

The board recognizes the importance of setting rigorous graduation requirements to help ensure that students are receiving an education that will prepare them to be career and college ready and productive members of society.

In order to graduate from high school, students must meet the following requirements:

1. successful completion of all State Board of Education course unit requirements as described in Section A; and
2. successful completion of cardiopulmonary resuscitation instruction.

Principals shall ensure that students and parents are aware of the number and nature of credits required for high school graduation, the potential to complete high school graduation requirements in three years, and the availability of early graduate college scholarships.

A. COURSE UNITS

As described in State Board of Education Policy GRAD-004, all students must fulfill the course unit requirements of the Future-Ready Core Course of Study, unless they are approved for the Future-Ready Occupational Course of Study. The tables below list the course unit requirements for the Future-Ready Core Course of Study and the Future-Ready Occupational Course of Study, as well as additional course units recommended by the board, based on the student's year of entry into ninth grade for the first time. School counseling program staff shall assist students in selecting high school courses to ensure that students are taking all required units and selecting electives consistent with their post-graduation plans.

In accordance with policy 3101, Dual Enrollment, and State Board of Education requirements, students may earn high school credit for college courses completed. In addition, students may earn credit for certain high school courses in the Future-Ready Core Course of Study completed prior to grade nine, as authorized by the State Board of Education. Students also have the opportunity to meet course unit requirements without completing the regular period of classroom instruction by demonstrating mastery of the course material in accordance with policy 3420, Student Promotion and Accountability, and State Board of Education requirements. For students who have transferred to the school system during high school or who, for other reasons, have completed course work outside of the school system, the principal shall determine what course work will be applied as credit toward graduation. See policy 3420 for information regarding receiving credit toward graduation for courses taken abroad.

All awards of high school course credit must be consistent with State Board of Education requirements. Any inconsistency between board policy and State Board graduation requirements will be resolved by following the State Board requirements. While the board

endeavors to keep its policy up to date with current State Board of Education graduation requirements, students should verify current requirements with their school counselors when planning course schedules or making other decisions based on graduation requirements.

***Refer to the North Carolina State Graduation requirements (ncpublicschools.org) or communicate with your School Counselor.**

B. HIGH SCHOOL END-OF-COURSE AND OTHER TESTING

High school students must take all end-of-course (EOC) tests and Career and Technical Education (CTE) State Assessments required by the State Board of Education and pursuant to policy 3410, Testing and Assessment Program.

C. SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES**1. Honor Graduates**

Honor graduates may be designated by principals on the basis of criteria established by the superintendent. Recognition of honor graduates may be included in graduation programs.

2. Students with Disabilities

Graduation requirements must be applied to students with disabilities to the extent required by state and federal law and State Board policy.

3. Children of Military Families

In order to facilitate the on-time graduation of children of military families, as defined in policy 4176, Children of Military Families, school officials shall comply with the requirements of the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children (G.S. 115C-407.5), G.S. 115C-407.12, and the following requirements.

a. Waiver Requirements

Specific course work required for graduation will be waived for children of military families if similar course work has been satisfactorily completed in another school system. If a waiver is not granted, school administrators shall provide the student with reasonable justification for the denial. If a waiver is not granted to a student who would qualify to graduate from the sending school, the superintendent or designee shall provide the student with an alternative means of acquiring the required course work so that the student may graduate on time.

b. Testing Requirements for Graduation

The superintendent shall accept from children of military families the following in lieu of any local testing requirements for graduation: (1) the end-of-course exams required for graduation from the sending state; (2) national norm-referenced achievement tests; or (3) alternative testing. If these alternatives are not feasible for a student who has transferred in his or her senior year, subsection c below will apply.

c. Transfers During Senior Year

If a child of a military family who has transferred at the beginning of or during his or her senior year is ineligible to graduate from the school system after all of the alternatives listed above have been considered and the student meets the graduation requirements at his or her sending school, then school officials from the school system shall collaborate with the sending school system to ensure that the student will receive a diploma from the sending board of education.

4. Early Graduation

Students have the option of graduating early by completing the State Board of Education minimum graduation requirements on an accelerated three-year pathway. Students choosing to use an accelerated pathway must follow the process required for early graduation as described in State Board Policies GRAD-001 and GRAD-006.

5. Graduation Certificates

Graduation certificates will be awarded to eligible students in accordance with the standards set forth in State Board Policy GRAD-010.

6. Diploma Endorsements

Students have the opportunity to earn diploma endorsements as described in State Board Policy GRAD-007. No endorsement is required to receive a diploma.

D. DIFFERENTIATED DIPLOMA PLAN

Purpose

The Gaston County School System offers the *Differentiated Diploma Plan* through our local high schools for students who are at risk of dropping out of high school or who have faced a life-altering hardship, which has had a traumatic effect on their education.

Description

1. The Differentiated Diploma is an alternative diploma plan, which allows students to

earn course credits that meet North Carolina graduation requirements. Students who are accepted into the *Differentiated Diploma Plan* must meet all local graduation requirements except for the 28 course credits required to earn a traditional high school diploma from the Gaston County School System.

2. This diploma option may be offered to students who face situations, which may prevent them from graduating from high school. The *Differentiated Diploma Plan* may be considered for a student who:
 1. is at risk of dropping out of school,
 2. has previously dropped out and has chosen to return to earn his/her high school diploma,
 3. was retained in the lower grades and therefore entered high school at an age older than the typical freshman entering high school, or
 4. has a significant life hardship which negatively affects his/her ability to be successful in school or to complete the traditional diploma track. Other areas that may be considered are absenteeism, previous course failures, and course repeats.
3. The *Differentiated Diploma Plan* is not a fast-track program. The individual needs of the student will be the primary consideration when determining acceptance into the program. Typically, a student in the *Differentiated Diploma Plan* may graduate after the first semester of his/her 4th year in high school. In some cases, a student may be permitted to graduate at the end of his/her 3rd year in high school.
4. A student following the *Differentiated Diploma Plan* must satisfactorily complete all state required courses, as well as all state and local required testing.

Legal References: G.S. 115C-47, -81.25(c)(10)(c), -81.45(d), -81.65, -81.90(c), -83.31, -83.32, -174.11, -276, -288, -407.5, -407.12; 16 N.C.A.C. 6D .0309, .0510; State Board of Education Policies CCRE-001, GRAD-001, GRAD-004, GRAD-006, GRAD-007, GRAD-008, GRAD-010, TEST-003

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