section 1278a(1) or under section 1278a(2).

(i) The health and physical education credit requirement under section 1278a(1)(a)(iii) may be modified as part of a personal curriculum only if the modification requires the pupil to complete 1 additional credit in English language arts, mathematics, or science or 1 additional credit in a language other than English. This additional credit must be in addition to the number of those credits otherwise required under subsection (1) and section 1278a(1) or under section 1278a(2).

(j) The visual arts, performing arts, or applied arts credit requirement under section 1278a(1)(a)(iv) may be modified as part of a personal curriculum only if the modification requires the pupil to complete 1 additional credit in English language arts, mathematics, or science or 1 additional credit in a language other than English. This additional credit must be in addition to the number of those credits otherwise required under subsection (1) and section 1278a(1) or under section 1278a(2).

(k) If the parent or legal guardian of a pupil requests as part of the pupil's personal curriculum a modification of the Michigan merit standard requirements that would not otherwise be allowed under this section and demonstrates that the modification is necessary because the pupil is a child with a disability, the school district or public school academy may allow that additional modification to the extent necessary because of the pupil's disability if the group under subdivision (a) determines that the modification is consistent with both the pupil's educational development plan under subsection (11) and the pupil's individualized education program. If the superintendent of public instruction has reason to believe that a school district or a public school academy is allowing modifications inconsistent with the requirements of this subdivision, the superintendent of public instruction shall monitor the school district or public school academy to ensure that the school district's or public school academy's policies, procedures, and practices are in compliance with the requirements for additional modifications under this subdivision. As used in this subdivision, "child with a disability" means that term as defined in 20 USC 1401.

(l) If a pupil transfers to a school district or public school academy from out of state or from a nonpublic school, the pupil's parent or legal guardian may request, as part of the pupil's personal curriculum, a modification of the Michigan merit standard requirements that would not otherwise be allowed under this section. The school district or public school academy may allow this additional modification for a transfer pupil if all of the following are met:

(i) The transfer pupil has successfully completed at least the equivalent of 2 years of high school credit out of state or at a nonpublic school. The school district or public school academy may use appropriate assessment examinations to determine what credits, if any, the pupil has earned out of state or at a nonpublic school that may be used to satisfy the curricular requirements of the Michigan merit standard and this subdivision.

(ii) The transfer pupil's personal curriculum incorporates as much of the subject area content expectations of the Michigan merit standard as is practicable for the pupil.

(iii) The transfer pupil's personal curriculum requires the pupil to successfully complete at least 1 mathematics course during his or her final year of high school enrollment. In addition, if the transfer pupil is enrolled in the school district or public school academy for at least 1 full school year, both of the following apply:

(A) The transfer pupil's personal curriculum shall require that this mathematics course is at least algebra I.

(B) If the transfer pupil demonstrates that he or she has mastered the content of algebra I, the transfer pupil's personal curriculum shall require that this mathematics course is a course normally taken after completing algebra I.

(iv) The transfer pupil's personal curriculum includes the civics course described in section 1166(2).

(m) If a pupil is at least age 18 or is an emancipated minor, the pupil may act on his or her own behalf under this subsection.

(n) This subsection does not apply to a pupil enrolled in a high school that is designated as a specialty school under section 1278a(5), and that is exempt under that section from the English language arts requirement under subsection (1)(a) and the social science credit requirement under section 1278a(1)(a)(ii).

(6) If a pupil receives special education services, the pupil's individualized education program, in accordance with the individuals with disabilities education act, title VI of Public Law 91-230, shall identify the appropriate course or courses of study and identify the supports, accommodations, and modifications necessary to allow the pupil to progress in the curricular requirements of this section and section 1278a, or in a personal curriculum as provided under subsection (5). and meet the requirements for a high school diploma.

Background Information

The Michigan Merit law outlined above allows a parent or legal guardian of a student to request certain modifications to the state high school graduation requirements under limited conditions to ensure all students are effectively and consistently engaged in school regardless of need or disability.

According to the American College Test (ACT) report *Crisis at the Core: Preparing All Students for College and Work*, only 32 percent of U.S. students entering ninth grade graduate prepared for college. For African Americans, the number is 20 percent; for Latinos, it is 16 percent. In fact, most high school graduates readily admit they were not significantly challenged in school or ready for employment or college. Forty percent say they wished they had worked harder, especially in math, science and English. Employers and college leaders say high school graduates need to master higher-level mathematics and communications skills. The key to students succeeding in college or the workplace is taking advanced high school courses in English, science and math beyond Algebra II.¹

Research suggests that:²

- The quality of courses completed in high school is a greater predictor of college success than test scores, class rank, or grade point average.
- Students are more likely to pass high-level courses than low-level courses. Thus, the research suggests that increasing access by all students to advanced academic course work will improve student academic achievement.
- Those who enter high school with test scores in the lowest quartile learn more in academically rigorous courses than they do in either the low-level vocational or general courses in which they are traditionally enrolled. Moreover, students enrolled in lower-level courses were more likely to earn a “D” or “F” in those courses despite their level of ability.
- When minority students are required to take rigorous college preparatory curricula, they rise to the challenge:
 - For example, the San Jose Unified School District in California recently showed dramatic results after it required all students to take the A–G curriculum required for admission to the University of California system. Between 1998 and 2002, test scores of African American 11th graders increased nearly seven times as much as those of African American students across the state.
 - What’s more, the more rigorous requirements have not resulted in the increase in dropout rates that some had predicted.
 - Taking a rigorous high school curriculum that includes math, at least through Algebra II, cuts in half the gap in college completion rates between white students and African American and Latino students.

In August 2006, Education Commission of the States researcher, Jennifer Dounay, reported the following about students and parents aspiration and expectations for completing a college degree:³

- Most high school students today (and their parents) believe they should – and will – graduate from high school and complete some form of postsecondary education.
- Six out of 10 parents – 62% - say a college education is “absolutely necessary” for their child.
- Sixty five percent of Hispanic parents say a college education “is the one thing that can most help young people succeed.”

¹ Improving High School Graduation Requirements Michigan Merit Curriculum – Research Says That...v.2.07.06

² Improving High School Graduation Requirements Michigan Merit Curriculum – Research Says That...v.2.07.06

³ Jennifer Dounay, “Involving Families in High School and College Expectations,” High School Policy Brief, Education Commission of the States, Denver, CO, August 2006. www.ecs.org

- Nine out of 10 respondents said it was a “very” (63%) or “somewhat” (27%) serious problem when told only 29% of graduates who start high school will eventually graduate from college.
- Ninety percent of Latino and African American high school students in Chicago hoped to attend a four-year college.
- Students (and their parents) are misinformed about what it takes to prepare for college.
- Students whose parents did not go to college need the most assistance in setting goals and choosing high school courses for graduation and post secondary education.
- Research confirms that not all students are able to learn successfully at the same pace, with the same approach, in the same environment, on the same path, and in the same style and manner. Research confirms that every individual assimilates information according to his or her own unique learning style, need, and interest. Learning styles vary. Some students are visual learners, others learn by auditory means, others kinesthetically. Some students learn at a faster pace, others need more time. Some students are distracted when trying to learn in a noisy environment with 30+ other kids. Some students feel intimidated or unsafe in a large classroom environment.
- Research shows high school students who study the arts earn better grades and scores; are less likely to drop out of school; watch fewer hours of television; are less likely to report boredom in school; have a more positive self-concept; and are more involved in community service.⁴ Studies show that many students who have difficulty learning through traditional methods can benefit from teaching strategies that include learning in and through the arts.⁵

Further studies show health education and social skills programs improve school and test performance, attendance, and school connectedness.⁶ Physical education, structured physical activity and higher fitness levels also directly impact a student’s ability to achieve academically.

4 Critical Links: Learning in the Arts and Student Academic and Social Development. Arts Education Partnership. 2002.

5 Howard Gardner, *Disciplined Mind: Beyond Facts Standardized Tests K 12 education that Every Child Deserves*, 2000.

6 Connell, D., Turner, R., and Mason, E. (1985). Summary of findings of the school health education evaluation: health promotion effectiveness, implementation, and costs. *Journal of School Health*, 55(8), 316-321.

Michigan Merit Curriculum Personal Curriculum Modification Options

Subject Area Credit Requirements	Personal Curriculum (PC) Modification Required
<p>All requirements may be fulfilled in a variety of ways, including: traditional courses; Career and Technical Education; integrated sequence of instruction of the required High School Content Expectations (HSCE); online learning; Advanced Placement and college credit courses; work based learning; project based learning, etc.,.</p>	
<p>4 English Language Arts Credits</p>	<p>✓ No modification except for students with disabilities</p>
<p>4 Mathematics Credits</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 credits: Geometry, Algebra I, Algebra II; or an integrated sequence of instruction of the required High School Content Expectations (HSCE) for mathematics.1 additional math or math-related course • Math or math-related high school level credit in the final year 	<p>To qualify for a PC math modification, students must have completed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ 2 MMC math credit requirements (Geometry and Algebra I or equivalent) and would like a modification to complete Algebra II over two years with credit given for each year OR ✓ 2.5 MMC math credit requirements (Geometry, Algebra I and .5 credit of Algebra II or equivalent) and have a minimum of 4 credits including math in their final year <p>To graduate, students must complete:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ A minimum of 4 math or math-related credits up through an equivalent of .5 of Algebra II and math in their final year <p>Additional modifications may be available for students with disabilities</p>
<p>3 Science Credits</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 credits: Biology, Chemistry or Physics; or an integrated sequence of instruction of the required HSCE for science from the above courses • 1 additional high school level science credit 	<p>✓ No modification except for students with disabilities</p>
<p>3 Social Studies Credits (no sequence required)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • .5 Civics • .5 Economics • US History and Geography • World History and Geography 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ No modification of Civics ✓ 2 credits must be earned ✓ Modified only if student takes additional credit(s) beyond the required credits in English Language Arts, Math, Science, or World Languages
<p>1 Physical Education and Health Credit</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How this credit is offered is a local district decision 	<p>✓ Modification allowed only if student takes additional credit(s) beyond the required credits in English Language Arts, Math, Science, or World Languages</p>
<p>1 Visual, Performing, Applied Arts Credit</p>	<p>✓ Modification allowed only if student takes additional credit(s) beyond the required credits in English Language Arts, Math, Science, or World Languages</p>
<p>Online Learning Experience or Credit</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online course or learning experience OR • Online experience is incorporated into each of the required credits 	<p>✓ No modification except for students with disabilities</p>
<p>2 World Language Credits</p>	<p>✓ No modification except for students with disabilities</p>

This document is intended to provide general guidance. Due to the complexity of the law, policies and guidance will continue to evolve. For specific information regarding the law, please refer to MCL 380.1278a and MCL 380.1278b. 3/08

Questions & Answers (New & Revised 10.07)

1. **Q: When should a student's Michigan Merit graduation requirements be modified with a personal curriculum?**

A: The use of a personal curriculum (PC) modification is allowed by state statute for only three reasons:

- A student wishes to modify the mathematics requirement in Algebra II
- A student wishes to go beyond the academic credit requirements by adding more math, science, English language arts, or World Language credits
- A student with a disability needs to modify the credit requirements based on his or her disability and Individualized Education Program (IEP)

The legislative intent of the Personal Curriculum (PC) is to increase the rigor and relevance of the educational experience. While a PC can be requested at any time during a student's high school experience, with the exception of math and social studies, it should be used in limited circumstances after students have had the opportunity to succeed in the Michigan Merit Curriculum and have exhausted their elective options. There are no set time lines in state statute aside from the mathematics and social studies requirements.

Revisions to a Personal Curriculum may be made if they are developed and agreed to in the same manner as the original Personal Curriculum. The parent or guardian must be in communication with each of the student's teachers at least once each calendar quarter to monitor the student's progress toward the goals in his or her Personal Curriculum.

2. **Q: When is a Personal Curriculum Modification not needed?**

A: A personal curriculum is not needed if:

- A student wants to pursue a standard curriculum and can fulfill the Michigan Merit graduation requirements
- A student wants to pursue career and technical education courses, humanities courses, industrial education or applied arts
- A student wants to take accelerated courses through dual enrollment, advanced placement, or International Baccalaureate
- A student wants to enroll in alternative education programs
- A student wants to change the Educational Development Plan

Students participating in these programs are expected to meet the MMC credit requirements and use effective planning and scheduling to meet these needs.

The MMC does not prevent the district from serving at-risk students or alternative education students according to district policy. The PC is not intended to track all at-risk students and alternative education students into an alternative curriculum that does not align with the high school content expectations. Local schools must not erect barriers or limit a student's opportunity to take a challenging curriculum. The research is clear - low performing students do better when given the opportunity to learn a challenging curriculum.

A district has unlimited possibilities to vary instructional strategies to help students meet the MMC. The district has the option of creating integrated courses that meet student needs as long as the courses demonstrate proficiency on the high school content expectations. For example, districts can combine technical or humanities credit with academic credit to enhance relevance for students and increase student achievement or combine a stage lighting Career and Technical Education (CTE) class with a dual enrollment physics credit in a community college demonstrating the science of light. The key here is identifying the appropriate content expectations that are being addressed and ensuring the student is

proficient. A personal curriculum is not needed to exercise these options. The MMC has not eliminated any of these options.

While the PC option is available to any student, the legislative intent is that districts will make curriculum modifications only when it is clear that a modification is necessary for the student to achieve graduation requirements. For example, students in alternative education settings, at-risk students and students with a qualifying disability under the Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act may request and be granted a personal curriculum modification only if there is documented evidence that the student may not meet the graduation requirements.

3. Q: Do you need a Personal Curriculum (PC) to offer an alternative education program?

A. No. A PC is not necessarily needed to offer an alternative education program. If a student in an alternative education program is at risk of not meeting graduation requirements or dropping out of school, a parent or guardian may request a PC to make allowable modification to the MMC. A PC is not a vehicle to track all alternative education students in a curriculum that is not consistent with the MMC.

4. Q: How should a student request a Personal Curriculum (PC)?

A: A Personal Curriculum must be requested:

- By a parent or guardian or an emancipated (18 years old) minor who can act on his or her own behalf under these provisions.
- By a parent of a student with a disability to modify the MMC that is not, otherwise allowable if the student has a disability as defined in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act 2004 (IDEA 2004). This allows for additional credit substitution or content modification if the changes are based on the student's disability and Individualized Education Program (IEP).

The PC is developed by the pupil, one or more of the student's parents or legal guardians, and his or her high school counselor or other designee selected by the high school principal. For students with a disability, a school psychologist should also be involved. The PC:

- Should incorporate as much of the subject area content expectations as practicable.
- Should establish measurable goals the student must achieve while enrolled in high school.
- Should align with a student's Educational Development Plan, and Individualize Education Program for students with a disability.
- Must be agreed upon by a pupil's parent or legal guardian and the superintendent of the school district or chief executive of a public school academy or his or her designee.
- Must be monitored quarterly to ensure students meet the state high school graduation requirements.

If the student does not fulfill the approved Personal Curriculum, the PC is null and void, the student is obligated to make up the class(es) that were waived by the Personal Curriculum in order to be eligible to graduate.

5. Q: Does the personal curriculum apply equally as an option for students who want to take courses that are more rigorous?

A: Yes. The Personal Curriculum modification is allowed by state statute for a student who wishes to go beyond the academic credit requirements by adding more math, science, English language arts, or world languages.

6. Q: Do the classes substituted for Michigan Merit requirements (beyond those required) need to have a written set of state High School Content Expectations?

A: No. For a student requesting a Personal Curriculum for purposes of taking classes beyond those required in the Michigan Merit Curriculum there is no need to have written state expectations, but those classes should have local district expectations.

7. Q: Can a district establish local graduation requirements in addition to the state requirements? Can a district require students to take credits that are allowable modifications with a personal curriculum?

A: Yes. The state graduation requirements were established as the floor, not the ceiling. Districts continue to be able to establish requirements in addition to state requirements. In addition, districts may require students to take, for example, a ½ or full credit of Physical Education, which would eliminate a student's ability to modify the state requirement under a personal curriculum.

8. Q: How much of the Michigan Merit Curriculum (MMC) requirements can be modified for a special education student to ensure a quality education?

A: A majority of students receiving special education services will not need a Personal Curriculum. In addition, not all students with disabilities receive special education services. Some students receive educational accommodations under section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. It is important to note that the provisions in the MMC that allows for the consideration of modifications beyond what the personal curriculum stipulates are not available to students with 504 accommodations as they do not meet the federal IDEA 2004 definition of a student with a disability. Section K of Michigan Curriculum Law 380.1278b applies only to students with an IEP.

Every effort must be made to provide students with disabilities full access to the MMC before making modifications. Modifications to state standards may affect a student's opportunity to achieve a diploma.

For a student eligible for special education services, the personal curriculum modifications must:

- Incorporate as much of the subject area content expectation as practicable for the student
- Identify appropriate courses of study, as well as, supports and accommodations necessary to allow the pupil to progress
- Be consistent with the Educational Development Plan (EDP)
- Modify components of the content expectations within each credit requirement

Additionally, the personal curriculum modifications should:

- Reasonably enable the achievement of post-secondary goals
- Facilitate progress along the student's career pathway and the achievement of postsecondary goals
- Enhance the relevance of the student's educational experience
- Provide full access to statewide assessments
- Provide a gateway to employment and productive adult living
- Maintain the integrity of the diploma

9. Q: Does the IEP of a Student with a Disability override the Michigan Merit Curriculum?

A: No, the Individualized Educational Program (IEP) does not override the MMC but rather supports achievement in the curriculum. It is the responsibility of the school's Personal Curriculum committee, comprised of a parent/guardian, school principal or designee, school counselor, and a school psychologist to recommend approval of a Personal Curriculum. The Personal Curriculum (PC) must be approved by the school district superintendent or his/her designee. While the law says that this committee should take into account the IEP and Educational Development Plan (EDP), it does not require that it be ruled by them. In other words, the IEP does not determine the graduation requirements for a student with a disability. It is the responsibility of the PC committee.

The intent of the inclusion of the school psychologist is to assure that someone involved in the student's IEP provided input relative to the student's abilities and needs. This role may be served by including another member of the Individualized Education Program Team, so long as the person can provide the needed input. The decision of the superintendent to grant or deny a PC may be reviewed through the district's typical review or appeal process permitted by board policy.

The IEP does not set forth the general education classes the student is to take, but rather sets forth the "course or courses of study" and the accommodations or modifications needed by the student in the general education setting. The PC must be consistent with both the EDP and the IEP.

10. Q: What needs to be in the Educational Development Plan (EDP)?

A. No specific form or format for an EDP is required, so a school can custom design the form or format that works best for the local needs. However, there are some essential elements to include in any EDP.

1. **Personal Information** – This usually includes the student's name, date of birth, and grade level in school. The school could use a personal identification number for each student to maintain confidentiality when sharing information among staff or publishing information online. The EDP is a student record and should be maintained with the same policies governing other student records, as required in the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).
2. **Career Goal(s)** – Each student should identify a career pathway or career goal. These may be more general in middle school and become more specific as the student progresses through high school.
3. **Educational/Training Goal(s)** – Each student should identify the level of educational preparation that will be needed to meet the career goal. This encourages students to think beyond high school graduation and set long-range goals. Options include on-the-job training, military service, certificate programs, two year associate degree programs, apprenticeship programs, trade or technical education, four-year university programs, and advanced university degree or professional preparation programs.
4. **Assessment Results** – The student may summarize the results of various assessments, highlighting information that is relevant to making career decisions. Assessment data may include formal and informal data such as: career interest surveys, aptitude testing, informal observations, student projects or hobbies, academic achievement, and extra curricular activities. From this information, students will be able to identify individual interests and strengths. They may also set improvement goals. Over time, students will be able to use this information to confirm career decisions or adjust goals.
5. **Plan(s) of Action** – The student can plan career awareness or exploration activities, work-based activities, and course selections that will prepare her/him for greater understanding of career options and achievement of career goals. Activities may include volunteer or work-related experiences including job shadowing, mentorship programs in community businesses, or part-time employment in areas related to the career goal(s).

Students may also investigate educational programs available within the school or college curriculum that will provide opportunities to become more aware and skilled in a career pathway, e.g., an internship in a community agency, intensive project-based learning in a particular course. The student should also take the time to explore the opportunities for earning college credit while

still in high school through Advanced Placement Courses, dual enrollment, International Baccalaureate, and other programs. The action plan should include high school course selections, projected completion date, desired degree, certificate or other credential, timeline for college application, financial assistance deadlines, and employment opportunities.

The plan may also identify special resources and support needed for the student's success in the Personal Curriculum. For example, an EDP might contain a personal literacy plan to aid students who are struggling readers, or a prevention plan for students who have been identified as at risk of dropping out.

- 6. Parent Consultation/Endorsement** – Parents/guardians should have the opportunity to review and endorse their child's EDP. This will give parents access to information about emerging careers and employment trends so they can help their children to prepare for the future. Parents/guardians may also need to discuss assessment results or have assistance interpreting them. Students should be encouraged to discuss career-related issues with their parents and share their goals and action plans.

11. Q: How do the EDP, PC, and transition IEP work together to support student achievement?

A: The first planning tool for a student preparing for high school is the Educational Development Plan (EDP). At the simplest level, the EDP should always be considered when developing an Individualized Educational Program (IEP). A well written EDP is transition planning in that it may contain a course of study (the MMC or PC) and Education/Training and employment goals sufficient to meet the student's needs. These could be referenced by the IEP or lifted directly from one document to the other. Some students may need additional support (modifications, accommodations, supports, and services) or more specific postsecondary goals that will be stipulated in the IEP. The EDP outlines the students' educational pathway including the course of study that will enable them to be successful in their desired post school activities (work, community, and continuing learning). The IEP is the program of additional supports that when implemented, will enable a student with a disability to be successful in the educational pathway they have identified. The intent of these documents is to capture the educational experiences and systems of supports that will enable the student to be successful once high school is over.

12. Q: What support is the state prepared to make available to students who need additional time and support to meet the new requirements?

A: High school redesign is an opportunity to restructure high schools to ensure all students become proficient in the High School Content Expectations and Course Content Expectations. Every student is entitled, through existing resources, to a free and appropriate public education. Districts have the opportunity to realign resources appropriately to ensure all students have the opportunity to achieve the MMC requirements.

13. Q: Is the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) going to develop additional guidance on allowable modifications outlined in Section K?

A: No. MDE will rely on special education associations and local districts to develop additional guidance based on actual application of the Personal Curriculum (PC) for actual situations. The department will collect and track how the PC is being applied and share sample plans from districts.

14. Q: Can a Student with Disabilities (SWD) receive a Personal Curriculum (PC) as early as 8th grade?

A: While a personal curriculum can be requested at any time, it cannot go into effect until the student is in high school. The PC is a provision in the MMC law to help students achieve as much of the high school content expectations as possible. Districts have the option to offer high school credit acquired in the 8th grade as long as that credit is based on proficiency with the high school content expectations.

15. Q: What is meant by modified further?

A: It means that the limitations on the Personal Curriculum (PC) stated in the law (e.g. no modifications of ELA, Science, on-line, etc.) may be modified further for a Student With a Disability (SWD). However, it is not permissible to create an alternative pathway to graduation. Modifications that erect barriers to progress along the student’s career pathway or jeopardize the achievement of postsecondary goals need to be carefully considered. Ultimately, the decision regarding how much of the Michigan Merit Curriculum (MMC) Course Content Expectations equal credit in a subject area is a local board decision.

While it is conceivable under the language of the statute that the content of the PC may be modified to a grade level much lower than the high school content expectations, this was not the intent or expectation of the Department. Rather, the expectation is that the PC will include as much of the grade level expectations in the particular subject matter as possible, though possibly presented in a modified manner (e.g., multiple classes, extended time, through Career and Technical Education (CTE), etc.). The law allows a school district to modify instructional strategies or approaches to help the student achieve the content expectations. However, you do not need a personal curriculum to modify instructional strategies or approaches (e.g., multiple classes, extended time, through CTE, universal design, etc.).

16. Q: Can you have a Personal Curriculum (PC) if you are entering the 9th grade and have a completed Educational Development Plan (EDP)?

A: The legislation states that you must complete a minimum of 2 credits in mathematics before you can request a PC to modify the math requirement. The legislation states that you have to complete 2 credits of social studies before you can request a modification in social studies. Parents of students entering 9th grade who request a PC in order to have their students exempted from Physical Education, Health or Visual, Performing and Applied Arts so that their students, later on in high school, can use the exemption in order to take additional classes in ELA, math, science, or world language, must provide a written four-year plan that clearly shows the additional credits a student intends to take in place of the required credits. If the student does not fulfill the PC and does not take the additional credits, the PC is null and void and the student would be required to take the PE/Health/VPAA credits.

17. Q: Can Local Boards of Education establish a separate diploma and requirements?

A: No. The legislation clearly stipulates that a diploma shall not be awarded unless the pupil successfully completes all of the credit requirements in MCL 380.1278a and 380.1278b. This does not prevent districts from issuing alternative certificates such as a GED or certificate of completion for students who do not meet all of the requirements of the MMC. For students with a disability, only a diploma ends the entitlement to a free and appropriate public education.

18. Q: What are the essential skills needed by staff to complete the Personal Curriculum documents? Will training be provided?

A: In general, staff will need to be skilled in helping students develop postsecondary goals including assessment methods that aid in the identification of the goals and the planning skills that will align educational experiences with the desired outcomes. The skills needed by staff that sit on a personal curriculum committee must be consistent with their current certification requirements, i.e. counselor, school psychologist, certified teachers, etc.

19. Q: What does the Personal Curriculum mean for a General Education Student?

A: A General Education student can request a personal curriculum to make allowable modifications to the Michigan Merit Curriculum (MMC) requirements the same as any student. The MMC is for all students regardless of circumstances or barriers to learning. The requirements and curriculum are the constant. What varies is how students are engaged to achieve proficiency of the content expectations. The PC for a General Education student makes it possible for students to attend specialized

postsecondary programs to access relevant content in place of content that may be less relevant to a desired specific post school outcome and receive MMC credit for the work.

20. Q: The MMC does not take into consideration the hundreds of students who fall in the below average range of intelligence. Instead of offering classes that allow NO CHILD to be left behind, we are making them take classes that they will surely fail.

A: The prevailing notion that nearly all intelligence is inherited might be a credible argument if IQ tests really measure ability. IQ tests measure acquired information. While IQ tests are designed to predict success in school, they do not predict ability or basic intelligence. Many assessments and tests used in many areas of school are not about ability or intelligence, they are about an acquired knowledge base; if the parents are educated, chances are their children will have a higher acquired knowledge base. A better approach to achievement is to look at the teaching and learning. Reuven Feuerstein looked at poor disenfranchised youth and found that an important element to learning is mediation between an environmental stimulus and response, i.e. the interventions of an adult. Mediation builds cognitive strategies and gives students the ability to plan and systematically go through data, etc. The fact that many youth succeed in school despite below average intelligence tests suggests that learning is more a function of motivation, effort, and good teaching.

21. Q: Will the Michigan Merit requirements cause the drop out rate to increase?

A: Over the past few years, the Michigan Department of Education and educators, parents, business representatives, and others have developed Grade Level Content Expectations designed to ensure students receive the learning foundation they need in each grade to successfully transition into the next grade and harder subjects.

While many believe students leave school because it is too hard, numerous studies show most students say they dropped out because: they weren't learning anything they thought important; they hated their school; had personal problems, and said teachers didn't care. Only 13% say they left because school was too hard. In fact, what most students have said is, they want to be challenged, expect us to have high expectations and if needed, offer the support they need to achieve their dreams.

Drop out rates involving Students With Disabilities in Michigan have been falling steadily since 1999 and currently sit at 25.2% for students with disabilities. This marks tremendous progress that needs to be celebrated. However, over the last three years, the rate of progress has begun to level off suggesting that new strategies and interventions will need to be implemented if progress is to continue. We actually lose more students with learning disabilities identified as not having an intellectual impairment, than students with significant cognitive challenges.

The biggest factor in student success is quality teaching.

22. Q: What will happen to the Career Centers that save MANY students from dropping out?

A: Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs are seen as an essential and integral part of the educational experience for many students. Many of these programs offer alternative learning opportunities that provide students with real world experiences. The MMC does not eliminate these programs but encourages districts to provide not only CTE programs, but other opportunities to help ensure the curriculum is relevant for all students.

Guidelines on Awarding Academic Credit have been developed that examine curriculum to determine the amount of academic credit to award in a CTE program, a humanities or other integrated sequence, or in a project based curriculum. The document was developed by MDE staff, Office of Career and Technical Preparation staff, and representatives from CTE programs. The Guidelines are posted on the MDE website.

23. Q: Does the new Michigan Merit Exam (MME) curriculum that begins with fall 2007 freshmen apply to all students?

A: Yes.

24. Q: Does the MMC eliminate the Cognitively Impaired population from getting a diploma?

A: The MDE understands that under the graduation requirements outlined in the Michigan Merit Curriculum there will be some students who do not earn a diploma. It is not the opinion of the department that the graduation requirements automatically eliminate categories of students from the potential to earn a diploma. The graduation requirements will require educators in local systems to examine the needs of the student, the student's desired post-school options, alternate instructional and assessment methods, and alternate criteria for demonstration of mastery, among other things, to craft truly individualized learning plans for the more challenged learners (not all of whom have cognitive impairments). However, we must understand and recognize that while IDEA 2004 establishes a right to a free and appropriate public education, it does not establish an entitlement to a diploma.

25. Q: What flexibility do local districts have with approving personal curriculums?

A: General guidance, developed to provide interpretation and clarification of the personal curriculum, in no way defines every situation in which a personal curriculum may be applicable. Local districts retain control within the limits imposed by the law. As long as the Personal Curriculum option meets the minimum credit requirements, is comprised of the content expectations from the required subject areas that make up credit, measures progress and helps students achieve, "the board of a school district or board of directors of a public school academy may award a high school diploma to a pupil who successfully completes his or her personal curriculum even if it does not meet the requirements of the MMC." Flexibility is initially guided by the student's learning needs. The personal curriculum option is available for any student and outlines specific modifications that are intended to increase the rigor and/or relevance of the educational experience for the student. This option is further guided by subsection (k) which allows for modification based specifically on a student's disability.

26. Q: What will be the extent of modifications practicable under subsection (k)?

A: Modifications are dependent upon a number of factors.

1. The modification must be necessary because the pupil is a student with a disability
2. The modification is permitted only to the extent necessary
3. The modification must be consistent with both the student's Educational Development Plan (EDP) and Individualized Educational Program (IEP)
4. The appropriateness of the modification must be determined by the same group of people responsible for developing and approving a PC for any pupil (student/parent/guardian, counselor or designee), and should include a school psychologist
5. Acceptable modifications might include:
 - Additional credit swapping within the MMC
 - Modification of math before completing 2 credits
 - Modification to the method of assessing mastery
 - Modification to the criteria for determining mastery

In general, modifications should *facilitate* progress along the student's career pathway (as identified in their EDP) and the achievement of annual and post secondary goals (as identified in the student's IEP). Any modification that would erect a barrier to progress or achievement should be carefully considered by all parties involved as it may have long reaching detrimental effects for the individual student.

27. Q: Do courses taken as “substitutes” in the personal curriculum for students with disabilities require a set of written content expectations?

A: Yes. The Personal Curriculum is based on the same set of content expectations described in the Course Credit Requirements and must offer as much of the content expectations as is “practicable.” For a student with disabilities, the Personal Curriculum must address as many of the content expectations as is reasonable based on the student’s disability. The Personal Curriculum for any student must specify the content expectations that will be covered.

28. Q: Does a student with a personal curriculum receive a high school diploma after 4 years of high school?

A: As long as the Personal Curriculum option meets the minimum credit requirements, is comprised of the content expectations from the required subject areas that make up credit, measures progress and helps students achieve, “the board of a school district or board of directors of a public school academy *may* award a high school diploma to a pupil who successfully completes his or her personal curriculum even if it does not meet the requirements of the MMC.” Flexibility is initially guided by the student’s learning needs. The personal curriculum option is available for any student and outlines specific modifications that are intended to increase the rigor and/or relevance of the educational experience for the student. This option is further guided by subsection (k) which allows for modification based specifically on a student’s disability and the IEP.

If a student has a personal curriculum and has successfully completed all or nearly all of the content expectations for all state required credits, although modified, a student is eligible to receive a regular high school diploma. The local board of education is responsible for establishing criteria for content mastery, allowable modifications, and what constitutes credit for specific courses.

If a student cannot meet most of the Michigan Merit content expectations, such as a student with severe cognitive impairments, he or she would be eligible for a certificate of completion or other form of recognition as developed at the local level.

29. Q: What does it mean to modify graduation requirements and content expectations based on a student’s disability? Are modifications for students with a disability limited to the identified disability area?

A: The parent of a student with a disability may request a modification to the MMC that is not *otherwise* allowable if the student has a disability as defined in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act 2004 (IDEA 2004). This allows for additional credit substitution or content modification if the changes are based on the student’s disability. This does not suggest that all of the MMC needs to be modified; only the areas that are specific to the student’s disability.

IDEA 2004 specifies that an Individualized Educational Program (IEP) for a student with a disability shall identify appropriate courses of study as well as; supports, accommodations, and modifications necessary to allow the pupil to progress in the requirements of the MMC or in the Personal Curriculum. Federal law requires the IEP to identify the course or courses of study that allow the student to achieve IEP goals and objectives, not to specify individual classes or curriculum.

NCLB and IDEA 2004 hold State and Public Agencies accountable for the performance of students with disabilities within a structure of state standards. While it is allowable to account for growth and performance for some of these students on alternative achievement standards, it is not appropriate to create a different path to graduation.

Section 300.102(a)(3), regarding exceptions to Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE), clarifies that a regular high school diploma does not include an alternative degree that is not fully aligned with the State’s academic standards, such as a certificate of completion or a general educational development credential (GED).

Neither the Michigan Department Education, local or intermediate school districts have the authority to override the accountability framework that NCLB and IDEA created.

30. Q: What types of modifications to the academic requirements might be appropriate for a student with an emotional impairment, where the disability itself would not impair the student's ability to perform academically, but rather impacts the student's behavior?

A: It depends on what the PC team decides. If the student is unable to complete the typical MMC expectations because of the disability, the team may modify the expectations through the PC. In extreme cases, this could even include waiving certain requirements. Say, for example, that the student has already completed 4 years of high school and yet has not completed the last credit in math, and the team decides that continuing for another year is just not possible because the student will not be able to handle it emotionally. The PC team, with the agreement of the superintendent, may agree to have the student earn the credit in another way; like through a Career and Technical Education (CTE) program, or online independent study at home, or eliminate the requirement for this student if the student has met Educational Development Plan (EDP) and Individualized Educational Program (IEP) goals. However, this would result in the student not meeting all MMC requirements and not being eligible for a diploma.

31. Q: What is the message to parents of students with disabilities if we want all students to achieve at higher levels?

A: The message regarding the MMC is the same for all parents and students. All students need to have the opportunity and have access to a challenging curriculum. Only when there is a documented need every effort has been made to help the student achieve, and the student is at risk of dropping out of high school are modifications considered. The modifications for any student including a student with a disability, must address as many of the graduation requirements and the content expectations as possible. The key issue is providing the educational experience that will best enable the student to achieve their career pathway goals and/or postsecondary goals as identified in the Educational Development Plan (EDP) or Individual Educational Program (IEP).

32. Q: Who is responsible for developing the PC for a student with a disability? How can special educators help general education colleagues?

A: The development of the PC for students with a disability is the same process that would be used for any student requesting a personal curriculum. Special educators can assist general education colleagues by supporting the development of a PC as the adults in the education setting who best know the student's strengths and abilities. Additionally, special educators can assist with the individualized or differentiated instruction that provides multiple means of access to the content and competency or mastery.

33. Q: What math modifications are allowed for general education students?

A: While a Personal Curriculum (PC) modification may be requested at any time, to qualify the law requires students to complete a certain number of credits depending on the math modification.

For a PC to allow the Algebra II content to be taken over two years, the law requires a student to successfully complete 2 math credits including the equivalent of Geometry and Algebra I. The credit for the first year of Algebra II, however, may not be recorded as an Algebra II credit since the student has not yet completed the content expectations for Algebra II. A student gets the Algebra II credit when they have demonstrated proficiency with the required content expectations for Algebra II. A PC is not needed for students taking Pre-Algebra II for credit and Algebra II for credit.

All other modifications require students to complete a minimum of 2.5 math credits including Geometry, Algebra I and ½ credit of Algebra II, or the equivalent of these credit requirements in an integrated math or Career and Technical Education program. Once this requirement has been met, a modification may allow a student to take the remaining 1.5 credits in a math or math related course.

Allowable Mathematics Modifications

	1 credit	1 credit	1 credit	1 credit	Total Credits
MMC without PC	Algebra I, Algebra II and Geometry (no sequence required)			Final year math or math-related credit	4
Modification after successful completion of 2 math credits allowing Algebra II to be taken over two years	Algebra I and Geometry (no sequence required)		Algebra II		4
Modification after successful completion of minimum of 2.5 math credits	Students required to take Geometry and Algebra I		Algebra II ½ credit	Math or math-related credit	4
Modification after successful completion of 2 math credits	Algebra I and Geometry (no sequence required)		Algebra II content in CTE	Math or math related credit	4

34. Q: Is a personal curriculum required if a student takes Algebra II over two years? Can a student receive a credit for each year?

A: Yes. A personal curriculum would be necessary if a student requests to take Algebra II over 2 years or requests to be exempted from the second semester of Algebra II.

35. Q: Do math related courses for the 4th credit developed for the personal curriculum need to meet the same high school content expectations as MMC required courses?

A: No modification for the 4th credit is required. A personal curriculum can only modify the Algebra II requirements. The 4th credit must be math related but does not need to meet any of the high school content expectations. However, for student with disabilities taking as much content as possible, all four credits must be based on the high school content expectations.

36. Q: The law authorizing the Michigan high school graduation requirements clearly states that a diploma shall not be granted unless the student achieves all of the state required credits. If a student chooses to modify Algebra II and only completes .5 credits, are they required to make up the remaining .5 credit in math?

A: Yes. If a student is in his or her final year of high school and chooses to modify Algebra II by only completing .5 credits instead of 1 full credit, the additional half credit must be made up of additional math content. Students not in their final year must take a minimum of .5 credits in Algebra II and a full math credit in their final year.

37. Q: What additional types of modifications in Mathematics are allowed for a student with a disability?

A: All of the math requirements in the Merit Curriculum would be subject to modification...again, with the caveat that a student should not just be blank-exempted from even attempting Algebra I, II, or Geometry. but should be engaged in an instructional program in math that covers as many of the content expectations as is practicable/possible, given the student's disability. Because the IDEA 2004 states that the school cannot offer an alternative curriculum or diploma, the modifications may not lead to a diploma. The student should complete a minimum of 4 mathematics credits based on as much of the content expectations as needed to meet the graduation requirement.

38. Q: For students earning credits through CTE or other classes which may be math-related courses (such as accounting), does the teacher assigning the grade need to be "highly qualified" under NCLB, and if so, how can districts address this where the CTE or other teacher is not highly qualified in math?

A: The teacher assigning the grade must be "highly qualified" in math in order for the credit to be granted in math. The department is working on guidance for districts modeled after the New York state "Collaborative Teaching" model. This is where the Career and Technical Education (CTE) or other teacher meets with a highly qualified teacher in math to align the content expectations between the two courses and collaborate on how the content expectation will be addressed. By having the teachers collaborate in the content and method of delivering instruction, the student may receive a credit in a math related subject and the district will meet the highly qualified requirements. The department is looking at modeling its approach after the system in New York since it has already been reviewed and approved by the US DOE.

39. Q: How will the schools change to assist a large number of students who are not proficient in Mathematics?

A: The state is currently supporting a Math AYP initiative through the State Improvement Grant (SIG). This information can be accessed at <http://michiganmathematics.org>. The state has also engaged multiple national technical assistance centers to assist high schools in the state to learn about model practices. Schools may change almost any operating or instructional practice to help students meet the graduation requirements of the MMC.

40. Q: Can a student required to take the Michigan Merit Curriculum waive the state's Physical Education or health credit requirement for any reason?

A. Yes. The new Michigan Merit Curriculum (MCL) 380.1278b, allows a student to substitute one physical education and health credit to acquire extra English language arts, mathematics, science, or world language credits if a student has an approved personal curriculum. Please see the Personal Curriculum Frequently Asked Questions document for guidance.

In addition, students may test out of any state required graduation credit if the student earns: 1) a qualifying score, as determined by the department, on the assessments developed or selected for the subject area by the department; OR, 2) the student earns a qualifying score, as determined by the school district or public school academy that measure a student's understanding of the subject area content expectations or guidelines that apply to the credit. Please see the Testing Out Frequently Asked Questions document for guidance.

The Revised School Code MCL 380.1169, requires school districts to instruct students in dangerous communicable diseases such as Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) infection and Acquired Immunodeficiency Virus Infection (AIDS). While the law does not require this instruction to take place in high school, the Michigan Department of Education has encouraged that this important instruction be taught to students in elementary, middle, and high school.

41. Q: Can districts still choose to replace extracurricular activities (e.g. marching band and sports) for the physical education requirement? What about health?

A: Under the Revised School Code, 380.1502(1) Health and physical education for pupils of both sexes shall be established and provided in all public schools of this state. Subject to subsection (2), each pupil attending public school in this state who is physically fit and capable of doing so shall take the course in physical education.

380.1502(2) A school may credit a student's participation in extracurricular athletics or other extracurricular activities involving physical activity as meeting the physical education requirement for the student under subsection (1).

This law is still in effect as well as the new Michigan Merit high school graduation requirements. Therefore, a district may still determine that extracurricular activities involving physical activity may be used as credit toward the physical education requirement. If a district does decide to use extracurricular physical activities to meet the physical education requirement, the student must still demonstrate proficiency in the physical education credit guidelines beginning with students entering 8th grade in 2006 (Class of 2011). Please see the Testing Out Frequently Asked Questions for further guidance.

Please note, however, that this pertains **only** to the physical education credit guidelines of the Michigan Merit Curriculum, not the health education credit guidelines.

42. Q: Can a modification for Health and Physical Education occur at any time?

A: Beginning with students entering 8th grade in 2006 (Class of 2011), a modification to either the health or physical education Michigan Merit Curriculum's 1 credit in health/physical education requirement could occur at any point in a student's high school career. The student should be required, before applying for a personal curriculum to:

- Develop an Educational Development Plan (EDP) that clearly indicates the additional credit the student proposes to earn in order to waive credit(s).
- Create an agreement that includes written understanding that if at some point in the future the student fails to follow through on the plan that justified the personal curriculum, the personal curriculum would become null and void and the student, in order to graduate, would be required to successfully complete waived credit(s).

43. Q: Can a district reduce the 3 credit requirement to 2 credits for social studies with a personal curriculum?

A: No. A district cannot arbitrarily reduce the social studies credit requirement to 2 credits. A parent may request a personal curriculum to substituting credit requirements for one social studies credit for students who have successfully completed two required social studies credits (which must include Civics), to acquire additional credits in English language arts, mathematics, science, or world languages.

44. Q: Can a student opt out of biology or chemistry?

A: No. The law regarding the Personal Curriculum does not allow any modifications to the MMC science requirements unless it is for a student with disabilities. Students are required to take Biology, and either Chemistry or Physics.

45. Q: Can a student who has taken two credits of world languages prior to 2016 request a personal curriculum to take additional credit in world languages?

A: Yes, a student can request a personal curriculum to acquire additional credit in world languages providing the request is not inconsistent with district graduation requirements or the world languages guidelines requiring the two credits in the same world language, and the student wants to substitute credit for health and physical education or visual, performing and applied arts, or social studies.

46. Q: In looking at the chart on MDE's site for the Personal Curriculum under the column "Modification," it currently shows no modifications in ELA or science. Does the law now allow students with a disability to modify both subject areas, and if so, what would they look like?

A: Yes. The basic rule mentioned in the law is that the PC for a student with a disability should include as many of the subject area expectations "as practicable." What this means is that a student with a disability shouldn't just be permitted to waive Biology but should be instructed in some program of science that includes as much of the Biology High School Content Expectation's as possible. What this alternate program of science would look like could vary and depends on a documented need because of a disability. Eligibility for special education services does not presume that a modification of the curriculum is necessary. However, the science program may not necessarily qualify for a biology credit that leads to a diploma.

Resources

Flanagan says HS MEAP Scores Shows Need for Tougher Requirements

<http://www.michigan.gov/mde/0,1607,7-140--147256--,.00.html>

Video Clips of Superintendent Flanagan speaking on Michigan's new high school graduation requirements.

<http://www.michigan.gov/mde/0,1607,7-140-38924-143681--,.00.html>

Preparing Michigan Students for Work and College Success

http://www.michigan.gov/documents/hs_research_doc_149897_7.pdf

MMC FAQ Document (PDF)

http://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/111706-finalhsfaq_178578_7.pdf

<http://www.michigan.gov/mde/0,1607,7-140--152784--,.00.html>

National award-winning High Standards and Student Achievement Brochure for parents/educators

http://www.michigan.gov/documents/Final_High_Standards_Brochure_7-18-01_11238_7.pdf

Michigan Department of Education – Office of School Improvement

http://www.michigan.gov/mde/0,1607,7-140-6530_30334---,.00.html

Michigan Department of Education – Office of Special Education and Early Intervention Services

http://www.michigan.gov/mde/0,1607,7-140-6530_6598---,.00.html

Michigan's Integrated Behavior and Literacy Support Initiative

<http://www.cenmi.org/miblsi>

International Center for Leadership in Education

<http://www.leadered.com>

National Drop Out Prevention Center

<http://www.dropoutprevention.org>

Michigan IDEA Partnership – Reach and Teach for Learning

<http://www.cenmi.org/ideapartner>

Michigan's Integrated Technology Supports

<http://www.cenmi.org/mits/Default.asp>

CAST – Center for Applied Special Technology
<http://www.cast.org>

State Improvement Grant: Mathematics AYP
<http://michiganmathematics.org>

Michigan Transition Resources
<http://www.cenmi.org/tspmi>

Important Links

New High School Graduation Requirements Pay First Dividends for Michigan Students
<http://www.michigan.gov/mde/0,1607,7-140--147284--,00.html>

STUDENTS ELIGIBLE FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES

What the Michigan Merit Curriculum Law Says

Sec. 1278b(6) If a pupil receives special education services, his or her individualized education program, in accordance with the Federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, must identify the supports, accommodations, and modifications necessary to allow him or her to progress in the Michigan Merit Curriculum requirements, or in a personal curriculum, and meet the requirements for a high school diploma.

(k) If the parent or legal guardian of a pupil requests as part of the pupil's personal curriculum a modification of the Michigan merit standard requirements that would not otherwise be allowed under this section and demonstrates that the modification is necessary because the pupil is a child with a disability, the school district or public school academy may allow that additional modification to the extent necessary because of the pupil's disability if the group under subdivision (a) determines that the modification is consistent with both the pupil's educational development plan under subsection (11) and the pupil's individualized education program. If the superintendent of public instruction has reason to believe that a school district or a public school academy is allowing modifications inconsistent with the requirements of this subdivision, the superintendent of public instruction shall monitor the school district or public school academy to ensure that the school district's or public school academy's policies, procedures, and practices are in compliance with the requirements for additional modifications under this subdivision. As used in this subdivision, "child with a disability" means that term as defined in 20 USC 1401.

Questions & Answers

1. Q: What about students who receive special education services?

A: Special Education students are general education students first, and by law must be given access to, and support for success in, the general curriculum. Studies show all students learn and achieve more when they take a challenging curriculum rather than low-level high school courses. However, some high school students are going to need support to meet the more rigorous high school graduation requirements.

All students receiving special education services in Michigan must have an Individualized Education Program (IEP) that details the appropriate education plan of support for student success. The State Board of Education firmly believes that special education students can learn and participate in the general education setting and that special education students should be given every opportunity to be successful in the Michigan Merit Curriculum.

2. Q: If a student is cognitively impaired and was not able to take the MEAP/HST or the new Michigan Merit Exam, is the student still required to complete the Michigan Merit Curriculum to earn a high school diploma?

A: Yes. The student must do so either through the general curriculum or the "personal curriculum" defined in the law. The decisions related to a student's educational program should be discussed and determined within the student's Individual Education Plan (IEP) process by the IEP Team. A decision to assess the student with the MEAP or MI-Access tests should be a subject of considerable discussion during these meetings and conclusions based on multiple factors, (present level of academic achievement and functional performance, the student's stated post school outcomes or desires, student performance on standardized, normative, criterion referenced, summative, formative or curriculum based assessments, etc.).

The standards set by the state legislature are the curriculum standards for the state and, therefore, become the foundation for educating all students in the state of Michigan. The requirement of a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) project requires that educators provide students with disabilities full access to these standards. The standard for FAPE is clear in the federal regulations that these curriculum standards must be the foundation for all instruction. However, for students with more significant disabilities, the IEP may modify content and instruction to achieve the desired outcomes for a student. Beyond curriculum modification, students also can have specific accommodations that assist them to learn within these standards. The federal Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) is very clear that all students with disabilities have a right to access, participate and perform in the general education curriculum. While IDEA guarantees FAPE, it does not provide a guarantee that a student with disabilities is entitled to a diploma. Diploma granting is a local board decision, but school boards now have specific graduation requirements they must address, and these are spelled out in state law.

Additional information on personal curriculum modifications for students with disabilities is available in both the Michigan Department of Education’s Personal Curriculum Guidelines and Frequently Asked Question documents.

TESTING-OUT

What the Michigan Merit Curriculum Law Says

380.1278(a)(4)(c) A school district or public school academy shall also grant a student a credit if the student earns a qualifying score, as determined by the department, on the assessments developed or selected for the subject area by the department or the student earns a qualifying score, as determined by the school district or public school academy, on 1 or more assessments developed or selected by the school district or public school academy that measure a student's understanding of the subject area content expectations or guidelines that apply to the credit.

Other law in effect regarding testing-out

Credit Awarded to Pupil Not Enrolled in Course

380.1279(b) The board of a school district shall grant high school credit in any course to a pupil enrolled in high school, but who is not enrolled in the course, who has exhibited a reasonable level of mastery of the subject matter of the course by attaining a grade of not less than C+ in a final exam in the course, or, if there is no final exam, by exhibiting that mastery through the basic assessment used in the course which may consist of a portfolio, performance, paper, project, or presentation. For the purpose of earning credit under this section, any high school pupil may take the final examination in any course. Credit earned under this section shall be based on a "pass" grade and shall not be included in a computation of grade point average for any purpose. Credit earned under this section may or may not be counted toward graduation, as the board of the school district may determine, but the board's determination shall apply equally to all such credit for all pupils and credit earned under this section shall be counted toward fulfillment of a requirement for a subject area course and shall be counted toward fulfillment of a requirement as to course sequence. Once credit is earned under this section, a pupil may not receive credit thereafter for a course lower in course sequence concerning the same subject area.

History: Add. 1993, Act 335, Imd. Eff. Dec. 31, 1993 **Popular Name:** Act 451

Questions & Answers

1. Q: Is the previous law on testing-out, outlined above, still in effect?

A: Yes. However, the two laws do different things. "Testing-out" in the Michigan Merit Curriculum is an option to demonstrate that a student meets or exceeds the content expectations associated with the subject credit area. The existing testing-out law speaks specifically about courses. In the MMC, the instruction needed to test-out does not necessarily have to be delivered in a traditional "course sequence," and testing-out can occur at any time, under reasonable rules and regulations developed by the school district. The final assessment(s) should be aligned with the content expectations or guidelines to assign credit. Districts may have to revisit current policies to make sure the two laws are compatible.

2. Q: If a student "tests out" of a class, say Algebra I, but NEVER takes the Algebra I class (they knew the material, but didn't put in time IN CLASS), can they receive graduation credit?

A: Yes. If students test out of the CREDIT for Algebra I, then the earned credit would count as a required credit for graduation under the Michigan Merit Curriculum. Part of the reform initiative is to change the way we think about "seat time" as the criteria for learning - if a student knows the content and can demonstrate this knowledge on course/credit assessment(s), they will earn the credit.

3. Q: Can a student test-out of a credit required for graduation under the Michigan Merit Curriculum? To test-out, does a student need to have a C+ or better?

A: Yes. Public Acts 123 and 124 require a school district or public school academy to grant a student credit if the student earns: 1) a qualifying score, as determined by the department, on the assessments developed or selected for the subject area by the department; OR, 2) the student earns a qualifying score, as determined by the school district or public school academy, on one or more assessments developed or selected by the school district or public school academy that measure a student's understanding of the subject area content expectations or guidelines that apply to the credit.

In addition, based on a previous law still in effect, if using a final exam to measure proficiency, a student must attain a grade of not less than C+, or, if there is no final exam, by exhibiting that mastery through the basic assessment used in the course which may consist of a portfolio, performance, paper, project, or presentation. This law also requires that credits earned through testing not be included in a computation of grade point average for any purpose.

TESTING-OUT ADDITIONS 08/07

4. Q: Can a student test-out of any of the new credit areas required for graduation? Even Civics?

A: Yes. The law (380.1278a) allows students to test-out of any of the credit areas required for graduation and does not limit this to specific credit areas. Prior to this law, Department guidelines and policies stated that students may not test-out of Civics due to a legal requirement, which mandated students take a one-semester Civics "course." The new law (380.1278a and 380.1278b) no longer requires students to take classes or courses but refers instead to students earning "credit" when considered proficient in the course/credit content expectations. Therefore, a student could test-out of Civics.

5. Q: For testing-out, does there have to be a single test such as a final or end of course exam that covers all the content expectations for that credit area?

A: No. There does not have to be a single, final, end-of -course exam but yes, all the content expectations need to be reasonably covered in whatever assessment or assessments are used for testing-out. Whether a student takes a class or requests to test-out, the law states that the award of credit to the student must be based upon the student's proficiency of the content expectations in that credit area.

6. Q: If there doesn't need to be a single test or final exam for testing-out, what are the other options?

A: In speaking about testing-out, the law allows to be used:

- "...assessments developed or selected for the subject area by the department..." OR
- "...1 or more assessments developed or selected by the school district or public school academy that measure a pupil's understanding of the subject area content expectations or guidelines that apply to the credit."

It is clear that both the state and the local district do not necessarily need to develop one, large comprehensive exam, but may use multiple assessments, as long as the content expectations are assessed in the process.

7. Q: What are some examples of multiple assessments?

A: Following are some examples, not intended to be limiting:

- A series of smaller tests, perhaps used in class by the teacher over the course of the class, which, taken together cover all the content expectations.
- An assessment consisting of the end-of-marking-period exams used by the teacher, or the first and second semester exams, again as long as, combined, they cover the content expectations.
- A written assessment plus a demonstration, performance, or participation element.
- No written assessment but a "portfolio, performance, paper, project, or presentation" (380.1279b).

8. Q: Can students be required to demonstrate knowledge in addition to taking an assessment?

A: Yes. If students taking the class are required to demonstrate knowledge beyond taking a test, a student wishing to test-out may be required to do the same. For example, in some classes, students may be required to demonstrate proficiency by:

- Giving a speech.
- Demonstrating minimum proficiency in dialoguing in a language other than English.
- Writing a college-level research paper.
- Designing and carrying out a scientific experiment.
- Participating in a cooperative learning experience.
- Constructing a project.
- Participating in a community service project.
- Other

8. Q: Does a testing-out assessment require a written exam?

A: Yes. The testing-out provisions of the new graduation requirements law did not eliminate or supersede all the testing-out provisions of the old law (380.1279b). The old law was based on the assumption that there were final exams but stated that credit could still be earned "...if there is no final exam, by exhibiting master through the basic assessment used in the course, which may consist of a portfolio, performance, paper, project, or presentation." These provisions of the old law still apply.

9. Q: Can a middle school student test-out of a credit required under the Michigan Merit Curriculum for high school graduation?

A: Yes. The law states if a student successfully completes one or more high school credits before entering high school, the student **must be given graduation credit** for that credit **if:** 1) the district determines a student has met Michigan Department of Education high school course/credit content expectations; and, 2) the district uses an assessment to certify that the student is proficient in the course/credit content expectations, and the expected level of proficiency is the same as for high school. While a student must receive graduation credit for credit earned prior to high school, a district continues to have the ability to establish graduation requirements beyond the Michigan Merit Curriculum.

In other words, if middle school students meet the same expectations and proficiency level as high school students, they must receive credit. This is true even if textbooks and other resources are different. The key is mastering the course content expectations, being measured by the same assessment(s) as in high school, and performing at the same level of proficiency (passing standards) as in high school. (Updated 8/07 in Earning Credit section)

10. Q: The old law says that “Credit earned under this section may or may not be counted toward graduation, as the board of the school district may determine...” Does this provision still apply?

A: No, in this case the new law supersedes the old law. The new law (380.1278a) states that if a student earns a qualifying score on the assessments developed for testing-out, the district SHALL grant credit.

11. Q: May a school or district establish requirements on how often testing-out is allowed, that is, how often the end-of-course exams and/or other assessments are given?

A: Yes. Testing-out is not meant to be “testing on demand,” but to provide students reasonable opportunities to demonstrate they were proficient on the content expectations and did not need to take the course or the class. A school or district may establish reasonable times when end-of-course exams and/or other related assessments would be given. These should be at times convenient to both the student and the school, for example: before the school year starts, at semester time, in the winter or spring before students begin scheduling for the next year, etc.

12. Q: If a student is taking a class and then decides to test-out, is the school obligated to allow them to do so?

A: Yes, but under certain locally determined conditions. The school is obligated to allow the student an opportunity to test-out, but it may be according to the reasonable rules or timeframes described in the answer to the previous question. A school has the right, for instance, to make clear to students that if they decide to earn credit by taking a class but then, after a period of time, want to get out, they are obligated to attend and participate in that class until such point (e.g. semester time) when test-out assessments will be administered. A school has a reasonable right to exercise supervision over students such that it decides it cannot have testing-out occurring at all times during the year, with students entering and leaving classes.

13. Q: Can a district have a policy, which limits the number of classes a student could test-out of, for example: two high school classes over four years?

A: No. The new law does not provide for any limitation and allows a student to attempt to test-out of all the credit areas required for graduation in the Merit Curriculum. The credits required for graduation, however, number 18 and most high school master schedules allow for additional credits to be earned in elective areas or in areas required by local graduation requirements.

14. Q: Can a school district deny credit to a student who is enrolled in a course and has not met the district attendance policy?

A: Yes. However, a student who fails to earn credit for not meeting a district’s attendance policy may still request to test-out of a subject regardless of the amount of class time or attendance. The opportunity to do so, however, may be limited by the testing-out timelines of the local district. (Updated 10.07)

15. Q: If a student passes the Calculus Advanced Placement (AP) test prior to entering high school, but has not taken Algebra II, can the district approve the AP test as an assessment to validate student proficiency in Algebra II?

A: Yes. A district or public school academy can determine the AP Calculus test measures a student’s understanding of the Algebra II and/or Geometry content expectations that apply to the credit.

16. Q: Will the number of students graduating high school early increase as a result of allowing students to test-out?

A: The state high school graduation requirements are the minimum credits students should know and be able to do for success in college and the workplace. There are many reasons why a student who has met the state high school graduation requirements may be required or want to continue to attend high school. For example, many districts may have additional graduation requirements students will need to complete or may offer early college credit earning opportunities in their school or in coordination with a college or university. In addition, many students may wish to continue to attend high school and graduate with their classmates or participate in extra-curricular activities.

17. Q: Can a district determine who is eligible to test-out? For example, can a district establish a policy that would exclude 8th or 9th grade students from testing-out?

A: While districts can determine when test-out assessments will be administered, all interested students must have the opportunity to test-out.

COURSE/CREDIT CONTENT EXPECTATIONS AND GUIDELINES

Since the passage of the new state high school graduation requirements commonly referred to as the Michigan Merit Curriculum, the Michigan Department of Education has worked with hundreds of educators and representatives from professional organizations and higher education to develop documents and materials that outline what students should know and be able to do in required courses/credits during their high school experience.

Two main sets of documents called *High School Content Expectations (HSCE)* and specific *Course/Credit Content Expectations* and Guidelines provide educators with the tools needed to align their curriculum and instruction and provide parents with meaningful information to gauge student progress. These expectations also serve as the basis to determine student proficiency, grant high school credit, and develop various questions for the Michigan Merit Exam.

The Michigan Merit requirements are based on what research shows will provide students with the educational foundation to be successful as they move beyond high school into college and the workplace.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

What the Michigan Merit Curriculum Law Says

Sec. 1278b(a) The board of a school district or board of directors of a public school academy shall not award a high school diploma to a pupil unless the pupil has successfully completed at least 4 credits in English language arts that are aligned with subject area content expectations developed by the Michigan Department of Education and approved by the State Board of Education before graduating from high school.

Sec. 1278b(5)(f) The English language arts credit requirements are not subject to modification as part of a personal curriculum.

Background Information

The English Language Arts High School Content Expectations (HSCE) are organized in four strands, 14 standards, and 91 expectations. The 91 expectations are recursive in that they are addressed repeatedly throughout units of instruction and in increasing complexity and sophistication over the four years of high school English language arts. The overarching goal for the HSCE is for students to exhibit the “habits of mind” or “dispositions” listed in the Successful Post-Secondary Engagement chart on page four of the HSCE document available on the Michigan Department of Education’s high school web site at www.michigan.gov/highschool. These dispositions are developed through reading, writing, listening, speaking, viewing, and expressing experiences encompassing a broad range of literary, nonfiction literary, and informational texts.

The Grade 9 through 12 English Language Arts Course/Credit Requirements define how credit will be assigned for the four English language arts credits required for graduation. The credit requirement documents for each grade provide a model unit framework and model units of instruction for meeting the 14 standards and 91 expectations while developing the disposition assigned to each grade level. The model units focus on specific aspects of the literary experience while building, refining, applying, and extending the knowledge, skills, and strategies students will need for success beyond high school.

What Research Says

Research shows that in order for students to be successful in college and well-paying jobs, high school graduates need four years of English language arts in which all expectations are addressed across units of instruction in increasing levels of complexity and sophistication. In Michigan today, only 37% of high schools require students to take four years of continuous study in English language arts.

Questions & Answers

1. Q: If a district currently requires a class such as Speech or Technical Writing, rather than English 9, 10, 11, or 12, as one of its required English graduation requirements, would it be allowed as one of the four English language arts requirements, or would it have to be changed to more of a general English 9, 10, 11, or 12-type class?

A: If the Speech or Technical Writing courses meet all 91 expectations and offer students the opportunity to build, refine, apply, and extend the knowledge, skills, and strategies included in the unit framework and incorporated in the model units of instruction for the grade level, and include opportunities for developing the dispositions, a district could assign credit for these courses.

2. Q: Are the four dispositions in English Language Arts (ELA) suggested themes to meet the benchmarks or are they mandated? Do all four need to be addressed at each grade level?

A: Since the dispositions represent an overarching goal of the ELA High School Content Expectations, they are required. The goal is that by the end of high school, students will exhibit the "habits of mind" exemplified in all four dispositions. The Course/Credit requirements for ELA 9, 10, 11, and 12 are designed to focus on and develop one disposition in each grade while offering opportunities for discussing questions that would lead to all four dispositions. The more often each disposition is discussed throughout the grades, the more likely the students will be comfortable discussing issues related to all four dispositions.

MATHEMATICS

What the Michigan Merit Curriculum Law Says

380.1278a(a)(i) The board of a school district or board of directors of a public school academy shall not award a high school diploma to a pupil unless the pupil has successfully completed at least 4 credits in mathematics that are aligned with subject area content expectations developed by the Michigan Department of Education and approved by the State Board of Education before graduating from high school.

Students must complete at least Algebra I, Geometry, and Algebra II, or an integrated sequence of this course content that consists of 3 credits, and an additional mathematics credit, such as Trigonometry, Statistics, Pre-calculus, Calculus, Applied Math, Accounting, Business Math, or a retake of Algebra II. Each pupil must successfully complete at least 1 mathematics course during his or her final year of high school enrollment.

Sec. 1278b(5)(f) The mathematics credit requirements may be modified as part of a personal curriculum only after the pupil has successfully completed at least 2-1/2 credits including Algebra I, Geometry and 1 semester of Algebra II or the same content as 1 semester of Algebra II and only if the pupil successfully completes at least 3-1/2 total credits of the mathematics credits required under that section before completing high school including 1 mathematics course during his or her final year of high school. Under a personal curriculum, a student may elect to complete the same content as Algebra II over two years, with a credit awarded for each of those two years.

Background Information

The Mathematics High School Content Expectations (HSCE) are organized in 4 strands, 14 standards, and 157 expectations which students are expected to meet by the end of high school and represent 3 mathematics credits. There is no required course sequence. The only requirement is that students be proficient in the required Course/Credit Content Expectations to receive 3 of the 4 required mathematics credits.

If a traditional sequence of instruction is selected, the Algebra I, Geometry, and Algebra II Course/Credit requirements define the expectations for those courses. Course/Credit requirement documents for Pre-calculus and Statistics define the expectations for earning additional optional credits in these areas. The overarching goal for the HSCE is for students to exhibit the "habits of mind" that will result in the Components of Mathematical Proficiency listed in the Successful Post-Secondary Engagement chart on page four of the HSCE document available on the Michigan Department of Education's high school web site at www.michigan.gov/highschool. These dispositions are developed throughout the four years of high school mathematics instruction by building, refining, applying, and extending the knowledge, skills, and strategies incorporated in the 14 standards and 157 expectations. Updated 9/07

What Research Says

Studies show students taking four years of challenging math including Algebra I, Geometry, Algebra II, and one additional higher-level course are more likely to succeed in college and the workplace. Eighty-four percent of individuals who currently hold highly paid professional jobs have taken Algebra II or higher as their last high school math course. In Michigan, nearly half of all high school graduates did not take four years of challenging math including Algebra II.

Questions & Answers

1. Q: If students take Algebra I over two years, can they earn credit for both years?

A: The law implies all graduation requirements other than Algebra II, regardless of the length of time a student spends in a classroom, should count as 1 credit. The law does allow students taking Algebra II over two years through an approved Personal Curriculum to receive 1 credit per year for a total of 2 credits. The first of these 2 credits, however, may not be recorded as Algebra II since the student has not yet completed all the content expectations. The first credit must be recorded with some other Math title (e.g. Algebra II Prep, Pre-Algebra, etc.).

A district, however, may allow high school students taking Algebra I for example, to take a support course, during the same high school year and earn their 4th mathematics or math-related credit.

It is also possible for a district to offer Algebra I over two years. In this case, however, Algebra I credit cannot be awarded until the student successfully completes the second year and demonstrates proficiency. [Updated 9/07](#)

2. Q: Will it still be possible for our high school students to take Pre-Algebra for high school credit?

A: Yes, if the credit is taught in high school and the district determines Pre-Algebra, Algebra Concepts or other courses meet their 4th mathematics or math-related credit requirement, the district may decide to grant students credit. However, students who have not mastered the 8th grade mathematics content expectations and are beginning their high school careers with Pre-Algebra may have difficulty in meeting the requirements for Algebra I, Geometry, and Algebra II in four years without some additional mathematics support. [Updated 9/07](#)

3. Q: If a student has a personal curriculum, modifying Algebra II and only completes .5 credits, is he or she allowed to graduate with 3 ½ credits of Mathematics, rather than 4 credits?

A: No. A student must successfully complete a total of 4 math credits including a math or math-related credit in their final year. [Updated 3.08](#)

4. Q: If a student has taken Algebra I, Geometry, Algebra II, and Pre-calculus prior to senior year, is the student still required to take Math in the senior year?

A: Yes. The requirement is that a student must successfully complete a mathematics or math-related course in the final year of high school. This requirement could be met by taking either a mathematics course or a math-related course. It is at the discretion of the local district to determine what credits would count as "math-related." [Updated 9/07](#)

5. Q: Does the required 4th credit in math have to be in math beyond Algebra II (for example, Pre-calculus or Trigonometry)?

A: No. The law requires a 4th mathematics credit, but provides local districts with the flexibility to determine what counts for the 4th mathematics credit. The credit does, however, need to be a high school level course. The credit could be in a basic or an applied math area, such as Business Math, Accounting, Consumer Math, Applied Math, General Math, Pre-algebra, etc., or from Career and Technical Education or Work Study program or other high school level math program.

The 4th mathematics credit is not necessarily synonymous with the senior year math credit. For example, students could take a pre-algebra II class as a junior that would count as the 4th credit and then take Algebra II as a senior. An integrated sequence of mathematics could incorporate the required

HSCE in each of the 4 years plus enough additional mathematics content to warrant the awarding of 4 credits. Updated 9/07

6. Q: If a student has to take a math-related class in the final year, doesn't that preclude participation in relevant senior year experiences like a practicum, independent study, or cooperative employment?

A: No. A practicum, independent study, or cooperative employment experience can be structured to include math-related elements and fulfill the requirement for a 4th credit in mathematics aligned with the HSCE as determined by the district.

MATHEMATICS ADDITIONS 9/07

7. Q: Can a student earn two high school credits for math while in middle school, e.g., Algebra I in 7th grade and Geometry in 8th grade?

A: Yes. There is no limit to the number of state required high school graduation credits a student can earn prior to high school if the following criteria are met:
The middle school class must cover the same content expectations as the high school class.
Proficiency must be assessed using the same assessment(s) (e.g. exam) used at the high school.
The level of proficiency expected in order to "pass" (e.g. 80%) must be the same as at the high school.

8. Q: Can a college math course count as the 4th required math credit?

A: Yes, if the district determines the college math course meets district requirements for the 4th Michigan Merit Curriculum math credit it should be counted, as well as placed on the student's transcript.

9. Q: Does the 4th math or math-related credit need to be aligned to the High School Mathematics Content Expectations?

A: That depends. For students not requiring a personal curriculum or requiring a personal curriculum after completing ½ year of Algebra II, the 4th math or math related credit does not need to be aligned.

For students with disabilities requiring a personal curriculum, all math credit must be aligned with the HSCE or K-8 Mathematics Grade Level Content Expectations to ensure students are proficient in as many mathematic expectations as possible.

10. Q: Can a district require students to take a math or math-related credit each year he or she is in high school?

A: Yes. Most students who begin to take the four state math credit requirements in high school will be taking a math or math-related credit each year. However, for students who begin earning high school level math credits in middle school or test out of one or more requirements, a district may establish credit requirements above and beyond the state graduation requirements. This could include a requirement to enroll in Math courses all four year, regardless of the number of high school Math credits earned prior to high school.

11. Q: If students in a district on a trimester schedule have completed 1 credit each of Algebra I, Algebra II, and Geometry, along with ½ credit of Statistics, for 3-1/2 total math credits by the spring of their junior year, does a ½ credit in a personal accounting class meet the math requirement in a student's senior year?

A: Yes. All students need 4 credits of math including a math or math related course in the senior year. Given students will have 3 ½ credits of math by their senior year and if your district has determined the personal accounting course will meet the math or math-related credit requirement, then the ½ credit in a student's senior year will meet the requirement.

12. Q: If a student earns 4 credits of math by the end of their junior year, and is enrolled in a Physics class during their senior year for science credit, can the Physics course also be counted as a "senior math experience" if he or she does not receive a math credit?

A: That depends. If a student has already satisfied the 3 credit graduation requirements in science, then yes. However, if a student is taking physics as part of the 3 credit requirement, it cannot be counted as both a science and math or math-related credit.

13. Q: Can a program like the Michigan State University C.H.A.M.P. (Cooperative Highly Accelerated Mathematics Program), which allows students to complete the traditional four year high school mathematics program in two years, meet the requirements and count for credit under the Michigan Merit Curriculum?

A: Yes, if the district granting credit determines the courses meet the course content expectations and students are able to demonstrate proficiency with these expectations. The Michigan Merit Curriculum outlines the minimum all students should know. It is not intended to limit those students who are capable of going beyond the required HSCE but instead encourages flexibility with addressing the needs of all students, including students capable of acceleration. Students still need to earn a math or math-related credit in their final year of high school.

14. Q: What options are available for students who are struggling in Algebra II?

A: It is up to each district to assess student needs and determine appropriate options to support students who are struggling in mathematics. Many districts choose to offer support classes such as Algebra Concepts, Pre-Algebra, tutoring and/or a resource lab, or other supports. In addition, a student may request a Personal Curriculum that would allow him or her to take Algebra II over two years for 1 credit each year.

The Michigan Merit Curriculum is part of a systemic education reform. With the advent of the K-8 Grade Level Content Expectations, which clearly outline what students need to know and be able to do at the end of each grade, and with MEAP testing of students in mathematics beginning in 3rd grade, schools should identify struggling students and provide support long before they reach high school. In addition, while the MMC and the mathematics High School Content Expectations define the content all students should know to be successful with their post-secondary endeavors, it does not define how this content should be taught. Schools can (and should) differentiate their instruction to meet the needs of all their students, including those at both ends of the learning spectrum.

15. Q: If a student takes the following sequence of courses, has he or she met all the Michigan Merit graduation requirements?

- 9th grade - Algebra I
- 10th grade - Geometry
- 11th grade - Algebra II ("first" half of the HSCE)
- 12th grade - Algebra II ("second" half of the HSCE)

A: No, unless a student or parent initiated and received approval for a Personal Curriculum requesting Algebra II be taken over two years for 2 credits.

16. Q: Who is working on instructional strategies for all students to learn Algebra II?

A: Michigan Mathematics Leadership Association (MMLA), with support from the Michigan Department of Education, is working with individuals in the field to create a clarification document for the Content Expectations. This document will provide clarifications and support strategies for all students.

Also, many local and intermediate districts and the Michigan Council for Teachers of Mathematics (MCTM) are working on the creation of instructional materials. The Michigan Educator Resources on the Michigan Electronic Library and Net Trekker on Michigan Learnport are excellent resources that are available free of charge to Michigan educators. Visit www.mi.gov/highschool for links to these and other resources.

17. Q: Can a district simply say no to kids earning high school graduation credit for classes passed prior to high school? If a student successfully completes Algebra I in the 8th grade, can I just check off the Algebra I box on his list of requirements, but not give him or her an actual credit?

A: No. The new law REQUIRES high school graduation credit must be awarded for classes taken before high school, which meet the following conditions:

- The class must cover the same content as the high school class, in other words, high school level material. School districts have one year following state approval of each Michigan Merit Curriculum Course/Credit Expectations to align courses and assessments. Therefore, during the 2006-2007 school year, districts may use their current high school curriculum to assign credit. By the 2007-2008 school year, all expectations and assessments should be aligned with the exception of social studies expectations, which must be aligned one year following final approval.
- Proficiency must be assessed using the same assessment(s) (e.g. end-of-course exam or combination of assessments) used at the high school.
- The level of proficiency expected in order to "pass" (e.g. 80%) must be the same as at the high school.

18. Q: Our school district has traditionally awarded high school credit to students who successfully completed Algebra I in the 8th grade. Although we have been working this year to align Algebra I and other classes with the new high school content expectations, we have not completed that task. May we award high school credit to this year's 8th graders successfully completing Algebra I, even though our high school and middle school Algebra I programs are not yet fully aligned with the content expectations.

A: Yes, you may do so for this year only, 2006-07. The law requires that a high school have in place all the opportunities necessary for a 9th grader entering in the fall of 2007 to earn the graduation requirements. This essentially has given schools the current 2006-2007 school year to align with the content expectations the programs/courses/classes that are available to freshmen next fall. You may therefore, award high school credit for 8th grade Algebra this year based on the benchmarks and standards that your district has in place currently for Algebra I.

This would NOT apply to a district that, up to now, has not been awarding high school credit for Algebra I in 8th grade and now wishes to take advantage of doing so this year under the old benchmarks. In order for this permission to apply, the district must have had a history of awarding such credit.

ONLINE COURSE OR LEARNING EXPERIENCE

What the Michigan Merit Curriculum Law Says

380.1278a(1)(b) A school district or public school academy shall provide the basic level of technology and internet access required by the state board to complete the online course or learning experience. For a pupil to meet this requirement, the pupil shall meet either of the following, as determined by the school district or public school academy:

Has successfully completed at least 1 course or learning experience that is presented online, as defined by the Michigan Department of Education.

The pupil's school district or public school academy has integrated an online experience throughout the high school curriculum by ensuring that each teacher of each course that provides the required credits of the Michigan merit curriculum has integrated an online experience into the course.

What Research Says

Thirty-eight million fulltime workers in the nation have Internet access at their jobs and two-thirds of them (67%) go online at least once per day. Seventy-two percent of full-time workers with Internet access at work say it has improved their ability to do their jobs.

Questions & Answers

1. Q: Why has an online learning experience been added to the Michigan Merit Curriculum?

A: Today, technology plays an integral role in school, at home and in the workplace. Completing a meaningful online learning experience in Grades 9-12 will allow students to become familiar with the key means of increasing their own learning skills and knowledge. It also will prepare them for the demands they will encounter in higher education, the workplace, and personal lifelong learning.

Already, many universities and colleges require students to have a laptop with them when they arrive on campus. Businesses conduct training sessions online, and cities now are providing wireless Internet access in businesses to attract customers to their establishments. To give our students an experience of learning in a virtual world, the online learning experience is included in the Michigan Merit Curriculum requirements.

2. Q: What counts for the online learning requirement?

A: The Michigan Department of Education has developed Online Learning Guidelines that were approved by the State Board in October 2006. You can access these guidelines at www.michigan.gov/highschool.

3. Q: Will the online learning experience cost money? Who is going to pay for this?

A: The Michigan Merit Curriculum requires an online learning experience, which can be met in a variety of ways at no cost and does not necessarily have to be met through an online course. A free online course called Career Forward has been developed by the Michigan Department of Education and the Michigan Virtual University (MVU) with funding from the Microsoft Corporation. For more information visit the [Career Forward](http://www.mivu.org) website at www.mivu.org.

4. Q: Can the online learning requirement be met prior to 9th grade?

A: Yes, the requirement may be satisfied by an online experience at the middle school level, but students are encouraged to continue with online learning throughout high school.

5. Q: Does the online learning experience need to go on a transcript? (Updated 8/07)

A: While districts will need to assure students complete this requirement, the law does not mandate that a student be given credit for this experience or this experience be recorded on a transcript.

6. Q: If a student is taking a high school class via distance learning, does this fulfill the requirement of an online course or learning experience?

A: Yes, if the class meets the guidelines. Distance learning does not automatically qualify. The distance learning experience must meet the guidelines.

7. Q: Does an online course or online learning experience need to be teacher led or can it be self-paced? Revised (6/07)

A: No. Although research shows that students are most successful in a teacher-led environment, and districts are encouraged to offer teacher-led opportunities, it is a local district decision.

Online Additions 6/07

8. Q: Can students currently enrolled in a CTE or alternative school program earn credit for a required course online or through a computer based course software program?

A: Yes. The emphasis of the Michigan Merit Curriculum is now on proficiency rather than seat time. Any of the state graduation required expectations can be taught in any format as long as it is under the oversight of a highly qualified teacher (see page 40 #7 of the FAQ document) in that subject and is aligned to the state's High School Content Expectations.

9. Q: Can the online experience requirement be met in one class or must an online learning experience be incorporated into each course/credit required by the Michigan Merit Curriculum?

A: The online requirement need only be incorporated into 1 credit such as Chemistry (for example). If the instructor has incorporated online learning into such a class, to the extent that it meets the Online Learning Guidelines, a district may determine that students in that class have satisfied the requirement. Online guidelines may be found at <http://www.mi.gov/highschool>

10. Q: What types of technology-based programs are allowable in a classroom if the teacher is certified but not "highly qualified" in the area(s) he/she is teaching or facilitating.

A: The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act, which outlines the requirements for highly qualified teachers, differentiates the following:

1. If the teacher of the online class or course is employed and salaried by a public school district that is receiving Title I funds, and if the online class or course is being delivered to students in that district, or another public school district, for credit, the teacher must be highly qualified.
2. If the teacher of the online class or course is not employed and salaried by a public school district (or if so, is not acting in that capacity) and is being compensated for the development or delivery of the class or course by other than a public local or intermediate school district, the teacher does not have to be highly qualified.

It is, therefore, possible for a student in a public school classroom, technology lab, resource center, media center, etc. to be taking an online course or a multiple number of such courses for high school credit. The online teacher does not need to be "highly qualified" in the subject area(s) in which students are being instructed, unless, as noted above, the instruction is being

delivered online by a teacher employed by the student's public school district or another public school district.

For state aid purposes, there are some conditions under which online learning could occur and still be eligible for state aid. Rather than try to recite them all here, please refer to the department's *Pupil Accounting Manual*. A copy of this can be accessed online at the department's website: www.michigan.gov/mde. In the column of options on the left, click on "Offices" then "State Aid and School Finance" and the document appears on the main page.

11. Q: Does a highly qualified requirement apply to stand-alone ("plug and play") course software, e.g. Plato, vs. online courses?

A: The issue of the "highly qualified" teacher requirement does not apply to the use of stand-alone instructional programs since there is generally no teacher actively involved in instruction in a stand-alone program.

The use of stand-alone programs also does not pose a problem with state aid. Whether the student is taking an online class as part of his/her school day schedule for high school credit, or whether outside of school on his/her own time and place, again for high school credit, eligibility for state aid would require that a certified teacher either be the instructor-of-record of the course or function as a mentor or facilitator assigned to the student.

Furthermore, state aid would not hinge upon whether the student is engaging stand-alone software or is online but on whether the student is taking the online course for credit and whether a certified teacher is engaged with the student as teacher, mentor, facilitator, etc. The *Pupil Accounting Manual* referenced above outlines additional requirements for state aid eligibility if the student is taking online classes outside the school day.

12. Q: Do you know of any online options for social studies that a student could take in addition to his or her regular classes that would be accepted for her graduation requirement?

A: The Michigan Virtual High School offers online courses that would help fulfill the social sciences requirement. For additional information, contact the MVHS help desk, (888) 889-2840, or visit their online course catalog at <http://www.mivhs.org/content.cfm?ID=32>. Other online providers may also have courses that would fulfill the requirement, though care must be taken to ensure they align to the Michigan Merit Curriculum Content Expectations.

13. Q: Can a student taking a class, which the district has determined also meets the online learning requirements, test out of both the class and the online requirement?

A: No. While a student may test out of a subject or class required by the MI high school graduation requirements, the law does not mention testing out of the online requirement. The online requirement is unlike the other graduation requirements in that it is more about process than content. It is not about "computer skills," which most young people are presumed already to have. It is instead about the process of using those skills to pursue learning in an online environment, which is a process that unfolds as students engage in online learning activities. It is unlikely that any kind of testing-out assessment (like an end-of-course exam) could truly "test" the process that occurs when a student engages with content, other students, and a teacher online.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND HEALTH

What the Michigan Merit Curriculum Law Says

MCL 380.1278a At least 1 credit in subject matter that includes both health and physical education aligned with guidelines developed by the Michigan Department of Education and approved by the Michigan State Board of Education.

MCL 380.1278b(5)(i) The health and physical education credit may be modified as part of a personal curriculum only if the modification requires the pupil to complete 1 additional credit in English language arts, mathematics, or science or 1 additional credit in a language other than English. This additional credit must be in addition to the number of those credits otherwise required under subsection (1) and section 1278a (2).

What other Relevant Michigan Law Says

MCL 380.1502 Health and physical education; establishment; course in physical education required; extracurricular athletics as meeting requirement.

Sec. 1502(1) Health and physical education for pupils of both sexes shall be established and provided in all public schools of this state. Subject to subsection (2), each pupil attending public school in this state who is physically fit and capable of doing so shall take the course in physical education.

(2) A school district may credit a pupil's participation in extracurricular athletics or other extracurricular activities involving physical activity as meeting the physical education requirement for the pupil under subsection (1).

MCL 380.1169 Dangerous communicable diseases; human immunodeficiency virus infection and acquired immunodeficiency virus infection; teacher training; teaching materials; curricula; teaching of abstinence from sex.

Sec. 1169(1) The principal modes by which dangerous communicable diseases, including, but not limited to, human immunodeficiency virus infection and acquired immunodeficiency syndrome, are spread and the best methods for the restriction and prevention of these diseases shall be taught in every public school in this state. Subject to subsection (3) and section 1507b, the teaching under this section shall stress that abstinence from sex is a responsible and effective method for restriction and prevention of these diseases and is a positive lifestyle for unmarried young people.

(2) Except for licensed health care professionals who have received training on human immunodeficiency virus infection and acquired immunodeficiency syndrome, each person who teaches K to 12 pupils about human immunodeficiency virus infection and acquired immunodeficiency syndrome pursuant to subsection (1) shall have training in human immunodeficiency virus infection and acquired immunodeficiency syndrome education for young people. The superintendent of public instruction, in cooperation with the department of public health, shall train trainers to provide the teacher training required by this subsection and shall provide for the development and distribution to school districts of medically accurate material on the teaching of human immunodeficiency virus infection and acquired immunodeficiency syndrome to young people.

(3) The choice of curricula to be used for human immunodeficiency virus infection and acquired immunodeficiency syndrome education required to be taught under subsection (1) shall be approved by the appropriate school board and implemented in the school setting not later than October 1, 1990. Before adopting any revisions to the curriculum implemented under this section, including, but not limited to, revisions to provide for the teaching of abstinence from sex as a responsible method for restriction and prevention of disease, a school board shall hold at least 2 public hearings on the proposed revisions. The hearings shall be held at least 1 week apart and public notice of the hearings shall be given in the manner required under section 1201 for board meetings. A public hearing held pursuant to this section may be held in conjunction with a public hearing held pursuant to section 1507.

What Research Says

Research tells us that when students are fit, healthy, and ready to learn, they achieve more success in all areas of their lives, including the classroom. Research shows effective health education helps students stay in school and better achieve in their classes. Research also shows effective physical education and physical activity has a positive impact on cognitive functioning and supports improved student learning.

Questions & Answers

1. **Q: Do the requirements give the option for students to take just physical education OR health?**

A: No. One credit that includes both physical education AND health must be earned by high school students for graduation. The requirement could be met in two separate courses each earning ½ credit. How this credit is offered is a local district decision.

2. **Q: How should the one credit for physical education/health be divided?**

A: Schools have flexibility in meeting the requirements as long as they meet the intent of the requirement. They are able, under the law, to organize the health education and physical education requirement at the high school in whatever way makes sense in their district.

They must ensure that:

The standards and credit guidelines for both health education and physical education are thoroughly addressed in the required content; and persons assigned to teach health education have a teaching certificate with an endorsement that qualifies them to teach health, and those assigned to teach physical education must have a teaching certificate with an endorsement that qualifies them to teach physical education.

Districts may find that the simplest solution is offering a semester of health and a semester of physical education to meet the requirement, using qualified teachers to do so. Even if the school teaches health in some other class, such as physical education or biology, the teacher must have the health endorsement to teach health education.

3. **Q: How does the High School Graduation Requirement for one credit in physical education and health affect teachers?**

A: Some teachers who currently are teaching health education and/or physical education are qualified to teach both. Not all are. The state's health education endorsements are MA, MX and KH. The physical education endorsements are MB, MX, and SP.

4. **Q: How can high school teachers who lack the endorsement to teach health education become qualified?**

A: Certain institutions of higher education are collaborating to offer alternative preparation/endorsement options for teachers who are already teaching health, but who do not have the endorsement. Some institutions will give teachers significant credit toward the additional endorsement for experience gained in teaching health and professional development received from the regional School Health Coordinator. Teacher colleges' also are planning to offer distance learning courses, evening and/or weekend courses, and summer institutes for the convenience of teachers.

5. Q: I thought No Child Left Behind didn't require health and physical education teachers to be highly qualified.

A: That's true. However, state law and administrative rules define what it means to be a qualified teacher in Michigan schools. For the definition of a qualified teacher of health education, go to www.michigan.gov/mde. Click on K-12 Curriculum/ Curriculum Subjects/ Health. Look for the document titled, "Fully Qualified Teachers of Health Education." For the definition of a qualified teacher of physical education, go to: www.Michigan.gov/physed. Under professional development, you will find the document titled, "Qualified Teachers of Physical Education."

6. Q: What do the credit guidelines refer to?

A: The credit guidelines refer to the content expectations that have been developed for high school in both physical education and health. Students earn credit based on the student's demonstrated proficiency in each subject matter's content expectations.

7. Q: Can a student required to take the Michigan Merit Curriculum waive the state's Physical Education or health credit requirement for any reason?

A: Yes, under certain conditions. The Michigan Merit Curriculum MCL 380.1278b, allows a student to substitute one physical education and health credit to acquire extra English language arts, mathematics, science or world language credits, if a student has an approved personal curriculum. Please see the Personal Curriculum Frequently Asked Questions Document for guidance.

In addition, students may test out of any state required graduation credit if the student earns: 1) a qualifying score, as determined by the department, on the assessments developed or selected for the subject area by the department; OR, 2) the student earns a qualifying score, as determined by the school district or public school academy, on one or more assessments developed or selected by the school district or public school academy that measure a student's understanding of the subject area content expectations or guidelines that apply to the credit. Please see the Testing Out Frequently Asked Questions Document for guidance.

The Revised School Code MCL 380.1169 requires school districts to instruct students in dangerous communicable diseases such as Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) infection and Acquired Immunodeficiency Virus Infection (AIDS). While the law does not require this instruction to take place in high school, the Michigan Department of Education has encouraged that this important instruction be taught to students in elementary, middle, and high school.

8. Q: Can districts still choose to replace extracurricular activities (e.g. marching band and sports) for the physical education requirement? What about health?

A: Under the Revised School Code, *380.1502(1) Health and physical education for pupils of both sexes shall be established and provided in all public schools of this state. Subject to subsection (2), each pupil attending public school in this state who is physically fit and capable of doing so shall take the course in physical education.*

380.1502(2) A school may credit a student's participation in extracurricular athletics or other extracurricular activities involving physical activity as meeting the physical education requirement for the student under subsection (1).

This law is still in effect as well as the new Michigan Merit high school graduation requirements. Therefore, a district may still determine that extracurricular activities involving physical activity may be used as credit toward the physical education requirement. If a district does decide to use extracurricular physical activities to meet the physical education requirement, the student must still demonstrate proficiency in the physical education credit guidelines beginning with students entering 8th grade in 2006 (Class of 2011). Please see the Testing Out Frequently Asked Questions for further guidance. Please

note, however, that this pertains **only** to the physical education credit guidelines of the Michigan Merit Curriculum, not the health education credit guidelines.

9. Q: Can a modification for Health and Physical Education occur at any time?

A: Beginning with students entering 8th grade in 2006 (Class of 2011), a modification to either the health or physical education Michigan Merit Curriculum's 1 credit in health/physical education requirement could occur at any point in a student's high school career. The student should be required, before applying for a personal curriculum, to:

- Develop a Educational Development Plan (EDP) that clearly indicates the additional credit the student proposes to earn in order to waive credit(s).
- Create an agreement that includes written understanding that if at some point in the future the student fails to follow through on the plan that justified the personal curriculum, the personal curriculum would become null and void and the student, in order to graduate, would be required to successfully complete waived credit(s).

10. Q: Can a district establish physical education and health requirements above and beyond those required in the Michigan Merit high school graduation requirements?

A: Yes. A district may mandate additional credits in Health and Physical Education without being affected by the personal curriculum modification or testing out criteria.

11. Q: Can a student receive high school credit for a health or physical education class in middle school?

A: Yes, students may receive high school credit in middle school if the following three criteria for middle school credit outlined below are met:

- The middle school class must cover the same content expectations as the high school class.
- Proficiency must be assessed using the same assessment (e.g. exam) used at the high school.
- The level of proficiency expected in order to "pass" (e.g. 80%) must be the same as at the high school.

However, leaving students without such education during high school could place students at greater risk for alcohol, tobacco, and drug use; sexual activity leading to Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) and unintended pregnancies; personal injury (e.g. violence, bullying) and long term health problems (e.g. childhood overweight & diabetes) related to lack of nutrition and physical activity.

12. Q: Can the Physical Education, Health or Visual, Performing and Applied Arts requirements be met through an online course?

A: To an extent, yes, some content associated with the physical and health education guidelines could be taught through an online experience. However, there are many skill-based requirements that could not effectively be taught through an online experience such as maintaining a target heart rate or demonstrating the ability to express emotions constructively, including use of anger management skills.

SCIENCE

What the Michigan Merit Curriculum Law Says

380.1278b(1)(b) The board of a school district or board of directors of a public school academy shall not award a high school diploma to a pupil unless the pupil has successfully completed at least 3 credits in science that are aligned with subject area content expectations developed by the Michigan Department of Education and approved by the Michigan State Board of Education, including completion of at least biology and either chemistry or physics. The law strongly encourages pupils to complete a 4th credit in science, such as Forensics, Astronomy, Earth Science, Agricultural Science, Environmental Science, Geology, Physics or Chemistry, Physiology, or Microbiology.

380.1278b(5)(f) The science credit requirements are not subject to modification as part of a personal curriculum.

Background Information

The Science High School Content Expectations (HSCE) were designed to include essential general science understandings as well as discipline-specific descriptions for Earth Science, Biology, Physics, and Chemistry. The HSCE are organized in four disciplines/strands, 19 standards, 92 content statements, and prerequisite, essential, core, and recommended content expectations. Students are expected to meet all essential expectations (those describing essential general science knowledge and skills and assessable on the Michigan Merit Exam) by the end of high school. The overarching goal for the Science HSCE is for students to engage in the four Practices of Science Literacy listed in the Successful Post-Secondary Engagement chart on page 3 of the HSCE document available on the Michigan Department of Education's high school web site at www.michigan.gov/highschool. These practices are developed throughout the four years of high school science instruction by building, refining, applying, and extending the useful and connected knowledge, skills, and strategies incorporated in the standards and expectations.

Course/Credit requirements have been developed for Earth Science, Biology, Physics, and Chemistry. They define the expectations that must be met for high school credit in Earth Science, Biology, Physics, or Chemistry. All students are required to earn three science credits aligned with the HSCE. These 3 credits must include Biology and either Chemistry or Physics.

The 3rd science credit may be met by taking another science course designed to meet other expectations included in the HSCE. The Michigan-developed science component of the high school Michigan Merit Exam (MME) will be based on the essential expectations from all four disciplines.

Districts are encouraged to offer opportunities for meeting both the graduation requirements and the essential science expectations identified as necessary for science literacy. The graduation requirement legislation recommends, but does not require, a fourth year of science credit.

What Research Says

Research shows students taking courses in Biology, Chemistry, and Physics and upper-level mathematics beyond Algebra II (such as Trigonometry) are more likely to be college ready. However, only 26% of ACT-tested high school graduates in Michigan met ACT's College Readiness Benchmark, demonstrating their readiness for their first credit-bearing college course in Biology.

Most modern technology came from physics. Any technology involving electricity, magnetism, mechanics, heat, light, sound, optics, etc. comes from physics. In addition, Physics is one of the few high school-level classes that requires both high level mathematical and verbal skills. All problems in physics are word problems that require students to think logically, use analogies, and deal with subtle shades of meaning as well as use mathematics. Physics courses teach students to think, a valuable skill apart from the knowledge content of physics.

In Michigan according to recent statistics, approximately 40 percent of students took Chemistry and 25 percent took physics prior to high school graduation.

Questions & Answers

1. Q: What was the thinking behind the choice of science courses listed in the Michigan Merit Curriculum?

A: Students are required to take a minimum of 3 credits of science: Biology, Physics or Chemistry, and one additional science credit aligned with the HSCE, such as Earth Science. These courses are specified because they are most often the prerequisite courses for additional study in science, mathematics, or engineering. However, these recommendations do not specify a sequence, nor do they represent the only courses that could meet the requirement. The law strongly encourages students to take a 4th science credit such as Forensics, Astronomy, Earth Science, Agricultural or Environmental Science, Geology, Physiology, Microbiology, etc.

2. Q: What subject can a student take to fulfill the 3rd science credit required in the Michigan Merit Curriculum? Can Advanced Placement (AP) Environmental Science or Psychology be counted as a "science" under the new state curriculum?

A: Under the Michigan Merit Curriculum, students are required to take 3 credits of science including Biology, Chemistry or Physics and 1 additional high school level credit. Students may select the 3rd credit from the menu of science credits offered and approved for credit by each district including advanced placement, dual enrollment, international baccalaureate or early college/middle college classes.

In addition, the law strongly encourages pupils to complete a 4th credit in science, such as Forensics, Astronomy, Earth Science, Agricultural Science, Environmental Science, Geology, Physics or Chemistry, Physiology, or Microbiology.

However, since the Michigan Merit Exam (MME) will assess student's knowledge in the essential expectations in all four science disciplines including; Biology, Chemistry, Physics and Earth Science, when helping students develop their schedule, districts should encourage students to select courses, which will assist them in preparing for the Michigan Merit Exam given in 11th grade. (Updated 8/07)

3. Q: With respect to Physics and Chemistry classes, will a basic level of those classes be acceptable or will students have to take the more rigorous classes that require higher-level mathematics?

A: The Course/Credit Requirements for assigning credit for Physics and for Chemistry include meeting all essential and core expectations. Students earn the required credit for Chemistry or Physics when they have met the course/credit expectations. A "basic" class, implying coverage of less than the required content expectations, will not qualify for earning the Physics or Chemistry credit. The law also states that the assignment of credit must be based, at least in part, on assessments designed for the purpose of determining whether the expectations have been met. Since students are required to earn 4 credits in mathematics, they should be prepared for the mathematics infused in the science credits.

4. Q: Can students earn science credit for conceptual Physics and Chemistry classes, or for other classes designed to address science concepts at a basic level?

A: The law does provide districts with the flexibility to determine which classes or credits contain enough science that is aligned with the HSCE to count as the 3rd science credit. Therefore, a district could decide to grant students their 3rd science credit for Basic Chemistry, Conceptual Physics, or for Physical Science, but students still would be required to demonstrate proficiency on the essential and

core expectations in order to earn a full credit for the Physics or Chemistry that are required (one or the other) as part of the first two science credits.

However, the Michigan Merit Exam (MME) will assess student's knowledge in the essential expectations in all four science disciplines including; Biology, Chemistry, Physics and Earth Science. When helping students develop their schedule, districts should encourage students to select courses, which meet the expectations and prepare for the MME. (Updated 8/07)

5. Q: Can a student take a Physics class and count it for both a math/math-related and physics credit?

A: No. If a student takes Physics as one of the three required science credits, it could not be counted as a math-related credit. However, if a student takes Physics as an elective after fulfilling his/her science requirements, it could qualify as a math-related class as determined by the district.

6. Q: Would an Earth Science class need to include the entire essential and core expectations for Earth Science. In other words, once a class is labeled Earth Science must it then meet ALL the expectations for that course?

A: If a course is designed to provide students with a high school Earth Science credit, it must meet all course/credit content expectations.

Earth Science is not a required science credit, but it could be used as a 3rd year science credit. A course should only be named Earth Science if it is designed to meet all of the Earth Science course/credit content expectations. If a student takes a general science or other course designed to meet some of the Earth Science expectations, that course could count as a 3rd science credit if it is aligned with the HSCE, as determined by the district. In this case, the credit earned would bear the name of the course in which the Earth Science essential expectations were covered and could not be labeled Earth Science.

7. Q: While Earth Science is not a required credit under the Michigan Merit Curriculum, will it be tested on the new Michigan Merit Exam (MME)?

A: While Earth Science is not a high school graduation requirement, the essential skills listed for Earth Science are expectations for high school and will be tested on the MME, along with the essentials for the other 3 science credit areas.

SCIENCE ADDITIONS 9/07

Questions & Answers

8. Q: Whether it's Earth Science, or Biology, or Chemistry, or Physics, what is the difference between "essential" and "core" expectations?

A: In general, essential expectations are those all high school students should achieve, whether or not they take a particular course in Earth Science, Biology, Chemistry, or Physics. Essential knowledge is considered useful and connected knowledge for all high school graduates, regardless of what courses they take in high school. Essential expectation codes include an upper case letter as the last letter in the code (e.g. the final capital "A" in **E2.1A**). Essential content knowledge and performance expectations are required and assessed on the Michigan Merit Exam (MME) and on future secondary assessments.

Core expectations, on the other hand, are skills that are more rigorous or knowledge that a student needs to build a sound foundation for post secondary education or training and end in a lower case letter (e.g., B2.3d).

For students to receive credit in a discipline, they must be proficient in both essential and core expectations.

9. Q: If a class requires a prerequisite that freshmen would need to have, can one assume that that skill/content will be in the Middle School Grade Level Content Expectations?

A: The prerequisites listed in the original high school document were those skills and content the high school writers felt important to their discipline and possible to address in the middle school curriculum. Those skills and content that directly lead to high school expectations and are tied to the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) will be part of the middle school grade level content expectations.

10. Q: What is the status of Earth Science in the new graduation requirements?

A: Earth science is part of a complete curriculum all students need to know and be able to do. While a credit in Earth Science is not required for high school graduation, the essential Earth Science expectations, along with Biology, Chemistry, and Physics will be tested on the Michigan Merit Exam. It is important, therefore, that districts and schools, in their science curriculum, ensure that students have had an opportunity to acquire the knowledge that will be tested on the Michigan Merit Exam.

11. Q: How do we know what Earth Science knowledge or skills will be tested on the MME?

A: The high school science expectations are coded to distinguish skills or knowledge that is “essential” or “core.” The MME will test the skills or knowledge that are coded as “essential.” One can distinguish “essential” skills by the fact that the last letter of the code, on the far right, is a capital letter. For example, the first skill to be listed in the expectations for Earth Science is:

E1.1A – Generate new questions that can be investigated in the laboratory or field. The capital “A” at the end signifies this as an essential skill.

12. Q: If a teacher does not have a major or minor in Earth Science, college level coursework or prior teaching experience in Earth Science, can they become HQ by simply taking and passing the General Sciences (DX) or the Earth Science Certification Tests?

A: If a teacher has a major or minor and has taken the state certification test for that endorsement and passed, then he or she would be considered highly qualified. However, a teacher cannot simply take the DX test and be endorsed. They must go through an established university with a program approved by MDE.

13. Q: If a school offers a course, which combines the essentials of both Physics and Chemistry, can a student receive either a full Physics or Chemistry credit or must they meet either all the Physics or all the Chemistry expectations?

A: No. A student must be proficient in all the Physics or all the Chemistry essential and core expectations in order to receive a full credit in either.

14. Q: Can 8th grade be used for the 3rd science credit for graduation? For example, can we have a Forensics, Astronomy, Geology, Physiology, Geophysical, etc., class count?

A: Yes. Each district has the flexibility to determine what students can take to receive the third science high school credit. However, the class must be a high school level course and students must meet the same expectations and proficiency level as high school students.

15. Q: Can a general science (or Earth Science essential + some core expectations) class in 8th grade count for the third graduation credit if it aligns with the high school content expectations?

A: Yes, if all the following criteria are met: the 8th grade class is a high school level class aligned to the science HSCE; the class has the same rigor as other local board approved third high school science credits, it can count toward graduation. A district is reminded that any student, including any current high school aged student, has the opportunity to "test out" and show proficiency for this 3rd credit.

16. Q: Can a "physical science" class composed of the essential expectations of Chemistry and Physics, count as the 3rd science credit for graduation?

A: Yes. What courses count as the 3rd science credit is a local district decision. However, a district may only count this combination course as 1 credit.

SOCIAL STUDIES

What the Michigan Merit Curriculum Law Says

Sec. 1278a(ii) The board of a school district or board of directors of a public school academy shall not award a high school diploma to a pupil unless the pupil has successfully completed at least 3 credits in social science that are aligned with subject area content expectations developed by the Michigan Department of Education and approved by the Michigan State Board of Education, including completion of at least 1 credit in United States history and geography, 1 credit in world history and geography, ½ credit in economics, and ½ credit of civics.

Sec. 1278b(5)(h) The social science credit requirements may be modified as part of a personal curriculum only if the pupil has successfully completed 2 credits of the required social science credits including the civics course. The modification requires the pupil to complete 1 additional credit in English language arts, mathematics, or science or 1 additional credit in a language other than English.

Background Information

High School Content Expectations for Social Studies are being written at this time and should be approved by the State Board of Education in July 2007. The Social Studies HSCE will define what students should know and be able to do by the end of high school.

Social Studies Course/Credit Requirement documents will also be produced. They will define the expectations for earning the three required Social Studies credits as defined by law: U. S. History and Geography (1 credit), World History and Geography (1 credit), Economics (1/2 credit), and Civics (1/2 credit). As stated above, the new law requires both U.S. History and World History credits to contain a geography component.

Until the above content expectations are developed, a school district or PSA should align the content of social studies credits required under the Michigan Merit Curriculum with the current Michigan Curriculum Framework for Social Studies.

What Research Says

Studies show students taking more social studies coursework have higher ACT reading test scores, knowledge of basic concepts of democracy and government and the basic foundation necessary to be responsible citizens. In Michigan, 87 percent of districts currently require students to complete three or more credits of social studies.

Questions & Answers

1. Q: Why is the GLCE document marked DRAFT.

A: On October 1, 2007, the State Board of Education requested the Grade 4 Content Expectations document be changed to include history expectations that address Michigan history beyond statehood. The draft expectations are being reviewed currently in a Zoomerang survey online at michigan.gov/glce and will remain open for feedback until October 31st. The GLCE for Grades K-8 will be finalized in mid-November 2007.

SOCIAL STUDIES ADDITIONS 10.07

2. Q: Is a high school social studies teacher with an RX (social studies) certification, considered to be *highly qualified* to teach the new World History and Geography and United States History and Geography Courses?

A: Yes. Teachers **without** RX (social studies) certification, but with certification in history or geography may also teach the new courses, but will have to work towards qualifying themselves to remain qualified to teach these courses in the future.

A committee has been formed to work on what additional requirements teachers not holding RX (social studies) certification will need to become highly qualified to teach World History and Geography and United States History and Geography.

3. Q: Do all students in high school need to take civics/government course to graduate?

A: Every student must show they are proficient in the required content expectations for civics/government. While most students will accomplish proficiency by taking a "Civics' Course," "Government Course," other options such as testing out, integrating Civics into others courses or programs including Career and Technical Education courses are also viable options. In other words, how students acquire the knowledge and become proficient, as well as how proficiency is measured are local school district decisions.

4. Q: When will the social studies requirements be put into place?

A: School districts have one year following state approval of each Michigan Merit Curriculum Course/Credit Expectations to align courses and assessments. Therefore, during the 2007-2008 school year, districts may use their current high school curriculum to assign credit.

The Michigan Department of Education plans to work with Michigan educators in Summer 2008 to develop items for the Michigan Merit Exam that are aligned to the new social studies high school content expectations. Items aligned to the new expectations are expected to be ready for operational use by Spring 2010."

VISUAL, PERFORMING AND APPLIED ARTS

What the Michigan Merit Curriculum Law Says

Sec. 1278a(a)(iv) The board of a school district or board of directors of a public school academy shall not award a high school diploma to a pupil unless the pupil has successfully completed at least 1 credit in visual arts, performing arts, or applied arts, that is aligned with guidelines developed by the Michigan Department of Education.

Sec. 1278b(5)(g)(j) The visual, performing and applied arts credit requirement may be modified as part of a personal curriculum only if the modification requires the pupil to complete 1 additional credit in English language arts, mathematics, or science or 1 additional credit in a language other than English. This additional credit must be in addition to the number of those credits otherwise required in each subject area.

What Research Says

Studies show high school students who study the arts earn better grades and scores; are less likely to drop out of school; watch fewer hours of television; are less likely to report boredom in school; have a more positive self-concept; and are more involved in community service. Research also shows that many students who have difficulty learning through traditional methods can benefit from teaching strategies that include other means of learning and subject areas, such as the arts.

Currently, less than half of all Michigan high schools require students to have one or more visual and performing arts credits prior to graduation.

Questions & Answers

1. Q: What is the goal of the Michigan Merit Curriculum's 1 credit graduation requirement in the visual, performing, and applied arts?

A: The goal of 1 credit graduation requirement in the visual, performing, and applied arts is to ensure that all students have a foundation and experience in the complete artistic/creative process by the time they graduate from high school. This process is important to the preparation of all students, throughout life and across careers.

2. Q: How were the credit guidelines for the visual, performing and applied arts developed?

A: The Michigan Department of Education established an Advisory Committee to develop the Visual, Performing and Applied Arts credit guidelines. This committee was composed of active, respected, and award-winning scholars and practitioners from: K-12 schools, intermediate and local school districts, postsecondary and teacher preparation institutions, industry, education associations, career and technical education, and cultural institutions.

The State Board of Education approved the Visual, Performing and Applied Arts guidelines on September 12, 2006.

3. Q: How will the 1 credit requirement in the Michigan Merit Curriculum meet the needs of students in the visual, performing and applied arts?

A: The 1 credit graduation requirement in the visual, performing, and applied arts is a minimum requirement. The Michigan Merit Curriculum provides students desiring to specialize in or have more learning experiences in the visual, performing, and applied arts the flexibility to select additional

electives, and to earn merit core credits through online courses, testing out, summer school, and other local options.

4. Q: What are the visual, performing, and applied arts credit guidelines based on?

A: The credit guidelines are based on national and state standards and career pathway and program guidelines for the visual, performing, and applied arts. They are aligned with No Child Left Behind and the Michigan School Improvement Framework. In addition to the new visual, performing, and applied arts credit guidelines, the State Board of Education's 1998 Arts Education Content Standards and Benchmarks remain in effect and continue to serve as a guide for K-12 arts education, curriculum development, instruction, and assessment.

5. Q: What is meant by the term Applied Arts?

A: Applied Arts is an inclusive term that refers to the application of design and aesthetics to the artistic/creative process which results in products of function and everyday use, such as ones that could be created through Industrial Technology programs.

6. Q: What can a student take to meet the visual, performing, and applied arts credit requirement?

A: All visual, performing, or applied arts curricular offerings that alone, or in combination, prepare a student to master all of the visual, performing, and applied arts credit guidelines are eligible for consideration by the local district. The local district is to determine which courses or programs will qualify as meeting this requirement. The 1 credit requirement is frequently equivalent to one year of traditional coursework.

7. Q: Why don't the visual, performing, and applied arts guidelines include specific courses?

A: In order to be inclusive and meet the needs of the broad fields of the visual, performing, and applied arts, the credit guidelines focus on the complete artistic/creative process that is central to student learning in each of the visual, performing, and applied arts. Because of this core focus, the guidelines can be easily adapted to curricular offerings in any of the visual, performing, or applied arts disciplines and /or level of student proficiency. This provides local school districts with the flexibility to determine which of their course offerings in the visual, performing, and applied arts, alone or in combination will prepare students to master all of the credit guidelines.

8. Q: Won't this 1 credit requirement reduce the number of students in visual, performing, and applied arts courses?

A: Prior to the passage of the new Michigan Merit Curriculum, less than half of all Michigan students were required to take one or more visual & performing arts credits for graduation. This new requirement should substantially increase the number of students taking one or more Visual, Performing, or Applied Arts courses. A recent analysis of trend data from New York State, which has had high school graduation requirements similar to the Michigan Merit Curriculum in place for several years, indicates increased student enrollment in high school general music and significant increases in performing arts courses since the requirements were put in place.

The visual, performing, and applied arts guidelines promise to introduce more students to the broad field of the Visual, Performing and Applied Arts.

VPAA ADDITIONS 9/07

9. Q: Will the Michigan Merit Curriculum reduce the number of electives students may take?

A: The Michigan Merit Curriculum continues to allow each school district to determine the number of electives offered to their students. It also provides students the flexibility to select additional electives and/or to earn merit core credits through online courses, testing out, summer school, and other local options.

10. Q: Different school districts have varying ways in which they schedule their high school class day. Will these new requirements force districts to change their high school class day schedules?

A: No. There is flexibility provided to school districts to maintain their current scheduling system, or develop other systems to meet the individual needs and desires of each district.

WORLD LANGUAGE

What the Michigan Merit Curriculum Law Says

Sec. 1278a(2) Beginning with pupils entering grade 3 in 2006, the board of a school district or board of directors of a public school academy shall not award a high school diploma to a pupil unless the pupil has successfully completed during grades 9 to 12 at least 2 credits, as determined by the Michigan Department of Education, in a language other than English, or the pupil has successfully completed at any time during grades K to 12 course work or other learning experiences that are substantially equivalent to 2 credits in a language other than English, based on guidelines developed by the department. Schools must consider American Sign Language to be a language other than English. A student may meet all or part of this requirement with online course work.

What Research Says

Students who learn a second language benefit in practical ways. They are better able to communicate with native speakers in this country and in other nations; they have a better understanding of other cultures; and they are better prepared for potential careers. Moreover, students' learning skills in general are enhanced through foreign language study.

Students who study two years of a language other than English score significantly higher on the SAT verbal and math test than students who do not complete two years of a language. Higher wages are also linked to students who studying a language other than English for two years. In Michigan, 85% of school districts currently do not require a world language credit.

Questions & Answers

- 1. Q: Was the Michigan World Language Association included in the development of guidelines for the languages other than English requirement? (Updated 9.07)**

A: Yes

- 2. Q: If a student is fluent in two or more languages, does he or she still need two credits for graduation?**

A: The guidelines currently under development will address this issue.

- 3. Q: If we currently offer world language to juniors and seniors via Michigan Virtual High School, can this course count for both of the world language and the online requirement?**

A: Yes.

RECENT CHANGES TO THE MICHIGAN MERIT CURRICULUM FAQ

March 2008

Page 13, Assessment (Revision)

Proposed SCAS Development Schedule (Updated 3.05.08)

Year	English	Math	Science	Social Studies
2007-08	English 9	Algebra I Geometry	Biology	
2008-09	English 10		Chemistry Earth Science	US & World History plus Geography
2009-10	English 11	Algebra II Statistics & Probability	Physics	World History plus Geography
2010-11	English 12	Pre-Calculus	Earth Science	Civics Economics

Page 73, Final Year Math (Clarification) added math-related.

3. Q: If a student has a personal curriculum, modifying Algebra II and only completes .5 credits, is he or she allowed to graduate with 3 ½ credits of Mathematics, rather than 4 credits?

A: No. A student must successfully complete a total of 4 math credits including a math or math-related credit in their final year. [Updated 3.08](#)

February 2008

Page 95, Recent FAQ Changes (New Addition)

January 2008

Page 6, Assessment (Change)

What the Michigan Merit Exam Law Says

388.1704b Michigan merit examination.

Sec. 104b (1) Beginning in the 2006 calendar year, in order to receive state aid under this act, a district shall comply with this section and shall administer the state assessments under section 1279 or the Michigan merit examination to pupils in grade 11 as provided in this section, as follows:

(a) For pupils in grade 11 in the 2005-2006 school year, the provisions concerning state assessments under section 104a apply to all pupils in grade 11 and the Michigan merit examination shall be administered to a sample of pupils in grade 11 statewide, as identified by the department. The pupils to be included in this sample shall be determined by the department as the department determines necessary to seek the approval of the United States department of education to use the Michigan merit examination for the purposes of the federal no child left behind act of 2001, Public Law 107-110.

(b) Subject to subdivision (c), for pupils in grade 11 in the 2006-2007 school year and subsequent school years, the Michigan merit examination shall be offered to all pupils in grade 11. examination to a sample of pupils in grade 11 statewide as described in subdivision (a).

November 2007

Page 36, Earning Credit (Clarification)

13. Q: If a student fails a class as a result of not meeting district attendance policy, for example, but passes the end of course exam, does the student get credit?

A: Yes. Once a student registers for and attends a class, he or she agrees to the district's requirements for earning a grade in the class, including attendance, homework, etc. However, the district must grant credit if a student passes an exam or series of exams used for testing out, which the district has determined measures a student's proficiency in meeting the Michigan Merit course/credit content expectations.

Districts are responsible for determining the assessments, which can be used for testing out purposes. The assessments could include the Michigan Department of Education's Secondary Credit Assessment or other assessments aligned with the Michigan Merit course/credit content expectations. Assessments may also include one or more elements in addition to paper-and-pencil exams for testing out purposes, including but not limited to paper, project, presentation, performance, demonstration or participation elements. (Updated 11.07)

Page 73, Mathematics (Clarification)

3. Q: If a student has a personal curriculum, modifying Algebra II and only completes .5 credits, is he or she allowed to graduate with 3 ½ credits of Mathematics, rather than 4 credits?

A: No. A student must successfully complete a total of 4 math credits including math in their final year. (Updated 11.07)

October 2007

Assessment, Page 9 (Change)

Status (NEW)

Currently, the Department is in the process of creating Secondary Credit Assessments, which includes summative assessments in 17 course content areas.

As of May 2007, the Department has developed prototypes of Secondary Credit Assessments in two areas: Algebra I and Geometry. These exams were written by Michigan educators in the summer of 2006 and were pilot-tested in Michigan classrooms in January 2007. They represent a first attempt to create instruments that schools can use. They cannot at this time be considered the official state Secondary Credit Assessment but are being provided at the request of districts who would like some state instrument to verify the rigor of their classes or, in some cases, to use for purposes of student assessment. These prototypes are now available to download in Adobe Acrobat PDF format on the OEAA secure website at <https://oeaa.state.mi.us/meap/>.

No testing services (printing of test booklets and answer documents, assessment administration services, scoring and reporting) are available. Districts, however, may print, use, and score the prototype exams to assess students who have taken these course/credit areas and/or to help gauge the extent to which current course content is aligned with the High School Content Expectations for Algebra I and Geometry. The Department indicated a recommended passing score for earning credit when the tests were posted on the web.

Guidelines for the use of Secondary Credit Assessments are still under development. At this time, however, the Department strongly advises that where a Secondary Credit Assessment is used as the final exam for a student taking a class or course (as opposed to "testing out" without having taken the class), the score on the Secondary Credit Assessment should not count for more than 20-25% of the student's final grade in the class.

In addition, the Department has requested funding to begin the development of the assessments for the other course/credit areas. If provided by the legislature, this funding would permit the Department to begin the development of some of the assessments in summer/fall, 2007. Our priority areas are course/credit areas that freshman or sophomores would typically take, including Algebra I, Geometry, Biology, and English 9. If funds permit, assessments would also be created in Chemistry and English 10. (Updated 10.07)

Assessment, Page 11 (Clarifications)

6. Q: How will the testing out option be equitable when each school determines the criteria? Or, how will the state ensure that Algebra I Course Content Expectations (and the content expectations for all other courses) are being learned by all students in Michigan in the absence of a state developed test?

A: All schools will determine their requirements for student proficiency in the subject area content expectations. Schools using their own Secondary Credit Assessments will need to verify to themselves that the assessments used produce reliable and valid information, are aligned to and cover the content expectations for the credit area, and that the cut score they select is valid for the assessment. (Updated 10.07)

8. Q: Doesn't the ACT test cover all the HSCEs?

A: The ACT covers only some of the High School Content Expectations (and only those appropriate through the end of Grade 11), so it is necessary each year for the Department to determine which content is not covered by the ACT so that augmented assessments can be provided to ensure full alignment with State content expectations. (Updated 10.07)

9. Q: When will the Department's Secondary Credit Assessments be ready?

A: Prototype summative assessments for Algebra I and Geometry have been developed, piloted and are available on the MEAP secure testing site. Prototype unit and/or summative assessments are being developed for Biology and English 9 for release in May 2008. (Updated 10.07)

Testing Out, Page 68 (Clarification)

14. Q: Can a school district deny credit to a student who is enrolled in a course and has not met the district attendance policy?

A: Yes. However, a student who fails to earn credit for not meeting a district's attendance policy may still request to test-out of a subject regardless of the amount of class time or attendance. The opportunity to do so, however, may be limited by the testing-out timelines of the local district. (Updated 10.07)

Social Studies, Page 90 (Additions)

- 2. Q: Is a high school social studies teacher with an RX (social studies) certification, considered to be *highly qualified* to teach the new World History and Geography and United States History and Geography Courses?**

A: Yes. Teachers without RX (social studies) certification, but with certification in history or geography may also teach the new courses, but will have to work towards qualifying themselves to remain qualified to teach these courses in the future.

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- 4. Q: When will the social studies requirements be put into place?**

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The Michigan Department of Education plans to work with Michigan educators in Summer 2008 to develop items for the Michigan Merit Exam that are aligned to the new social studies high school content expectations. Items aligned to the new expectations are expected to be ready for operational use by Spring 2010."