



## Agreements with Technical Colleges

### Questions on Other Ways to Complete High School

**1. Which students have the right to attend a technical college for purposes of receiving high school graduation credit?**

Under Wis. Stat. § 118.15(1)(b), students who are 16 years of age or older and meet the statutory definition of children at risk under Wis. Stat. § 118.153(1)(a) may take classes at a technical college leading toward high school graduation. Wis. Stat. § 118.15(2)(a) requires a school district to pay for the student to attend.

Another option exists under the Start College Now program; see Question 30, below.

**2. What is the definition of being a child at risk?**

Under Wis. Stat. § 118.153(1)(a), children at risk means pupils in grades 5 to 12 who are at risk of not graduating from high school because they are dropouts, or are two or more of the following:

- One or more years behind their age group in the number of high school credits attained.
- Two or more years behind their age group in basic skill levels.
- Habitual truants.
- Parents.
- Adjudicated delinquents.
- Eighth grade pupils whose score in each subject area on the examination administered under Wis. Stat. § 118.30(1m)(am)1. or 118.30(1)(3) was below the basic level, eighth grade pupils who failed the examination under Wis. Stat. § 118.30(1m)(am)2., and eighth grade pupils who failed to be promoted to the ninth grade.

**3. When are districts required to enter into an agreement with the technical college?**

Prior to the student's admission to a technical college program leading to the student's high school graduation or a high school equivalency program, the student and their parent or guardian, the school board, and a representative of the high school equivalency program or high school completion program shall enter into a written agreement. Wis. Stat. § 118.15(1)(c)3.

**4. What are other ways that a student may attend the technical college under school district sponsorship?**

- Under Wis. Stat. § 118.15(1)(c)1., a child who is 16 years of age and who does not meet the statutory definition of being at risk, with the written permission of their parent or guardian, may request to attend a technical college to take classes leading to high school graduation. The school board is not required to grant this request.
- Under Wis. Stat. § 118.15(1)(c)2., any child who is 17 years of age or older, with the written permission of their parent or guardian, may request to attend a technical college to take classes leading to high school graduation or leading to a high school equivalency diploma (HSED). The school board is not required to grant this request. This option is considered GED Option #1 unless a district has been granted permission to operate a program under GED Option #2.
- Under Wis. Stat. § 118.15(1)(cm)1., if a child who is 17 years of age or older, with the written permission of their parent or guardian, began a program leading to a high school equivalency diploma (HSED) while in a secured correctional facility, a secured residential care center for children and youth, a juvenile detention facility, or a juvenile portion of the county jail and requests to finish the program at a technical college, the school board is required to grant this request and enter into a written agreement with the child, parent/guardian, and technical college. There is no educational cost to the public school or to the student, and the technical college must admit the student. See Wis. Stat. §§ 38.24(1m)(n)(b) and 118.15(1)(cm)43.

A student is considered to have begun a program leading to an HSED if the student has received a passing score on a minimum of one of the four content area tests given under the general educational development (GED) tests or has demonstrated under a course of study meeting the standards established under Wis. Stat. § 115.29(4) for the granting of a declaration of equivalency to high school graduation a level of proficiency in a minimum of one of the four content areas specified in Wis. Stat. § 118.33(1)(a)1 (the state minimum high school graduation credits) that is equivalent to the level of proficiency that they would have attained if they had satisfied those requirements.

**5. Who pays for transportation costs if the student attends a technical college under Wis. Stat. § 118.15(1)(b)?**

The school district of the student's residence is required to pay for the transportation under Wis. Stat. § 118.15(2)(d).

**6. Are parents permitted to pay to send their children to a technical college to acquire credits toward high school graduation?**

No. The Wisconsin Constitution guarantees a free education for children through age 20, provided that the student has not graduated from high school. Parents may pay for credits for expelled students or for a course not credited for high school graduation.

**7. Can students who are home-schooled attend the technical college during the hours that the public high school serving their area is in session?**

For home-schooled students who are age 16 or 17, attendance during regular school hours is permitted under Wis. Stat. § 38.22(1) and (1s), provided the desired course is not categorized as either an adult basic education or adult high school course. Home-schooled students who are age 15 or younger and meet the enrollment requirements may attend a technical college anytime during the summer recess and during evening hours when the local K-12 school is in session.

**8. What is the difference between GED and HSED?**

The GED test is the general educational development test that was developed by the American Council on Education and administered in Wisconsin at testing sites approved by the state superintendent and the American Council on Education. The GED test consists of a battery of tests to measure competency in math, science, social studies, and language arts. Persons who pass only the GED test battery qualify for a GED certificate issued by the Department of Public Instruction. This is the original program that was begun after World War II and is available for adults. Wisconsin also offers five High School Equivalency Diplomas (HSEDs), that are outlined in PI-5 (5.05, 5.06, 5.07, 5.08, and 5.09). High school students accessing the program through a Wis. Stat. § 118.15(c)3. written agreement must prepare for a 5.05 or 5.09 HSED. The 5.05, 5.06, and the 5.09 also require completion of health, citizenship, employability skills, and career awareness.

**9. Can a school district require a student to withdraw from special education services before entering a Wis. Stat. § 118.15 contract program with the technical college?**

No, a school district has a duty to provide needed special education services to each student with a disability.

**10. Can a student with a disability be denied access to an HSED program?**

A high school student with a disability who is at least 17 years of age cannot be denied access to an HSED program because of their disability. The Individualized Education Program (IEP) team determines which education program is appropriate to meet the needs of the student through the development of an Individualized Educational Program. The IEP team must consider program modifications and adaptations, supplemental aids and services, and program modifications and support for school personnel. In addition, the IEP team must consider special factors when developing the individualized education program which may include behavior, limited English proficiency, Braille, communication needs, and assistive technology. If an IEP team determines that a 17-year-old student's needs are best met through an HSED program, then the school district must enter into a written agreement for such services.

**11. Are school districts required to pay for special education services over and above general education costs at the technical college?**

Yes. The services may be provided by the public school, or the public school may contract with the technical college to provide services identified in the individualized education program. In either case, the school district is responsible for the costs of these services.

**12. When entering a written agreement with the technical college to enroll in an alternative program, must students be enrolled in a full day of instruction?**

No. Under Wis. Stat. § 118.15(1)(a), students may be excused from regular attendance; however, it is desirable for students to have a program which is equivalent in length to the full day provided pupils in the regular education program. The written agreement should specify the hours of instruction that will be provided. At the high school level, regular school attendance is 1,137 hours per year of instruction. Programs providing fewer hours of instruction should be justified based on student needs and an opportunity to learn. As a base, alternative education students should spend 15 hours per week in a learning environment.

**13. Must all attendance hours per week be spent on academics until the student completes the final test or competency?**

No. Students should participate in at least 10 hours of math, science, social studies, language arts, or health instruction each week until their instructors certify that they are academically prepared to complete all core requirements (competencies or tests). As students complete academic requirements, a larger portion of the students' 15 hours per week can be devoted to experiential training (e.g., vocational/technical college education, art, music, foreign language, or work experience). All students must

be continuously enrolled and attending the program until they finish their last competency or test.

**14. What is the current hourly rate for the Wis. Stat. § 118.15(2)(a) payment from a school board to a technical college?**

This rate changes annually. For the 2024-2025 school year, the hourly rate is \$16.95. This hourly rate does not include charges for special student services requested by the school district which are over and above those routinely provided to all technical college students.

**15. How do parents request approval for their children to attend a technical college?**

The parents must provide the local school board with written approval of the student's request to attend a technical college in lieu of high school or on a part-time basis. Prior to admission into the program at the technical college, the parent, the student, the technical college, and the school board are required to sign a written agreement.

**16. What are the components of the agreement between the school board and the technical college?**

The agreement should specify the following:

- Services which are to be provided.
- Time needed to complete the high school equivalency program or program leading to high school graduation, and
- How the performance of the student will be monitored.

Districts are required to monitor students' progress at least once each semester; however, districts that are concerned about a student's ability to comply with the requirements can monitor the student's compliance more often. Wis. Stat. § 118.15(1)(c)3.

**17. Must school boards notify students prior to modifying or suspending an agreement?**

Yes. Students must receive a 30-day notice before the agreement may be modified or suspended. Wis. Stat. §§ 118.15(1)(c)3. and (1)(cm)2.

**18. What types of courses may high school students take at a technical college in lieu of high school?**

Students may take general education subjects (i.e., math, science, English) at the technical college which lead to high school graduation. Nothing precludes a student from taking other technical college courses for elective credit. Note: Under Wis. Stat. § 118.33(3m), a course taken at a technical college by a student attending part-time or in

lieu of high school under Wis. Stat. § 118.15(1)(b), does not fulfill any of the high school graduation standards under Wis. Stat. § 118.33(1)(a), unless the state superintendent has approved the course for that purpose.

**19. How many credits do high school students receive for passing a three-credit technical college course?**

No specific formula exists for converting college credit to high school credit for Wis. Stat. § 118.15 courses. However, Wis. Admin. Code § PI 40.06(1)(d), the administrative code that governs the early college credit program through which high school students may take courses at public universities and private colleges, may offer some guidance. That rule provides that a school board shall evaluate a postsecondary course for high school credit using the same method and criteria it would approve a course the school board offered for high school credit.

**20. Is passing courses the only way that students may earn high school credit?**

No. Wis. Stat. § 118.33(1)(d) allows school boards to grant a high school diploma to a pupil who has not satisfied the course work requirements for graduation if that pupil has demonstrated a level of proficiency in the subjects required for graduation and has been enrolled in an alternative education program as defined in Wis. Stat. § 115.28(7)(e)1. If a student in an alternative program can demonstrate proficiency using means acceptable to their school district, course work in required subjects does not need to be completed. The student must still satisfy the civics test requirement to receive a high school diploma. Wis. Stat. § 118.33(d)3.

**21. When should a student be allowed to enter into an agreement under Wis. Stat. § 118.15 to pursue an HSED?**

By law, students must be at least 17 years of age to begin an HSED program. The requirement to request an age waiver for high school students who are ready to complete their last GED Test has been updated to a permanent rule change. This rule change became effective October 1, 2021:255 PI5. Students are no longer required to wait to take their last test or competency. This impacts high school students who are in an approved program such as GED Option #2, 118.15 contract students working on their High School Equivalency Diploma, and students who graduated from the Wisconsin Challenge Academy or Job Corps.

**22. When can a Wis. Stat. § 118.15 student receive their high school equivalency diploma?**

Since the permanent rule change, students will not need to wait to receive their HSED credential until the class with whom they entered grade 9 has graduated from high school or until the student has reached 18 years and 6 months of age. Students should

be counted with their cohort for WISEdata purposes. Local school boards can decide to award regular diplomas to students who complete an HSED, counting them as graduates Wis. Stat. § 118.33(1)(d).

**23. May a local school district prepare students to take the GED tests?**

Yes, local school districts that have applied to the Department of Public Instruction and received approval to offer the GED Option #2 (GEDO #2) program may prepare students who are at least 17 years of age to take the GED tests. See Questions 26, 27, and 28.

**24. May a local school district that has not been authorized to offer GED Option #2 contract with the technical college solely to allow a student to take the GED exams?**

No. Wis. Admin. Code § PI 5.035(1)(b) allows a person who is at least 17 years of age to begin taking the GED tests but the person may only take the final test if the person is continuously enrolled and attending a program under an agreement between the local high school and a local technical college or a community-based organization which leads to a high school equivalency diploma and meets the requirements under Wis. Stat. § 118.15(1)(c)2.

**25. What is the GED Option #2 Program?**

The GED Option #2 (GEDO #2) Program allows authorized school districts to use the GED test battery to measure proficiency in lieu of high school credit for students enrolled in an alternative education program. A student who passes the GED test(s) and completes the other requirements for graduation is entitled to the traditional high school diploma.

**26. How is it possible to use the GED/HSED to measure proficiency in lieu of high school credits?**

Wisconsin law allows a school district to issue a high school diploma to a student who has attained the required credits, or if all the following apply:

- The student is enrolled in an alternative education program, as defined in Wis. Stat. § 115.28(7)(e)1.; and
- The school board determines that the pupil has demonstrated a level of proficiency in the subjects for which credit is required equivalent to that which they would have attained if they had satisfied the credit requirements. Wis. Stat. § 118.33(1)(d).
- The student satisfies the civics test requirement under Wis. Stat. § 118.33(1m)(a).

The GED tests are a nationally normed, standards-based means of measuring high school competency.

## **27. How does a school district become authorized to offer GED Option #2?**

A school district seeking to offer GEDO #2 must apply to the Department of Public Instruction using PI-8201. In addition to submitting the narrative describing the district's proposed program, the district must also make the following assurances:

- Students served will be at least 17 years of age.
- Students will be at least one year behind their (ninth grade) class in credits earned.
- Students served should be able to demonstrate an ability to read at or above the ninth-grade level.
- A formal meeting(s) will be held before a student is allowed to begin a GEDO #2 program. This meeting will include a discussion of the educational options available to the student; the academic, attendance, and behavioral expectations of the student once in the program; and the anticipated goal of the program (traditional high school diploma). Educational options should also be discussed if a student completes academic preparation before they are eligible to take the final GED test. The student, their parent or guardian, the student's guidance counselor, principal, and at least one teacher (or their designees) must participate in the meeting(s).
- Students must volunteer for the program after participating in the meeting described above.
- A contract with the student, the student's parent/guardian(s), the school, and the GEDO program's coordinator outlining the hours of attendance, academic and behavioral expectations, and services to be provided by the school district will be signed.
- A student/teacher ratio of no more than 15:1 will be maintained in the GEDO #2 program.
- At least 15 hours of instruction are required each week. The student will be required to participate in at least 10 hours of math, science, social studies, language arts, or health instruction each week until their instructors certify that they are academically prepared to take the final GED test. At this point, a larger portion of the student's 15 hours per week can be devoted to experiential training (e.g., vocational/technical education, art, music, foreign language, or



work experience). All students must be continuously enrolled and attending the program until they take the final GED test.

- Students with disabilities will not be excluded from the program but must have a current IEP recommending participation in GEDO #2. The IEP must document any related aids and services necessary for successful completion of the program.
- Eighty percent (80%) or more of the students accepted for GEDO #2 must successfully complete the program and graduate with their class as a condition of program approval.
- Students participating in the GEDO #2 program will be required to meet the high school graduation requirements under Wis. Stat. § 118.33 or district policy.
- Students who successfully complete GEDO #2 requirements will be entitled to a traditional high school diploma issued by their school district and to participate in the same graduation ceremony as other high school graduates.
- Program data required by GED Testing Service will be collected and submitted to the Department of Public Instruction each year.

**28. When a student is open enrolled in another school district other than their district of residence (i.e., neighboring district, virtual school), how does a Wis. Stat. § 118.15 agreement work?**

When a student is full-time open enrolled into another school district and wants to enter a written agreement under Wis. Stat. § 118.15(1)(c)3., the student and parent enter into a written agreement with the school district where the student attends and the technical college where the student resides. All other requirements remain the same. For example, if a student who lives in Ashland is enrolled in the Monroe Virtual School, the written agreement would be with the student, parent, Monroe School District, and Northwood Technical College – Ashland Campus.

**29. Are there programs other than those provided pursuant to Wis. Stat. § 118.15 that would allow high school students to attend a technical college during the regular school day?**

Unless the student is participating in the Start College Now program, Wis. Stat. § 38.22 restricts students under the age of sixteen from attending a technical college during the hours of the normal school day. Students who have completed 10th grade may take courses at a technical college through the Start College Now program. The Start College Now program allows all public high school juniors and seniors who meet

certain requirements to take courses for high school and/or technical college credit at a technical college during the regular school day. See Wis. Stat. § 38.12(14).

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