



STATE OF ALABAMA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



Thomas R. Bice
State Superintendent
of Education

January 18, 2013

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of Education

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MEMORANDUM

TO: City and County Superintendents
FROM: Thomas R. Bice ^{TRB}
State Superintendent of Education
RE: New Alabama High School Diploma

The new high school diploma was approved at the Alabama State Board of Education meeting last week. As you know, the draft of the new diploma has been shared in many venues over the last few months, and many of you provided feedback that resulted in positive adjustments. Enclosed is a copy of the new diploma requirements and Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) for you to share with your staff. The FAQs will remain on the Alabama State Department of Education Web site and will be updated as more questions are asked. To access the FAQs click the Offices tab, Office of Student Learning page, Publications tab: <http://www.alsde.edu/html/sections/documents.asp?section=900&footer=sections>.

Thank you for your continued enthusiasm and support as we seek ways to ensure college- and career-readiness for our students.

TRB:JPH:SSM

Enclosures

cc: Curriculum Directors

FY13-2036

NEW ALABAMA HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA

AREAS OF STUDY	REQUIREMENTS	CREDITS
English Language Arts	English 9, 10, 11, and 12 or any AP/IB/postsecondary equivalent option of these courses	4
Mathematics	Algebra I, Geometry, and Algebra II w/ Trig or Algebra II, or their equivalent. Additional course(s) to complete the four credits in mathematics must be chosen from the <i>Alabama Course of Study: Mathematics</i> or CTE/AP/IB/postsecondary equivalent courses.	4
Science	Biology and a physical science The third and fourth science credits may be used to meet both the science and CTE course requirement and must be chosen from the <i>Alabama Course of Study: Science</i> or CTE/AP/IB/postsecondary equivalent courses	4
Social Studies	World History, U.S. History x 2, and Government/Economics or AP/IB/postsecondary equivalent courses.	4
Physical Education	LIFE (Personal Fitness) One JROTC credit may be used to meet this requirement	1
Health Education	<i>Alabama Course of Study: Health Education</i>	0.5
Career Preparedness	Career Preparedness Course (Career and Academic Planning, Computer Applications, Financial Literacy)	1
CTE and/or Foreign Language and/or Arts Education	Students choosing CTE, Arts Education, and/or Foreign Language are encouraged to complete two courses in sequence.	3
Electives		2.5
Total Credits Required for Graduation		24

This one approach to the Alabama High School Diploma removes the need for endorsements or the Alabama Occupational Diploma. The focus will be on the coursework taken that necessitates a clearly articulated and individualized four-year high school plan built for each student based on the results from the EXPLORE academic and career interest assessment and middle school coursework.

**New Alabama High School Diploma
Frequently Asked Questions
January 18, 2013**

- 1. When will the new diploma be implemented?**
 - This will apply to all students beginning with the ninth-grade class in 2013-14.
- 2. Are school systems allowed to have a locally developed tiered diploma (Magna Cum Laude, etc.)?**
 - Yes.
- 3. Will this replace all variations of the diploma as in the advanced diploma?**
 - Yes. Local education agencies (LEAs) may add endorsements.
- 4. What is the purpose in making this change?**
 - The purpose for the change is to allow more flexibility for students in pursuing their interests. There are many differences in the courses students may take with this diploma; everyone will not take the same courses just because there is one diploma. Also, LEAs may add requirements for additional diplomas.
- 5. Will any high stakes test be attached to the requirements for receiving this diploma?**
 - No.
- 6. How do we obtain approval for locally developed courses to count as an equivalent course?**
 - Locally developed CTE courses must be submitted to the CTE Section.
 - Locally developed core courses (Mathematics, English, Science, and Social Studies) must be submitted to the Curriculum Section.
 - Once submitted to either Section, a cross-sectional team will review courses for alignment to standards and approval for equivalent credit.
- 7. What are the CTE equivalent courses that can be used to satisfy math, science, Computer Application, or CTE requirements?**
 - Currently, there are only equivalent courses for science. They are:
 - Aquascience—Aquaculture Science
 - Chemistry—Chemistry of Food
 - Environmental Science—Environmental Management
 - Forensic Science—Forensic and Criminal Investigations
 - Genetics—Introduction to Biotechnology
 - Human Anatomy and Physiology—Human Body Structures and Functions
 - Botany-Plant Biotechnology

8. Can a CTE course be used to meet the math requirement and also be used to meet the CTE/Foreign Language/Arts Ed requirement?

- Yes, it could be used to meet the requirement, but a student cannot earn two credits for the same course. So, the student would have the opportunity to earn an additional credit. Also, the CTE class must be an approved equivalent course for math.

9. Under math requirements, what is meant by “or its equivalent” after the Algebra II requirement?

- Algebra II, Algebra II with Trigonometry, or an approved equivalent course is required. Currently, a course is being developed as an equivalent option for Algebra II.

10. Is there a minimum level of math required for graduation?

- Yes. The minimum level is Algebra I, Geometry, Algebra II/Algebra II with Trigonometry, or the equivalent of any of these and one additional math course.

11. What sort of credentials or certificates will be required of CTE teachers whose courses meet the requirements to count as a math or science credit? How will this affect HQ status?

- The current requirements of certification remain in place at this time.

12. How will the new diploma affect HQ? Will there be any flexibility as it relates to HQ for any of the subject areas?

- At this time, HQ remains in place. However, we are pursuing what can be done related to HQ flexibility.

13. Currently, students can choose either 3 CTE courses for the AHSD/Advanced Career and Technical Endorsement or the AHSD/Career and Technical Endorsement (based on which math the student completes) or an Advanced Academic Endorsement by adding two of the same foreign language courses.

a. With the new diploma, can the student choose any of the following combinations?

- 2 Foreign Language courses (same language) and 1 CTE or 1 Art course = 3
- 3 CTE courses and no foreign language and no Art = 3
- 2 CTE courses and 1 foreign language or 1 Art course = 3
- 1 CTE course, 1 foreign language and 1 ART = 3

- Yes; however, 10th, 11th, and 12th graders in 2013-14 will follow previous requirements.

b. Will students still be required to take an Arts Education course?

- No.

- 14. There was much discussion about the two courses in CTE, foreign language and/or art. Some administrators believe the arts may suffer from loss of enrollment. What was the rationale for grouping these together? Many students have an interest in two or three of these areas.**
- Actually, this should foster greater opportunity for arts classes. There should be enough elective credits available for students to take additional courses in subjects of interest including art. Also, students may choose to take two sequential courses in one area and one additional course in another area or all three in one area.
- 15. If students are “encouraged” to take two courses in sequence in CTE, Art, or a foreign language, does that mean that taking one of each type course is also allowed (although not encouraged)?**
- Yes, it is allowed. Some pathways may require two courses in the same area, for example a CTE pathway, in order to achieve certification/credentials in a specific CTE field.
- 16. What happens if a student transfers and the student had chosen not to take a foreign language at the previous school and the new school requires a foreign language?**
- Foreign Language is not a requirement for the Alabama High School Diploma. Each district determines how to fairly acknowledge previously earned credits.
- 17. According to the CTE and/or Foreign Language and/or Arts Education credits to be acquired, is it a possibility that a student could complete high school with three (3) years of foreign language? In other words, they can graduate without taking either art or a foreign language.**
- Yes.
- 18. For clarification—this reflects THREE consecutive years of the same foreign language to graduate. Is that accurate? This would be a change necessitating the hiring of more teachers.**
- No. A student may take three consecutive years of foreign language, arts, or CTE. However, he/she may choose to take only one of each.
- 19. What Arts Education courses can fulfill the Arts Education requirement(s)?**
- Any courses from the *Alabama Course of Study: Arts Education*.

20. Does the Career Preparedness Course have to be taught in ninth grade? Does it have to be taught as a one credit course?

- No, each LEA is encouraged to determine the most appropriate grade for the course to be offered for students.
- It is a one-credit course, but it may be taught as two one-half credits. In other words, students may take the Part A—College and Career Planning/Computer Applications portion in one grade and then Part B—Financial Literacy can be taught in a different grade. Or, the course can be taught as a whole credit in Grades 9-12.
- Outcomes for this class are the most important factor to consider. This can be one of the most important courses that students take to help them plan and prepare for college and careers.

21. Will the Online Experience no longer be required when the proposed Alabama High School Diploma is adopted?

- There is no indication that this requirement would be dropped. This requirement can be satisfied in the new Career Preparedness course.

22. Will we be able to offer Business Technology Applications (BTA) in the eighth grade? Would we be able to offer personal finance in the eighth grade?

- BTA may be offered in Grade 8 with an approved waiver from the ALSDE. This course offers foundation standards for Personal Finance. The financial literacy component of the new Career Preparedness course is very rigorous and may only be taught in Grades 9-12.

23. Can we still issue an AOD in May to a student who has met all the requirements of the AOD?

- Yes, the new diploma will not be available until the beginning of the school year 2013-14. Meaning, the first group to take advantage of the new diploma will be ninth graders beginning with the 2013-14 school year.

24. When the IEP Teams meet in the spring to develop the annual IEP, how will we complete the transition page of the IEP that includes selecting a diploma option and determining a course of study/program credits to be earned? Was it revised to have just the one diploma option?

- At this time, the form has not been revised. For next year's 10th and 11th grade students who are currently pursuing an AOD, the ALSDE will allow LEAs to issue a regular diploma to students who have earned course credit for the AOD. For ninth graders in the 2013-14 school year, the IEP Team should choose the AHSD because that will be the only option available when they graduate.

25. Will the work component be a requirement for students with disabilities?

- Cooperative Education Seminar/Work-Based Experience will be required for any students with disabilities earning core credits through Essentials/Life Skills courses (formerly known as AOD courses).

26. Can we count the AOD students as graduates this school year?

- Yes.

27. Will this be the last year of AOD or will current 9th, 10th, and 11th special education students that are currently working toward an AOD remain on AOD until they graduate?

- Students currently working toward an AOD who will be 10th and 11th graders next year may receive a regular diploma if they earn course credit for the AOD. Ninth graders in 2013-14 will be the first class to work towards the new diploma.

28. Will AOD students be required to take the AHSGE to earn a regular diploma?

- This year's 12th graders and next year's 12th graders will be required to take the AHSGE as their nondisabled peers must do to earn a diploma.

29. Will the content/curriculum standards for special education and regular education students be the same or will there be a Curriculum Guide similar to the ones that are in place now for AOD students?

- There are Curriculum Guides for special education students. The guides can be found at <http://alex.state.al.us/specialed/curriculum.html>.
- All students must follow the requirements of the selected pathway leading to the Alabama High School Diploma. We anticipate continuing to develop the Curriculum Guides as the Alabama Courses of Study are revised.

30. Are only IDEA eligible students able to take the "AOD/Essential Coursework" Pathway classes or are we opening up this pathway/coursework to nondisabled students?

- Nondisabled students may take Essential courses/Life Skills courses as per the student's four-year plan.

- 31. Will special education students who receive the regular/standard diploma be able to return to school to work on transition skills even though they have received a “terminal” diploma?**
- Yes, we would still require LEAs to allow students who received a regular diploma through the “AOD/Essential coursework” pathway or “AAA” pathway to return to school to work on transitional/life skills until age 21.
- 32. When will training be scheduled for Special Education Coordinators on the proposed Alabama High School Diploma?**
- Training for all school personnel will be determined at a later date.
- 33. Will the students on certificates be involved in this or will this be an IEP Team’s decision for those students with cognitive deficits?**
- Yes, Alternate Achievement Standards courses for these students will count toward the required credits for graduation.
- 34. Have plans been made for articulating the new requirements to two- and four-year colleges in the state of Alabama?**
- Yes.
- 35. Will you provide LEAs with College- and Career-Choice forms for building student educational plans and explaining the new diploma requirements to the community and parents?**
- Yes.