

# FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



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K12: 2006-116

## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** District Superintendents  
Assistant Superintendents

**FROM:** Cheri Pierson Yecke, Ph.D.

**DATE:** August 10, 2006

**SUBJECT: NEW HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS, "IT'S A MAJOR OPPORTUNITY!"**

This memorandum and attachments will provide information regarding recent legislative changes pertaining to high school graduation requirements for students entering their first year of high school during the 2007-2008 school year, and thereafter. These changes were made during the 2006 legislative session as part of House Bill 7087 and became effective upon being signed into law.

Over the past two years, Commissioner Winn has convened task forces to explore middle and high school reform. Their efforts culminated into a series of recommendations to improve secondary school education. The Legislature took on the challenge to make these seminal changes to the high school diploma and design of high schools.

This memorandum and the attachments address the new high school graduation requirements and the procedure for submitting major areas of interest to the Commissioner for approval. Additional information relating to the other components of A++ will be provided by the Department in the coming months.

CHERI PIERSON YECKE, PH.D.  
CHANCELLOR, K-12 PUBLIC SCHOOLS

## LEGISLATIVE CHANGES

### High School Graduation Requirements

Beginning with students entering their first year of high school in the 2007-2008 school year, graduation requires:

1. The successful completion of a minimum of 24 credits, or
2. An International Baccalaureate Curriculum, or
3. An Advanced International Certificate of Education Curriculum, or
4. The successful completion of an 18-hour college or career preparatory accelerated graduation program.

The 24 credits may be earned through applied, integrated, and combined courses approved by the Department of Education. The credits are split between sixteen (16) core curriculum credits, four (4) credits in a major area of interest, and four (4) credits combined to allow for a second major area of interest, a minor area of interest, elective courses, intensive reading or mathematics intervention courses, or credit recovery courses. The credits shall be distributed as follows:

$16+4+4= 24$  credits

- 16 core curriculum credits
  - Four (4) credits in English, with a major concentration in composition, reading for information, and literature.
  - Four (4) credits in mathematics, one of which must be Algebra I, a series equivalent to Algebra I, or a high-level mathematics course. School districts are encouraged to set specific goals to increase enrollments in, and successful completion of, geometry and Algebra II.
  - Three (3) credits in science, two of which must have a laboratory component.
  - Three (3) credits in social studies as follows: one (1) credit in American history; one (1) credit in world history; one-half credit in economics; and one-half credit in American Government.
  - One (1) credit in fine arts.
  - One (1) credit in physical education to include integration of health.
- Eight (8) credits in majors, minors, or electives:
  - Four (4) credits in a major area of interest, such as sequential courses in a career and technical program, fine and performing arts, or academic content area, selected by the student as part of the education plan. Students may revise major areas of interest each year as part of annual course registration processes and should update their education plan to reflect such revisions.
  - Four (4) credits in elective courses selected by the student as part of the education plan. These credits may be combined to allow for a second major area of interest, a minor area of interest, elective courses, intensive reading or mathematics intervention courses, or credit recovery courses.

- Minor areas of interest are comprised of three (3) credits selected by the student as part of the education plan and approved by the district.
- Elective courses are selected by the student in order to pursue a complete education program and to meet eligibility requirements for scholarships.
- For each year in which a student scores at Level 1 on FCAT reading, the student must be enrolled in and complete an intensive reading course the following year. Placement of Level 2 readers in either an intensive reading course or a content area course in which reading strategies are delivered shall be determined by diagnosis of reading needs.
- For each year in which a student scores Level 1 or Level 2 on FCAT Mathematics, the student must receive remediation the following year. These courses may be taught through applied, integrated, or combined courses and are subject to approval by the Department for inclusion in the Course Code Directory.
- Credit recovery courses shall be offered so that students can simultaneously earn an elective credit and the recovered credit.

### **Major Areas of Interest**

- A major area of interest consists of sequential courses in a career and technical program, fine and performing arts, or academic content area.
- The major area of interest is selected by the student as part of the personalized academic and career plan required by the middle grades career and education planning course.
- Students may revise major areas of interest each year as part of annual course registration processes and should update their education plan to reflect such revisions.
- Annually, by October 1, the school district shall approve major areas of interest and submit the list of majors to the Commissioner of Education for approval.
- Each major area of interest shall be deemed approved unless specifically rejected by the Commissioner within 60 days.
- Upon approval, each district's major areas of interest shall be available for use by all school districts and shall be posted on the Department's Web site.

### **School Board Duties**

- A district school board may require specific courses and programs of study within the minimum credit requirements for high school graduation and shall modify basic courses, as necessary, to assure exceptional students the opportunity to meet the graduation requirements for a standard diploma, using one of the following strategies:
  - Assignment of the exceptional student to an exceptional education class for instruction in a basic course with the same student performance standards as those required of non-exceptional students in the district school board student progression plan, or

- Assignment of the exceptional student to a basic education class for instruction that is modified to accommodate the student's exceptionality.
- The district school board shall determine which of these strategies to employ based upon an assessment of the student's needs and shall reflect this decision in the student's individual education plan.
- Each district school board shall establish standards for graduation from its schools, which must include:
  - Successful completion of the academic credit or curriculum requirements
  - Earning passing scores on the FCAT, as defined in S. 1008.22(3)(c), F.S., or scores on a standardized test that are concordant with passing scores on the FCAT as defined in S. 1008.22(9), F.S.
  - Completion of all other applicable requirements prescribed by the district school board pursuant to S. 1008.25, F.S.
  - Achievement of a cumulative grade point average of 2.0 on a 4.0 scale, or its equivalent, in the courses required by this section

### **Awarding High School Diplomas**

- A student who meets all of these requirements shall be awarded a standard diploma in a form prescribed by the State Board of Education.
- A student who completes the minimum number of credits and other specified requirements, but who is unable to meet the assessment, grade point average, or district standards, shall be awarded a certificate of completion in a form prescribed by the State Board of Education. However, any student who is otherwise entitled to a certificate of completion may elect to remain in the secondary school either as a full-time student or a part-time student for up to one additional year and receive special instruction designed to remedy his or her identified deficiencies.

### **Students with Disabilities**

- The State Board of Education, after a public hearing and consideration, shall adopt rules based upon the recommendations of the Commissioner for the provision of test accommodations and modifications of procedures, as necessary for students with disabilities, which will demonstrate the student's abilities rather than reflect the student's impaired sensory, manual, speaking, or psychological process skills.
- This public hearing and consideration shall not be construed to amend or nullify the requirements of security relating to the contents of examinations or assessment instruments and related materials or data as prescribed in S. 1008.23, F.S.
- Each district school board must provide instruction to prepare students with disabilities to demonstrate proficiency in the skills and competencies necessary for successful grade-to-grade progression and high school graduation.

- A student with a disability, as defined in S. 1007.02(2), F.S., for whom the individual education plan (IEP) committee determines that the FCAT cannot accurately measure the student's abilities, taking into consideration all allowable accommodations, shall have the FCAT requirement waived for the purpose of receiving a standard high school diploma if the student:
  - Completes the minimum number of credits and other requirements prescribed
  - Does not meet the assessment requirements after one opportunity in 10th grade and one opportunity in 11th grade

### **Changes to the Accelerated Graduation Options**

- Prior to selecting an accelerated career or college preparatory program, a student and the student's parent must meet with designated school personnel to receive an explanation of the relative requirements, advantages, and disadvantages of each program option, and the student must also receive written consent from the student's parent.
- The grade point average requirement for a student to pursue an accelerated graduation option is raised from a 3.0 to a 3.5 on a 4.0 scale.
- For students choosing the college preparatory program, at least 6 of the 18 credits must be received in classes that are offered pursuant to the International Baccalaureate Program, the Advanced Placement Program, dual enrollment, Advanced Certificate of Education, or are specifically listed or identified as rigorous pursuant to S. 1009.531(3), F.S. This removes the option of honors classes being included as an option to meet this requirement.

### **Contact Information**

If you have additional questions, please contact Mary Jane Tappen by telephone at (850) 245-0834 or by e-mail at [mary.tappen@fldoe.org](mailto:mary.tappen@fldoe.org).

Additional information on components of A++ is available online at <http://www.fldoe.org/APlusPlus>. This site is designed to serve as a tool for you to access at your convenience and will be updated regularly.

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Attachments:

FAQ

Major/Minor Diploma Overview One Pager

Major Submission Process