

NEW! Michigan Merit Curriculum FAQ (11/2006)



Michigan Merit Curriculum High School Graduation Requirements

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 High School Graduation Requirements	
MATHEMATICS* - 4 Credits	
Algebra I ^o Algebra II ^o	Geometry ^o One math course in final year of high school
ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS - 4 Credits	
English Language Arts 9 ^o English Language Arts 10 ^o	English Language Arts 11 ^{oo} English Language Arts 12 ^{oo}
SCIENCE - 3 Credits	
Biology ^o Physics ^o or Chemistry ^o	One additional science credit
SOCIAL STUDIES** - 3 Credits	
.5 credit in Civics ^{oo} U.S. History and Geography ^{oo}	.5 credit in Economics ^{oo} World History and Geography ^{oo}
PHYSICAL EDUCATION & HEALTH** - 1 Credit	
VISUAL, PERFORMING AND APPLIED ARTS* - 1 Credit	
ONLINE LEARNING EXPERIENCE* Course, Learning, or Integrated Learning Experience	
LANGUAGE OTHER THAN ENGLISH** - 2 Credits In grades 9-12; OR an equivalent learning experience in grades K-12	

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.michigan.gov/highschool.

- * Content expectations have been completed by the Michigan Department of Education.
- ** Content expectations under development.

To provide you with easy access to this important document, you may download the entire FAQ or just specific chapters.

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[- Overview Questions](#)

1. What's the difference between the state's current graduation requirements and the new Michigan Merit Curriculum high school graduation requirements?
2. Don't most school districts already have similar graduation requirements?
3. How does the Michigan Merit Curriculum compare with other states' graduation requirements?
4. Does the Michigan Merit Curriculum allow decisions to be made by local school districts?
5. 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?
6. Will the Michigan Merit Curriculum reduce the number of electives students may take?
7. Why can't we take longer to implement new graduation requirements - it feels like we are rushing toward this change?
8. Will this push some struggling students to drop out rather than attempt to meet the demands of a harder curriculum?
9. Don't you think that making the high school credit requirements so rigorous is an invitation to return to "tracking" kids?

[- Non-Public and Home School Requirements](#)

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

[- Earning Credit](#)

1. What is a credit?
2. How can a student earn credit?
3. Do students have to earn credits in the Michigan Merit Curriculum in a particular sequence?
4. Is a student allowed to receive high school credit for coursework prior to high school?
5. 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?
6. Will districts be allowed to give'/ credits?
7. How can students receive credit without passing a class?
8. Does the content and assessment for a credit offered in both middle and high school need to be the same?

- Testing Out

1. Is the previous law on testing out, outlined above still in effect?
2. 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?
3. 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?

- Assessment

1. Who determines the type of secondary course/credit assessment a district could choose?
2. Who determines the score a student or students must meet to pass or meet the assessment requirements?
3. What if the student has passed the class, but fails the assessment? Does the student fail the course?
4. Will the state be developing credit assessments?
5. Will assessments be created for integrated math sequences and integrated science sequences?

- Highly Qualified Teacher and Personnel

1. Do teachers need to be highly qualified to teach Michigan Merit Curriculum Requirements?
2. Does a middle school teacher have to be "highly qualified" at the high school level in order for students to receive high school credit?
3. 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?
4. Will there be enough highly qualified teachers available to meet the need in required course credit areas?

- Special Education

1. What about students who receive special education services?
2. 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?

- Dual Enrollment, Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate

1. How will these new graduation requirements affect advanced learners?
2. 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?

- Career and Technical Education

1. 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?
2. Can students earn credit through a CTE program?
3. How will a CTE student demonstrate proficiency in the Michigan Merit Curriculum required course/credit?
4. Are CTE teachers required to be "highly qualified" to teach CTE courses that are subject to NCLB?
5. Will the Michigan Merit Curriculum requirements impact the scheduling of regional Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs?

- Sample CTE Student Schedules

1. Career and Technical Education
2. Instrumental Music Emphasis

- Effect on High School Scheduling

1. 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?
3. Sample 7 Period Day Schedule
4. Sample 4 x 4 Block / AB Block Schedule 4. Sample Trimester Schedule

- Alternative Education

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

- Personal Curriculum

1. Will there be guidelines from MDE as to when a personal curriculum modification can be made?
2. How can a student develop a personal curriculum?
3. Do students following a personal curriculum still get a diploma?
4. What are the accommodations for students receiving special education services?

Course/Credit Content Expectations and Guidelines

- English Language Arts

1. 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?
2. 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?

- Mathematics

1. If students take Algebra I over two years can they earn credit for both years?
2. Will it still be possible for our high school students to take Pre-algebra for high school credit?
3. If a student is not successful in completing Algebra II the first semester and completes the mathematics requirements through an alternative approach such as CTE, does this mean that the student will be allowed to graduate with three and one-half credits of Mathematics, rather than the required four credits?
4. If a student has taken Algebra I, Geometry, Algebra II, and Pre-calculus prior to the senior year, is the student still required to take Math in the senior year?
5. Does the required 4th credit in math have to be in math beyond Algebra II (for example, Pre-calculus or Trigonometry)?
6. 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?

- Science

1. What was the thinking behind the choice of science courses listed in the Michigan Merit Curriculum?
2. What subject can a student take to fulfill the 3rd science credit required in the Michigan Merit Curriculum? Can Advanced Placement (AP) Environmental Science be counted as a "science" under the new state curriculum?
3. 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?
4. Can students earn science credit for conceptual Physics and Chemistry classes, or for other classes designed to address science concepts at a basic level?
5. Can a student take a Physics class and count it for both a math/math-related and physics credit?
6. Would an Earth Science class need to include the entire essential and core expectations for Earth Science. In other words, once a class is deemed Earth Science must it then meet ALL the expectations for that course?
7. While Earth Science is not a required credit under the Michigan Merit Curriculum, will it be tested on the new Michigan Merit Exam (MME)?

- Social Studies

- (This section will be completed upon completion of the Social Studies Content Expectations)

- Visual, Performing and Applied Arts

1. What is the goal of the Michigan Merit Curriculum's one credit graduation requirement in the visual, performing, and applied arts?
2. How were the credit guidelines for the visual, performing and applied arts developed?
3. How will the one credit requirement in the Michigan Merit Curriculum meet the needs of students in the visual, performing and applied arts?
4. What are the visual, performing, and applied arts credit guidelines based on? What is meant by the term Applied Arts?
5. What can a student take to meet the visual, performing, and applied arts credit requirement?
6. Why don't the visual, performing, and applied arts guidelines include specific courses?
7. Won't this one credit requirement reduce the number of students in visual, performing, and applied arts courses?

- Physical Education and Health

1. Do the requirements give the option for students to take just physical education OR health?
2. Can a local school board still allow a student to count marching band and sports for physical education credit? What about health?
3. How should the one credit for physical education/health be divided?
4. How does the High School Graduation Requirement for one credit in physical education and health affect teachers?
5. How can high school teachers who lack the endorsement to teach health education become qualified?
6. I thought No Child Left Behind didn't require health and physical education teachers to be highly qualified.
7. Can districts still choose to replace extracurricular activities for the physical education requirement?
8. What do the credit guidelines refer to?

- Online Course or Learning Experience

1. Why has an online learning experience been added to the Michigan Merit Curriculum?
2. What counts for the online learning requirement?
3. Will the online learning experience cost money? Who is going to pay for this?
4. Can the online learning requirement be met prior to 9th grade?
5. Does the online learning experience need to go on a transcript?
6. If a student is taking a high school class via distance learning, does this fulfill the requirement of an online course or learning experience?
7. Does an online course or online learning experience need to be teacher led or can it be self-paced?

- Languages Other Than English

1. Has the Michigan World Language Association been included in the development of guidelines for the languages other than English requirement?
2. If a student is fluent in two or more languages, does he or she still need two credits for graduation?
3. 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?

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