

**Missoula County Public School**  
**2410P**  
INSTRUCTION

High School Graduation Requirements

Publication of Graduation Requirements

Prior to registering in high school, each student will be provided with a copy of the current graduation requirements. Graduation requirements shall also be included in the student handbook.

Credits

Students shall be expected to earn a total of 24 credits in order to complete graduation requirements, unless the student has been granted permission to work toward the Special Circumstances Diploma as outlined below. Special education students who have successfully completed their IEP leading to completion of high school will be awarded a diploma.

MCPS Graduation Requirements - Standard Diploma

Missoula County Public Schools requires that students entering the District earn a minimum of 24 credits to graduate.

- 4 credits of English language arts
- 3 credits of mathematics
- 2.5 credits of social studies (includes one year of American History, one year of US Govt. OR **equivalent social studies courses**, and one semester of social science elective)
- 2 credits of science (includes one year of earth & space and one year of biological science OR **equivalent science courses**)
- 2 credits of health enhancement
- 1 credit of arts (music, drama or visual art)
- 1 credit of career and technical education
- 8.5 credits of elective coursework

Waiver of Requirement

Graduation requirements generally will not be waived under any circumstances, except in the Special Circumstances Diploma option outlined below and which are approved by the principal. In other situations, the Board may waive specific course requirements based on individual student needs and performance levels. Waiver requests shall also be considered with respect to age, maturity, interest, and aspirations of the students and shall be in consultation with the parents or guardians.

Substitution of Requirement

In some circumstances the building principal may decide to substitute a graduation requirement with a similar course in a similar subject area, provided that the student still meets the 24 minimum credit requirement. Any substitution decision should be made in collaboration with the

school counselor, considering the student's graduation plan. A substitution does not require Board approval.

### Alternative Programs

A student may be given credit for a course satisfactorily completed in a period of time shorter or longer than normally required and, provided that the course meets the district's curriculum and assessment requirements, which are aligned with the content standards stated in the education program. Credit toward graduation requirements may be granted for planned learning experiences from accredited programs, such as summer school, university courses, and correspondence courses, extension, and distance learning courses, adult education, summer school, work study, work-based learning partnerships, and other experiential learning opportunities, custom-designed courses, and challenges to current courses. The administration shall accept units of credit taken with the approval of the District and which appear on the student's official school transcript. Credit for work experience may be offered when the work program is a part of and supervised by the school.

### Transcript, Credit Recovery, and Grade Point Average

All classes attempted at Missoula County High Schools and all acceptable transfer credits shall be recorded on the transcript. All grades earned, including failures and retakes, shall be recorded as such on the transcript. For retake courses, the highest grade earned will be used in the calculation of the GPA and class rank.

### Pass/Fail Grades

In special circumstances, the administration may approve a course to be offered for a Pass/Fail grade. Credit will be earned for a grade of PASS, but the grade will not be calculated in the GPA. Credit will not be earned for a grade of FAIL and the grade will be calculated in the GPA. Exceptions to this process may be granted through the IEP or 504 process.

### Honor Roll

A student must have a minimum grade-point average of 3.00 to be placed on the regular honor roll. Specific information regarding honors at graduation are included in the student handbook.

### Class Rank

Class Rank is compiled from semester grades. Courses not eligible for GPA are designated with an asterisk on the report card. When considering transfer credits, for the purpose of class rank, only those courses taken in an accredited school will be used in the calculation of class rank. Dual enrollment or University courses may be considered in the GPA calculation and/or class rank, when approved.

### Dual Credit

Dual credit allows high school students to simultaneously earn credit toward both a high school diploma and college coursework that can lead to a postsecondary degree or certificate, or toward transfer to another college. The primary purpose of offering dual credit courses is to deliver high quality, introductory, college level courses to high school students. MCPS has dual

credit partnerships with a variety of post-secondary institutions. Students interested in dual credit opportunities must meet with their building administration or school counselor to determine available options. Students should be aware of Montana High School Association on-campus attendance eligibility requirements for activity participation.

### Online Learning

Students wishing to enroll in online courses\* should seek approval from their Building administrator and counselor. The guidelines for enrollment in online courses are as follows:

- Generally, the Montana Digital Academy (MTDA) or the Missoula Online Academy (MOA) are the preferred options for online courses. Students wishing to take an online course for original credit or credit recovery will be directed to one of these programs first. If these programs do not fit the needs of the individual student, other online programs may be approved by building administration or designee.
- There are no fees for MTDA or MOA online courses, if the course will be used to complete a graduation requirement or for credit recovery. However, if the course is to be used for enrichment, there may be an associated course fee to enroll. Programs outside of MTDA or MOA may assess a course fee.
- Prior to 9th grade, students may be allowed to enroll in an online course for enrichment or course advancement. This must be approved by both the middle school and high school administrator, prior to enrollment. Credits will be awarded for these courses as outlined in the next section called “Credits for high school courses taken before 9th”
- Full time, 9th, 10th and 11th grade students enrolled in an MCPS high school may enroll in one online course, each semester during the regular school year. Exceptions to this process may be granted by the building administrator for certain circumstances (ex: IEP, 504, homebound or approved early graduation plan).
- Seniors enrolled at an MCPS high school may enroll in up to two online courses, each semester during their senior year. Exceptions may be granted by the building administrator for certain circumstances (ex: IEP, 504, homebound or approved early graduation plan).
- Any high school student enrolled in an online credit recovery course will not be restricted with regard to the number of online courses per year; however, a plan for credit recovery should be developed and approved by the school administration and/or their designee prior to enrollment in the credit recovery course.
- Online courses will be listed on the high school transcript with credit earned and associated grade achieved in the course. Online courses will also be used in the GPA calculation.
- The majority of online programs (MTDA or others) have their own unique timelines with regard to sign-up, drop dates, and grading. These timelines may be different from the MCPS high school timelines. Students are responsible for following the unique timelines of the online program.

\* Not all online courses are accepted for NCAA eligibility.

### Credits for high school courses taken before the 9th grade

In general, courses taken prior to 9th grade will not count towards high school graduation, unless the student has been approved by the middle and high school administration to enroll in a high school course. (Algebra 1 or equivalent course and World Language courses taught at the middle school are considered middle school courses and are not eligible for high school credit.)

When approved, courses taken prior to the 9th grade may not be used to fulfill graduation requirements, but will be granted high school credit. For example - a student who accelerates in mathematics in 8th grade and completes an approved high school course will be granted high school credit for the course. However, after enrolling in the 9th grade, the student will still be required to complete a minimum of 3 credits of mathematics to complete the MCPS requirements for graduation. Students who are approved to take a high school course before the 9th grade should be placed at the appropriate level based on their ability and previous course experience when they enter the 9th grade.

For approved high school courses taken prior to 9th grade, the course grade and credit will be placed on the transcript when the student enrolls at the start of the 9th grade year. Students who are interested in pursuing high school courses before the start of 9th grade should be aware that the grade and credit for their performance in that course will be reflected on the high school transcript and will be calculated in the high school GPA.

#### Early Graduation

In accordance with provisions of § 20-9-313, MCA, the ANB of a school may be increased when a high school district provides early graduation for a student who completes graduation requirements in less than eight semesters or the equivalent amount of secondary school enrollment. The increase must be established by the trustees as though the student had attended to the end of the school fiscal year and must be approved, disapproved, or adjusted by the superintendent of public instruction. Students interested in early graduation should meet with their school counselor to complete an early graduation plan.

The Board hereby authorizes the administration to recommend to the Board for early graduation students who have completed the minimum requirements for graduation in less than eight semesters.

#### Special Circumstances Diploma - Qualified Educational Disruption

If a student who has experienced an educational disruption meets the minimum high school credit requirement for graduation as established by administrative rules of the Board of Public Education but will not meet a higher credit requirement established by Board of Trustees, the District shall award the student a diploma. MCPS will consider this a *special circumstances* diploma. The actual diploma document given at the graduation ceremony will not distinguish between a standard and special circumstances diploma. The distinction will be made on the official transcript.

For the purposes of this policy, "educational disruption" means a disruption experienced during grades nine through twelve caused by homelessness, involvement in the child welfare system or juvenile justice system, a medical or mental health crisis, or another event considered a qualifying educational disruption by the District.

Students who experience an educational disruption may apply for the special circumstances diploma during their junior or senior year of high school. Students who are seeking early graduation status are generally not eligible for a special circumstances diploma. Final approval of this diploma option will be made by the administration. Appeals can be made through the Uniform Grievance Procedure (BP#1700). For students who qualify for the special circumstances diploma, the official transcript shall reflect that the student has not met the standard MCPS graduation requirements, but rather they have met the minimum high school credit requirements as established by administrative rules of the Board of Public Education.

Administrative Rules of Montana - Minimum high school credit requirement for graduation  
*10.55.905, ARM*

As a minimum, a school district's requirements for graduation shall include a total of 20 units of study that enable all students to meet the content standards and content-specific grade-level learning progressions.

In order to meet the content and performance standards, the following 13 units shall be part of the 20 units required for all students to graduate:

- 4 units\* of English language arts;
- 2 units of mathematics;
- 2 units of social studies;
- 2 units of science;
- 1 unit of health enhancement, with 1/2 unit each year for two years;
- 1 unit of arts; and
- 1 unit of career and technical education
- 7 units of elective coursework

\*A unit is defined as a "credit" for MCPS requirements.