

# REGULATION MONTGOMERY COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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**Related Entries:** IED, IKC-RA, IOF-RA, ISA, JEC-RA  
**Responsible Office:** Curriculum and Instructional Programs

## High School Graduation Requirements

### I. PURPOSE

To publish procedures for the implementation of the state and county graduation requirements

### II. DEFINITIONS

- A. The *Certificate of Meritorious Service* is a Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE)/Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) certificate awarded with the Maryland High School Diploma to recognize the successful completion of specified student service requirements. (Refer to Section III. B.1.)
- B. *Dual enrollment* is the concurrent enrollment of a student in both an MCPS high school and a postsecondary institution. Dual enrollment opportunities may be available to students through qualified MCPS special programs or with preapproval of the principal for an individual student.
- C. The *high school year* is defined as a minimum of 180 school days and 1,170 school hours during a ten-month period in each school year.
- D. *Independent study* is an opportunity to provide educational experiences in the local school program that offer the student optimal involvement in learning to achieve or move beyond the course objectives, goals, or standards.
- E. *Maryland High School Assessment (HSA) Bridge Plan (Bridge Plan) for Academic Validation* is an MSDE option that allows eligible students to meet the HSA requirement in a way other than a traditional test.
- F. The *Maryland High School Certificate* is a state certificate awarded for completion of a special education program to students with disabilities who cannot meet the requirements for a diploma, but meet state requirements for the certificate. (Refer to Maryland High School Certificate in Section III.C.)

- G. The *MCPS Certificate of Merit* is a local diploma endorsement recognized by the state to be awarded along with the Maryland High School Diploma upon successful completion of specified requirements. (Refer to MCPS Certificate of Merit in Section III.B.2.)
- H. The *MCPS High School Course Bulletin* is a resource that lists courses offered in MCPS, as well as the most current information about graduation requirements, assessments, internships, opportunities for dual enrollment in college, and special programs. The information is provided in printed form as well as on the MCPS Web site. Students, parents, and administrators should obtain the most accurate and up-to-date information on the MCPS Web site.
- I. *Original credit* is defined as the successful completion of a high school course for which a student has not received prior credit, regardless of a student's previous enrollment. Original credit may be received for high school courses taken in middle school if the student successfully completes the course and passes the same final examination given in high school.
- J. *Principal's approval* is required for coursework to be applied to graduation requirements. A student younger than high school age obtains approval of the high school principal of his or her attendance area.
- K. *Student service learning* is an unpaid activity completed by the student within the curriculum, school, or community that provides service to an individual or group to address a school or community need. The activity, as well as the individual/group sponsoring the activity, must be approved by MCPS.

### III. PROCEDURES

#### A. Maryland High School Diploma in Montgomery County

Students who fulfill the requirements listed below will be awarded a Maryland High School Diploma from MSDE.

#### 1. Enrollment, Credit, Student Service Learning, and Maryland High School Assessment Requirements

##### a) Enrollment

The student must satisfactorily complete four years of an approved program of study beyond Grade 8 unless an MCPS alternative program is approved. (Refer to Alternatives to a Four-Year Enrollment Plan in Section III.G.)

b) Credit

- (1) MCPS students must earn a minimum of 22 credits. Local school systems may require additional credits beyond the 21 credits required by the state of Maryland. A minimum of 19½ of these credits must be in areas and courses specified below. The additional elective credits may be chosen from offerings in any curricular area.
- (2) Students must successfully complete specified credits in English, social studies, science, mathematics, physical education, health education, fine arts, and technology education through the successful completion of courses that satisfy each requirement. Courses that satisfy each requirement are published in the *MCPS High School Course Bulletin*.

Core Credit Requirements

Subject Area	Credits	Description	Notes
English	4		
Social Studies	3	U.S History (1)  National, State and Local Government (1)  World History (1)	*Course content must focus exclusively on national history  *Course content must include Maryland state and local government
Science	3	Biology (1)  Physical Science (1)  Earth, life, or physical science (1)	*Laboratory experience must be integral to the course
Mathematics	4	Must include:  Algebra (1)  Geometry (1)	*Students who successfully complete the most advanced core math course offered by MCPS may waive other math requirements

Physical Education	1		*Students for whom an adaptive program is deemed inappropriate by the supervisor of physical education after an individual case review may be excused from this requirement if the student's health, as certified by a physician, would be adversely affected throughout a student's high school experience (Grades 9 to 12)
Health Education	0.5		
Fine Arts	1		*Courses that satisfy the fine arts requirement are marked FA in the MCPS <i>High School Course Bulletin</i>
Technology Education	1		*Courses that satisfy the career and technology education requirement are marked TE in the MCPS <i>High School Course Bulletin</i>

**Additional Credit Requirements**

In addition to the core credit requirements, a student is required to successfully complete one of the following options:

Option 1		Option 2		Option 3		Option 4	
Foreign Language	2	American Sign Language	2	Advanced Technology Education	2	State-approved career and technology program	4
AND		AND		AND		AND	
Electives	2.5	Electives	2.5	Electives	2.5	Electives	0.5

c) **Student Service Learning (SSL)**

Students must complete the MSDE Student Service Learning requirement. Student service learning is distinguished from volunteering or community service by the opportunity it provides for students to improve their academic skills by applying what they learn in school to the real world. They then reflect on their experience to reinforce the link between their service and their learning. SSL

requirements, acceptable service activities, and record keeping procedures are described on the MCPS Student Service Learning Web site.

SSL Hours as Required by Graduating Class:	
Graduating Classes	SSL Hours
2008–2010	60
2011 and later	75

d) Maryland High School Assessments

- (1) Secondary students enrolled in Algebra I, Biology, English 10, and National, State and Local Government are required to take the related end-of-course Maryland High School Assessment (HSA). The Algebra I and English 10 HSA also will be scored for the Maryland School Assessment (MSA). MSDE will identify the students eligible to meet this requirement.
- (2) Starting with the Class of 2009, students must achieve one of the following:
  - (a) Pass each of the four High School Assessment (HSA) tests—algebra/data analysis, English, biology, and government. There are two potential substitutions:
    - (i) Advanced Placement (AP) or International Baccalaureate (IB) Tests—for students who have earned a score approved by the MSDE on the HSA-related AP or IB test.
    - (ii) Modified HSA—an alternative test for students with disabilities who meet the specific participation criteria based on their Individualized Education Program (IEP) process.
  - (b) Combined-Score Option—for students who have earned a combined score of 1602 on the four HSA tests.

- (c) Bridge Plan for Academic Validation— for students who meet eligibility criteria.

2. Transferring Credits to Meet Graduation Requirements

a) Transfer from Outside MCPS

- (1) In order for a student to be awarded a Maryland high school diploma, the student must be in attendance in a Maryland public high school one full semester immediately preceding graduation in addition to meeting the other diploma requirements.
- (2) Credits earned in accredited out-of-county schools should be accepted by the principal at the unit value given by the school where the credit was earned and converted into appropriate MCPS credits for comparable MCPS coursework.
- (3) Students entering the school system in Grade 12 are exempt from locally established graduation requirements. Students transferring into a Maryland public school system after the start of the first semester of their senior year are exempt from statewide tests.
- (4) If a student transfers during the last semester of his/her senior year from one Maryland public high school to another Maryland public high school, the student has the option of graduating from either high school upon agreement of the principal(s) or designee(s) if all graduation requirements have been met.

b) High School Courses Taught in Middle School

The associate superintendent for Curriculum and Instructional Programs (OCIP) and the deputy superintendent of schools will identify the high school courses that may be offered in middle school for high school credit, taking into consideration the impact of the proposed course on existing programs and resources, and the availability of highly qualified teachers. OCIP may conduct a pilot study, offering a course at a small number of schools before implementing it systemwide.

- (1) A high school course offered at any middle school must meet the following criteria:
  - (a) The teacher must meet certification requirements specific to the course and subject code taught;
  - (b) The high school curriculum must be taught; and
  - (c) The final examination given in each course must be the same as the examination given in high school.
- (2) When a high school course specifically required for graduation is offered for credit in middle school, students must follow established pathways.
- (3) A middle school student must successfully pass both semesters of the course and the associated semester B final examination in order to earn credit consistent with the *Code of Maryland* Regulations §13A.03.02.051(3).
- (4) Partial credit will not be awarded for completing one semester of a two-semester sequence in middle school.

3. Credit/No Credit Courses and Replacement Grades

- a) Credit/no credit may only be used in courses not specifically required for graduation by MSDE or MCPS. Credit/no credit cannot be applied to a Certificate of Merit course.
- b) Replacement grades will be included in grade point averages as described in Regulation IKC-RA, *Grade Point Averages (GPA) and Weighted Grade Point Averages (WGPA)*.

B. Diploma Endorsements

1. Certificate of Meritorious Service

Graduating seniors who have completed 260 or more SSL hours qualify for the Certificate of Meritorious Service. Special recognition will identify meritorious service graduates at the time of graduation.

2. Montgomery County Public Schools Certificate of Merit (See Definitions, Section II.G.)

This endorsement is awarded with the Maryland High School diploma to students completing the following additional provisions:

- a) Maintain an unweighted 3.0 cumulative grade point average, or higher;
- b) Receive credit for the MCPS Algebra 2 course;
- c) Earn at least 12 credits in advanced courses identified in the MCPS *High School Course Bulletin* as having met one or more of the following criteria:
  - (1) The course assignments and class activities require more application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation than other courses in the same subject area.
  - (2) The course includes more content or the study of content in more depth than other courses with the same course title at the same grade level or other courses in the same subject area at the same grade level.
  - (3) Mathematics courses require the study or application of mathematics concepts at the level of Honors Geometry or beyond.
  - (4) Foreign language courses at Level III or beyond meet this requirement.

C. Maryland High School Certificate (See Definitions, Section II.G.)

This certificate will be awarded only to students with disabilities who cannot meet the requirements for a diploma but who meet one of the following criteria:

1. The student has been enrolled in a special education program for at least four years beyond Grade 8 or its age equivalent and, during a review of the student's IEP, and, with the agreement of the student's parents/guardians, it is determined that the student has developed appropriate skills to enter the world of work, act responsibly as a citizen, and enjoy a fulfilling life, including but not limited to—
  - a) Gainful employment;

- b) Work activity centers;
- c) Sheltered workshops; or
- d) Supported employment.

2. The student has been enrolled in a special education program for four years beyond Grade 8 or its age equivalent and will have reached age 21 by the end of the school year.

D. Alternative Provisions for Earning Credit

1. Extended Day/Extended Year Programs

- a) After consultation with the school counselor, parents, and the approval of the home school principal, a student who successfully completed Grade 8 may use learning opportunities offered outside the regular school day or the regular school year to earn high school credit.
- b) The extended day/extended year program staff is responsible for notifying the student's home school of all grades and credits earned. Grades earned in the extended day/extended year program will be included in computing weighted and unweighted grade point averages.
- c) Students who are expecting to complete requirements for graduation from a Montgomery County high school during the summer session and who have been approved by their home school principal for this purpose will be issued diplomas upon the successful completion of graduation requirements. Diplomas are issued in the name of the home school and bear the signature of the principal of that school.

2. Courses Offered by Institutions Other than MCPS

- a) After consulting with his/her counselor and with the prior approval of the principal, a student may earn original or replacement credit for courses taken outside the regular school day or the regular school year, offered by institutions other than MCPS under the following conditions:

- (1) The course is not available to the student because it is not part of the MCPS curriculum, it is not offered at the student's school, or it does not fit into the student's schedule.
  - (2) The course provider must be accredited by a recognized accrediting agency or approved by MSDE or MCPS.
  - (3) Courses may be taken in a variety of formats including classroom, correspondence, or online instruction.
  - (4) Courses for which there are associated state required assessments may only be taken online through a course or program offered by either MCPS or MSDE. Students may not use these options for original credit.
- b) A principal's approval is dependent upon the student demonstrating that the course is equivalent to or exceeds the rigor and standards of a comparable course offered by MCPS in terms of the syllabus studied and a summative examination.
- c) MCPS will not reimburse tuition costs for coursework taken outside the regular school day or regular school year.
- d) Course credit value, weight, and notification
- (1) Each course must provide the student opportunity to demonstrate mastery of all content standards for the high school course(s) in which the student will receive credit and meet any other requirements established by the Maryland State Board of Education in terms of credit valuation.
  - (2) Unless otherwise approved through the Office of the Deputy Superintendent of Schools, a student will earn 0.5 high school credit toward fulfilling the 22-credit requirement for graduation for each 3-credit college course successfully completed through qualified MCPS dual enrollment programs or with preapproval of the principal for an individual student.
  - (3) Grades earned in courses at institutions other than MCPS will be included in the student's weighted and unweighted grade point averages unless the student elects the credit/no credit option.

- (a) The decision for the course(s) to be included in the student's record must be declared by the student by the 25th scheduled day of instruction for MCPS.
  - (b) If the course is recognized by the principal as an honors or advanced level course, the weighted grade point average will be computed by adding one quality point to the grade of A, B, or C.
- e) Students may retake a course taken at institutions other than MCPS. The course grade shall enter into the computation of weighted and unweighted grade point averages as described in Regulation IKC-RA, *Grade Point Averages (GPA) and Weighted Grade Point Averages (WGPA)*.
- f) A student may apply credits earned for coursework at institutions other than MCPS and receive a diploma when finished under the following conditions:
- (1) The plan to complete courses outside MCPS that meet graduation requirements must be preapproved in writing by the student's home school principal.
  - (2) The institution offering the course must report the student's grade in the course before credit and/or a diploma will be granted.
  - (3) Diplomas are issued in the name of the home school and must bear the signature of the principal of that school.

E. Job Entry Programs, Internships, or Other Experiences Outside the School

Work and experience outside the school are recognized as valid ways of learning. When part of a planned program and approved and supervised by the local school system, these experiences may be counted for credit. A student may earn no more than nine elective credits toward graduation in this way.

F. Independent Study

- 1. Independent study may vary in length of time from several weeks within a given course to a semester or longer. No more than four credits of independent study may be granted to a student toward meeting graduation requirements. These experiences may make available content and/or

materials and personnel resources of the local school not available or practical in regular classroom study.

Opportunities for independent study and eligibility requirements are established by the professional staff of the school with appropriate involvement of the student and parents.

2. In cooperation with the certified staff/mentor, student, and parent, the principal is responsible for developing procedures for achieving the following:
  - a) Reviewing , approving, and evaluating individual projects
  - b) Assuring that independent study opportunities are available to all students within the order of their requests and within the limits of staffing and funding
  - c) Approving/disapproving applications from students interested in participating in an independent study program
  - d) Approving/disapproving a request to do all or part of a study project outside the school building (Approval of the project requires the completion of MCPS Form 560-31: *Application to Participate in An Activity Away from School for Which MCPS Transportation is Not Provided.*)
  - e) Informing all students and staff of the possibility of an independent study program as a part of the students' school experience
  - f) Securing written authorization from the parent or guardian, if the student is not of the age of majority, for the student to participate in independent study activities away from the school, without which the student will be ineligible to participate
3. The student is responsible for initiating, planning, and producing evidence of learning under the supervision of an appropriately certified teacher.
4. The teacher is responsible for evaluating the student's mastery of course objectives, goals, or standards and recommends to the principal an appropriate grade and credit award.
5. When developing an independent study program, the school should make use of community resources when appropriate.

6. Procedures for recording student attendance must be developed to ensure that the students are marked "present" for the period of time they are participating in the program.

G. Alternatives to Four-Year Enrollment

Students shall satisfactorily complete four years of study beyond Grade 8 unless an alternative enrollment plan is developed and a waiver is approved as outlined in Section III.G.2.

1. Reasons for approving a waiver are as follows:
  - a) The student is accepted to an accredited college before high school graduation;
  - b) The student is accepted to an approved vocational, technical, or other postsecondary school program before high school graduation; or
  - c) The student enters high school at a chronological age greater than that of his or her grade level peers.
2. Procedures for developing an alternative enrollment plan and approving a waiver are as follows:
  - a) The student/parent obtains and completes MCPS Form 280-97: *Request for Waiver of the Fourth Year Enrollment Requirement* and submits the form to the school counselor with an updated Form 560-45, *Student Educational and Planning Worksheet* with enough lead time to allow a decision to be made at least one full semester prior to anticipated enrollment in a specific course or program.
  - b) The school counselor schedules a meeting with the student and parent to discuss the proposed program. The school counselor forwards his or her recommendation to the principal. Recommendation for approval may be made contingent upon acceptance to an approved college, vocational, technical, or other postsecondary school program.
  - c) As the superintendent's designee, the principal approves or disapproves the request and sends a copy of MCPS Form 280-97, *Request for Waiver of the Fourth Year Enrollment*

*Requirement* indicating the final decision to the student/parent.

3. General Educational Development (GED) Testing Program

The GED testing program is administered by MSDE and allows an individual to obtain a Maryland high school diploma by examination, consistent with state law.

**Regulation History:** Formerly Regulation No. 310-3, March 22, 1976; revised December 1986; revised May 17, 1988; revised July 20, 1994; revised July 23, 1997; revised May 14, 2008 .