
Graduation Requirements, Grading, and Class Promotion

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The purpose of this document is to provide an overview of state graduation requirements and to provide a brief summary of local authority around this issue, including grading and class promotion. In addition, it provides strategies to deal with the current situation of school closures related to a public health emergency.

Graduation Requirements

The state graduation requirements under [Wis. Stats. 118.33](#) total 15 credits including:

- English - 4 credits,
- Math - 3 credits,
- Science - 3 credits,
- Social Studies - 3 credits,
- Physical Education – 1.5 credits, and
- Health – 0.5 credits (in grades 7-12).

There is also a civics exam required for graduation.¹

Brief Summary of Local Authority and Actions

The state superintendent encourages school boards to require an additional 8.5 credits selected from any combination of vocational education (career and technical education), foreign languages, fine arts, and other courses. Most districts have graduation requirements that far exceed the state-required 15 credits. These additional credits are at the discretion of local school boards, and can be changed by action of a local school board. Each district determines what requirements are necessary to grant a high school diploma beyond the 15 credits required under state law.

Grading and Class Promotion

Course grades and class promotions are determined by school board policies and not by state requirements. Districts have latitude in determining what grades to award, if any, for coursework, and what coursework is required for credit attainment.

Current School Closure, Changes in Instruction, and Graduation

It is likely in your current senior population you have students who are in the following categories regarding graduation credits:

¹ The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction has developed [resources](#) to assist you in meeting the civics graduation requirement. Knowing that districts vary in their ability to meet this requirement, we have provided a [form](#) for you to request a waiver if it becomes necessary.

- Students who currently have attained the district graduation requirements, which would include the 15 state-required credits.
- Students who have completed the 15 state-required graduation credits but currently have not completed all the district requirements. Options:
 - a. School boards could decide to modify district policy to grant a high school diploma.
 - b. School boards could determine that coursework completed to-date is sufficient to award credit for the district-required graduation credits.
 - c. Districts could provide additional learning opportunities that students could complete at home to meet district requirements/credits for graduation.
- Students who have not met the minimum 15 state-required graduation credits but were on track to meet those requirements in current coursework had the school year not been suspended. Options:
 - a. School boards could determine that coursework completed to-date is sufficient to award credit for the state-required graduation credits.
 - b. Districts could provide additional learning opportunities that students could complete remotely to meet state requirements/credits for graduation.
 - c. School boards have an option to request a waiver from the state superintendent. School boards could request a waiver from the state-required high school graduation requirements for those students who were on track with current coursework for them to have completed all state-required high school graduation requirements had the school year not been suspended.
- Students who are further behind high school graduation attainment and who would not have been able to meet the state high school graduation requirements with the normal coursework currently taken prior to the end of the 2019-20 school year. Option:
 - a. School boards could provide targeted online resources for these students further behind in coursework attainment or consider summer school opportunities to complete coursework. Districts can get aid for virtual summer school for grades 7-12 if the class meets a graduation requirement. Waivers for this group of students would not be approved.

IDEA Considerations

Graduating with a regular high school diploma or reaching the maximum age of eligibility both result in a termination of a student's eligibility for Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) services. Procedurally, the student's Individualized Education Program (IEP) team must meet to review the student's status and issue the appropriate Notice of Graduation (P-3) or Notice of Ending Services Due to Age (P-4) a reasonable time before the student's eligibility is terminated. The local educational agency (LEA) must also provide the student a summary of performance prior to graduation or ending services due to age. As this is an issue of IDEA eligibility, the department recommends LEA's make extra effort to complete these steps in a timely manner.

Some IEP teams may have already provided a Notice of Graduation or Notice of Ending Services Due to Age to certain students. In these instances, LEAs should consider whether IEP teams should be convened to review the student's status in light of the extended school closure.

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