

High School Transition Policy

Frequently Asked Questions

Revised: March 4, 2009

Is the “capstone experience” described in the new high school policy a requirement or a recommendation?

Neither state board policy or the state rules and regulations require the capstone experience.

TN MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS FOR THE APPROVAL OF PUBLIC SCHOOLS (Rule 0520-1-3-.06) (2) Graduation Requirements states the following:

Effective with the ninth (9th) grade class of 2009-2010 and thereafter,

Local boards of education are encouraged to consider requirements for students to complete a capstone experience such as, but not limited to:

- (i) senior project
- (ii) Virtual Enterprise
- (iii) internship
- (iv) externship
- (v) work-based learning
- (vi) service learning (minimum of forty (40) hours)
- (vii) community service (minimum of forty (40) hours)

How is the department responding to the concerns of school districts regarding “Conceptual Physics?”

In our efforts to advance and support educational reform in all curriculum content areas, the Department is issuing this notice concerning a change in the name of a new science course. The course previously titled "Conceptual Physics" will now become "Physical World Concepts". Physical World Concepts focuses on providing students with a conceptual foundation in physics and is comprehensive and sequential in its scope. This course is designed to provide a strong foundation for all students for taking higher level science courses such as Physics 3231, and AP Physics. "Physical World Concepts" will ensure that students pursuing STEM as a post-secondary major will have the necessary preparation for success in college work.

This course will count as a Laboratory Course, not for the Physics Course.

Features of this course include:

A necessary first step in building a comprehensive foundation as a pre-requisite for learning physical, earth and life science concepts in subsequent high school courses.

For college bound as well as students who do not have the necessary math background to be successful in a traditional physics course.

Course content is sequenced, in a coherent manner to ensure deeper understanding of the content and associated mathematical relationships. Standards for Physical World Concepts include:

Inquiry

Mathematics

Technology and Engineering

Mechanics

Thermodynamics

Waves and Optics

Electricity and Magnetism

Nuclear Science

Embedded Mathematics strand enables students to utilize mathematical skills in much greater depth, e.g. analyzing, interpreting, articulating, assimilating, modeling, demonstration.

Instruction is inquiry-based and employs applications for technology and engineering.

Licensure and Training:

The endorsements required at this time for teaching Physical World Concepts are physics and/or chemistry. To clarify information previously announced related to Physical World Concepts, only teachers who are currently certified to teach Physics and Chemistry are eligible to teach this course. Professional development aimed at increasing the number of teachers who hold the chemistry and/or physics endorsement is being offered this summer for teachers who wish to teach in 2009-2010.

- Dr. Sheila Pirkle at APSU has scheduled a summer program that targets Physics content for teachers seeking a Physics endorsement.
- Teachers that are currently certified to teach Physics and Chemistry, a two-week project will be offered through TMSTEC at MTSU to encourage teachers to apply a pedagogical approach that addresses student math skills needed to be successful in Physical World Concepts. The Project Director for High School STEM Redesign, Dr. Richard Audet raudet@mtsu.edu <<mailto:raudet@mtsu.edu>> will be able to provide dates and details about the event as these become available.

For additional information about the Physical World Concepts course content or the professional development opportunities for teaching this course, please contact Linda Jordan, Science Coordinator,

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What are additional science related changes with the implementation of the new high school policy in 2009-2010?

Life Science will no longer be offered.

Agriscience may count as a laboratory science credit required for high school graduation for students currently in high school, as well as students who are incoming 9th graders beginning with the 2009-10 school year. Agriscience does not replace the Biology I requirement for students in either graduation grouping, nor does it replace the Physics requirement for students entering the 9th grade in 2009-10. Agriscience is currently accepted by University of Tennessee and Tennessee Board of Regents as one of the optional natural/physical science units required for college entrance. See the TBR and UT System school list of approved lab science courses.

Biology I and the Biology I course previously named Biology for Technology will be taught with the Biology I 3210 curriculum standards and be recorded with the same course number (3210). Biology instructors must have a Biology endorsement. Biology students will take the same end of course exam. If the course is taught with the previously named Biology for Technology contextual methodology approach, it will be designated with an internal fifth digit on the end of the course code to indicate compliance with CTE federal guidelines concerning training, class size, etc.

Can an AP course fulfill BOTH core requirements AND satisfy the requirement of an elective focus if a student elects to have an AP focus?

Yes. There are no AP courses in the core requirements as there are in the other focus areas. Dr. Gary Nixon, Executive Director of the State Board of Education has provided some examples of what focus areas might look like on his blog at: www.garynixon.wordpress.com

The intent was to let CORE subjects in AP and IB count to meet the AP or IB Elective Focus in order to encourage more students to take AP and IB courses. While the AP and IB elective focus courses may not be beyond or on top of the core courses the way we count them for a math and science elective focus, they truly are beyond or deeper than the content of the regular core classes they replace.

Is graduating with Honors determined solely on ACT or do local boards have options?

Students who score at or above all of the subject area readiness benchmarks on the ACT or equivalent score on the SAT will “graduate with Honors.” Local boards of education have the flexibility to go beyond “graduating with “Honors” by establishing an “Honors” program.

When will the Bridge Math course standards be ready?

As this is a senior level course, plans are to have the course developed within an appropriate time frame for those students (next year's 9th graders) who fall under the new high school policy.

Do Algebra IA & IB have to be completed in a calendar or school year?

Algebra I A and I B must be completed in the same **academic** (fall, spring, summer) year for regular education students. There are separate modifications for Students with Disabilities (SWD). See the questions related to SWD at the end of this document.

There is a reference to "exceptional circumstances" in which Foreign Language may be waived. What are those circumstances? What is the accountability?

The "exceptional circumstances" provision in the new high school policy was designed to allow for the required Fine Art and Foreign Language requirements (3 credits) to be waived for students who are sure they are not going to attend a University and be replaced with courses designed to enhance and expand a CTE elective focus. The (3 credits) would be replaced by three courses in a CTE program of study to enhance and expand that CTE focus. This provision might be used for other scenarios. The elective focus may be CTE, science and math, humanities, fine arts, AP/IB, **or other areas approved by the local board of education.**

When will the rest of the EOCs be ready?

The answer is dependent on funding. The most likely sequence after Algebra I, English II, and Biology I is Algebra II and English III as college and career ready anchors in conjunction with English I and US History (these two could be ready very quickly). Finally, Chemistry, Geometry, and Physics would be the last to come on line.

The FAQ references certain documented exceptions in which a SWD may earn a regular diploma w/o 22 credits. What are those exceptions?

The FAQ response to the question "What will SWD have to do to qualify for a regular diploma" is: Students with disabilities must complete the required 22 credits with certain documented exceptions. To clarify, SWD must earn 22 credits, however, there are modifications for SWD that are detailed in the state board policy and described in the last answer on the FAQ. (What modifications will be made to the graduation requirements for students with disabilities?) The purpose of these modifications is to provide needed flexibility for SWD to earn those required 22 credits.

Recently the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) issued a letter stating that students with an IEP were eligible for all services regardless of their disability. For the math requirements, the state policy says the student must have a qualifying disability in math in order to get the accommodations such as increased seat time and an alternate assessment. Does this not go against OSEP's advice?

34 CFR 300.320(a)(6)(i) provides that an IEP team must include in a child's IEP " a statement of any individual appropriate accommodations that are necessary to measure the academic achievement and functional performance of the child on State and district-wide assessments, consistent with section 612(a)(16) of the Act." Since the federal regulation supersedes the state policy, children with disabilities must be afforded accommodations as provided by the IDEA. The letter referred to in the question is *Letter to Anonymous*, June 3, 2008, where in OSEP reiterates its longstanding position that special education and related services are based on the identified needs of the child and not on the disability category in which the child is classified. In developing the child's IEP, the factors that the child's IEP Team must consider include the strengths of the child, the concerns of the parent for enhancing the education of their child, the results of the child's initial or most recent evaluation, and the academic, developmental, and functional needs of the child. The guidance of the letter is consistent with 34 CFR 300.320 and Tennessee special education rules and regulations.

Will teachers with a SPED endorsement be able to teach a core class, offered for high school credit if they are highly qualified in that course but not licensed?

An appropriately endorsed SPED teacher who has demonstrated HQ status in a core content area may serve as the teacher of record and award credit to SPED students (only). The department recommends that school districts make every effort to place special education students in general education classes whenever possible, and to begin the process of getting S.E. teachers endorsed in the core academic courses they are to teach. This is not mandatory at this time, but the state anticipates that it will be mandated in the near future.

What online professional development is available from the state?

The Tennessee Department of Education has launched the Electronic Learning Center (ELC). This resource provides students, teachers, and parents educational resources any time and any where. The ELC can be accessed at www.TNelc.org. At the top of the page click iTunes. Scroll down and click on OPEN TDE on iTunes. If it doesn't open, you may be on the static page, click on the itunes icon.

How is the role of the school counselor affected in planning for implementation of the new policy for the freshman class of 2009-2010?

Six year plans have been required by State Board of Education policy for some time. This is not a new initiative. The difference is now we are asking schools and school counselors to be accountable for working with students and parents not only on creating a six year plan but also using it as an advising tool throughout high school. The six year plan is to be created in the spring of the 8th grade year. It outlines the courses students plan to take in their 4 years of high school plus their potential plans 2 years after high school. There is flexibility with these plans (if schools use them appropriately). The plans should be reviewed each year by the school counselor or teacher advisor, parent and student. Changes may be made at any time.

Does the new graduation policy allow a student to graduate in less than 4 years? If so, how does that affect the math requirement?

Yes, students may graduate early. The policy requires students to take a math course each year while in high school. The purpose is to be and stay ready mathematically for college and not to skip a year. The policy also requires four units of math to be completed (i.e. Algebra I, Geometry, Algebra II (or their equivalent) and an additional advanced math credit). This means a student will take one math course each year. However, a student may accelerate and graduate early as long as they complete the 4 credits of math and take math each year that they are enrolled in school.

What is an Elective Focus/Program of Study?

These are interchangeable terms that relate the concept of a student completing at least three units in a related academic or CTE area. The State Board of Education's "High School Policy" requires that all students, beginning with the 9th grade class of 2009-2010, complete an approved academic elective focus or a CTE program of study.

What are the approved areas of elective focus?

The elective focus may be CTE, science and math, humanities, fine arts, AP/IB, or other areas approved by the local board of education. Students completing a CTE elective focus must complete three units in the same CTE program area. To complete an approved focus in Trade and Industrial (T & I), three courses must be in one of the following:

- Transportation
- Manufacturing
- Construction
- Criminal Justice
- Cosmetology
- Culinary Arts
- Communication
- Arts

In regard to Programs of Study (POS), if a student in a POS such as marketing uses a marketing course to substitute as an economics credit; does the student take 2 or 3 more marketing courses to complete the marketing elective focus?

Students must take three elective classes in the POS whether they substitute or not, so in the above scenario, they would take two more in addition to the marketing course substituting for economics. Students would receive one credit in marketing and satisfy the requirement for .5 credit in economics.

For an academic elective focus, what are the requirements?

For math and science, three additional math and/or science courses (electives) are required in addition to the four math and three science required courses. For a humanities focus, any combination of courses in English, Language Arts, Foreign Language and Social Studies above the core requirements will satisfy the humanities focus area. Fine arts require any three courses above the core requirements.

Can high school courses taken in the middle school count toward an elective focus?

Courses taken in middle school may count toward the required core courses. Algebra I, for example, taken in eighth grade, would count toward the core requirement; the core plus three additional courses in math and/or science could complete the elective focus. Remember, a student will still be required to take at least one math course each year regardless of how many credits a student earns in middle schools.

Does foreign language taken in 8th grade count as a core credit or an elective focus credit?

It would count as a required credit. An elective focus is three credits PLUS the core requirements. In this case, 2 foreign language credits plus 3 additional credits would complete the focused program of study in humanities.

Are all students required to meet the foreign language requirement?

In exceptional circumstances, schools may waive the foreign language requirement for students who are not planning to attend a university to expand and enhance their elective focus. In this case, students could take an additional three credits to enhance or add a program of study.

What about four credits of JROTC? Would that count as an elective focus?

JROTC is not a state recognized elective focus area, but a local education agency is permitted to approve this, or any other, set of related courses to meet the requirement.

If a student earns 4 JROTC credits, are they able to waive personal finance, US Government, Lifetime Wellness and Physical education?

Yes, if the local education agency allows the substitution. Remember, in order for JROTC to satisfy the US government requirement, the instructor must also meet the highly qualified requirements for teaching government.

Will JROTC substitute for Lifetime Wellness and PE or just Lifetime Wellness?

Yes, two years of JROTC may substitute for Lifetime Wellness requirement and one additional year may substitute for PE requirement.

With regard to contextual academic courses (Technical Algebra, Technical Geometry, Communications for Life, and Principles of Technology I/II), are these courses acceptable by all of the following: TBR, UT system, and NCAA?

TBR and UT publish a list of courses approved for credit. NCAA requirements must be determined on a case by case basis. Communication for Life will be listed as English IV beginning in 2009-10 course codes document.

When using courses to substitute for required courses such as technical geometry, technical algebra, principles of technology I/II, economics, personal finance, lifetime wellness, PE, etc; how should these substitutions be adequately reflected on the transcript?

See above. Note that most of the contextual academic course titles will be changed in the 2009-10 course codes document to reflect its academic counterpart. The transcript may simply reflect the course that substitutes and not the course it substitutes for.

Can the additional ½ credit in physical education be met by marching band?

Yes. The physical education requirement may be met by substituting a documented and equivalent time of physical activity in other areas including marching band, JROTC, cheerleading, interscholastic athletics, and school sponsored intramural athletics, or other areas (such as dance) approved by the local board of education.

How should a substitution for the .5 PE (such as band participation, sports, cheerleading) be reflected on the transcript?

The system may choose how they reflect the participation on the transcript, with notation that it substitutes for the half credit in PE.

What are the criteria for graduating with distinction?

Students will be recognized as graduating with “distinction” by attaining a B average and completing at least one of the following:

- earn a nationally recognized industry certification
- participate in at least one of the Governor’s Schools
- participate in one of the state’s All State musical organizations
- be selected as a National Merit Finalist or Semi-Finalist
- attain a score of 31 or higher composite score on the ACT
- attain a score of 3 or higher on at least two advanced placement exams
- successfully complete the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme
- earn 12 or more semester hours of transcribed postsecondary credit

Each local school board shall develop a policy prescribing how students graduating with “distinction” will be noted and recognized.

What endorsement is needed to teach Principles of Technology I and II?

.A teacher must be endorsed in Chemistry or Physics to teach Principles of Technology I.

Teachers who teach this course must hold proper endorsement and have attended the state-approved, five-day training. This course may satisfy a laboratory science credit required for graduation

A teacher must be endorsed in Chemistry or Physics to teach Principles of Technology II.

Teachers who teach this course must hold proper endorsement and have attended the Principles of Technology I state-approved, five-day training. This course satisfies one science credit required for graduation. The completion of Principles of Technology I and II is equivalent to Physics.

What mathematics courses are required for graduation?

The new policy requires students to take a mathematics course each year while in high school to complete a 4 credit core that must include Algebra I, Geometry, and Algebra II (or the equivalent of these courses) and one advanced math course. **Students must be enrolled in a mathematics course each school year.** The Bridge Math course is designed for students who have not scored 19 or higher on the ACT by the beginning of the senior year and is in the development stage.

See the TBR and UT list of courses to identify accepted math courses.

Can regular education students take an Algebra IA and Algebra IB course of study?

Yes, however, the A course earns elective credit only. The mathematics credit is awarded with the B course. Students must complete both the A and B course within the same school calendar year. Further, the A course will not count as part of a student's elective focus. For guidance regarding students with disabilities, refer to the section at the end of this document. Note. Course codes will be developed for the A and B options. Systems will no longer be required to complete a special course application for A and B courses beginning with the 2009-2010 school year.

What math course should students take after completing Algebra II?

Currently, many students have access to STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, & Mathematics) focused courses such as Pre-Calculus, Calculus, Discrete Mathematics, Statistics, Advanced Algebra & Trig. or an Advanced Placement course. These options will still be available to any student who wishes to take them according to local school board policy. The state is developing options for students who do not wish to take a traditional STEM course.

Under the new high school policy when should students take Algebra I?

Local school systems can choose to offer an Algebra I course prior to high school and award high school credit; however, students will still be expected to complete a four year course of study while in high school. The standard course of study for the middle grades will prepare all students for a comprehensive Algebra I course in the 9th grade.

What is an enrichment level math course?

There is no terminology for "enrichment" math courses in the high school policy. However, Foundations Math I & II will continue to be offered as elective math credit courses only. The Foundations Math courses may be used concurrently with an algebra level course during the ninth grade. The Technical Mathematics course (equivalent to a Foundations course) will no longer be offered.

Must Algebra I and/or Geometry be taken in high school or can a student accelerate to take 4 years of higher math and still fulfill math core requirements?

The student may take courses for credit prior to high school, but still must complete one math course each of their four years in high school. Students may only “accelerate” in anticipation of taking very rigorous courses during the junior and senior year, not to complete math requirements early. This type of acceleration may allow students to create a more robust elective focus.

Can students earn 2 credits in math in one year? (Geometry/Algebra II in same year)? What if a student earns 4 math credits in 3 years (non-middle school), do they need to take an additional year of math their senior year?

Students may earn multiple math credits in one year, but they must still complete a math course each year they are enrolled. These students will graduate with a number of credits well above the minimums required for graduation.

What will SWD have to do to qualify for a regular diploma?

Students with disabilities must complete the 22 credits required with certain documented exceptions.

What are the additional exit options for SWD?

A Transition Certificate may be awarded to SWD who, at the end of the 4th year of high school, have failed to earn a regular diploma (22 units of credit) but have satisfactorily completed an IEP, and have satisfactory records of attendance and conduct.

SWD may continue to work towards the high school diploma through the end of the school year in which they turn twenty-two years old.

An IEP certificate will be awarded to SWD who have (1) satisfactorily completed an IEP, (2) successfully completed a portfolio, and (3) have satisfactory records of attendance and conduct. This replaces the old “Special Education Diploma”

When will the modified tests for SWD be in place for grades 3-8?

The Modified Academic Achievement Standards assessment (MAAS) will be field tested in Spring 2009 and be operational in Spring 2010.

What modifications will be made to the graduation requirements for students with disabilities?

Students with qualifying disabilities as documented in the IEP shall be required to achieve at least Algebra I and Geometry (or equivalent). The required number of credits in math will be achieved through increased instructional time, appropriate methodologies, accommodations and other differentiated instruction as determined by the IEP team. These students may earn mathematics credit for Algebra IA and for Algebra IB as well as math credit for Geometry A and Geometry B.

Students with qualifying disabilities as documented in the IEP are required to achieve at least Biology I and two other lab science credits. The required number of credits in science will be achieved through increased instructional time, appropriate methodologies, and accommodations and other differentiated instruction, as determined by the IEP team. Note: Only one additional lab course is needed if Biology IA and IB are taken for credit.

Students failing to earn a yearly grade of 70 or higher in a course that has an end-of-course test and whose disability adversely affects performance in that test will be allowed, through an approved process, to add to their end-of course assessment by demonstrating the state identified core knowledge and skills contained within that course through an alternative performance-based assessment. These assessments will be in place by the beginning of the 2009-2010 school year.