

VISUAL, PERFORMING AND APPLIED ARTS

What the Michigan Merit Curriculum Law Says

Sec. 1278a(a)(iv) The board of a school district or board of directors of a public school academy shall not award a high school diploma to a pupil unless the pupil has successfully completed at least 1 credit in visual arts, performing arts, or applied arts, that is aligned with guidelines developed by the Michigan Department of Education.

Sec. 1278b(5)(g)(j) The visual, performing and applied arts credit requirement may be modified as part of a personal curriculum only if the modification requires the pupil to complete 1 additional credit in English language arts, mathematics, or science or 1 additional credit in a language other than English. This additional credit must be in addition to the number of those credits otherwise required in each subject area.

Background

The State Board of Education's expectation is that all K-12 students should achieve at the basic level in each of the visual, performing, and applied arts disciplines* and achieve proficiency in at least one of these disciplines by graduation from high school (State Board of Education, June 1998).

Central to each of the visual, performing, and applied arts is the artistic/creative process, i.e. a non-linear process characterized by iterative cycles* of exploration in which students attempt a variety of approaches and sustain a realm of possible results before completion. This process is important to the preparation of all students, throughout life and across careers.

For these reasons, the goal of the visual, performing, and applied arts credit guidelines is to ensure that all students have a foundation and experience in the complete artistic/creative process, and that they achieve competence in this process by the time they graduate from high school.

The Michigan Merit Curriculum one credit graduation requirement in the visual, performing, and applied arts is a minimum requirement. The Michigan Merit Curriculum provides students desiring additional credits in the visual, performing, and applied arts, the flexibility to select additional electives and to earn merit core credits through online courses, summer school, and other local options.

The guidelines for the one credit graduation requirement in the visual, performing, and applied arts describe three strands within the artistic/creative process: Create, Perform/Present, and Respond, artistic/creative process that is central to these guidelines and involves: observation, exploration, innovation, problem solving, aesthetic decision-making, application, skill development, creation, expression, communication, presentation, demonstration, reflection, and analysis before completion—all key to the artistic/creative process.

These credit guidelines are aligned to and work together with Michigan Content Standards and Benchmarks, Career Cluster Mastery Grids and Program Guidelines for each of the visual, performing, and applied arts for a complete description of the knowledge, skills, and competencies students are expected to achieve. These core state documents remain available to guide and support curriculum development at the local level.

Each student must satisfactorily master all guidelines specified in this document through one or more courses to meet the one credit graduation requirement in the visual, performing, and applied arts.

What Research Says

Studies show high school students who study the arts earn better grades and scores; are less likely to drop out of school; watch fewer hours of television; are less likely to report boredom in school; have a more positive self-concept; and are more involved in community service. Research also shows that many students who have difficulty learning through traditional methods can benefit from teaching strategies that include other means of learning and subject areas, such as the arts.

Research on workforce preparation and the global economy emphasize the importance of skills developed through the arts to the new economy. 21st century skills developed through the arts include the ability to collaborate, innovate, create, and work with technologies.

Before the Michigan Merit Curriculum, less than half of all Michigan high schools required students to have one or more visual and performing arts credits prior to graduation.

Questions & Answers

1. Q: What is the goal of the Michigan Merit Curriculum's 1 credit graduation requirement in the visual, performing, and applied arts?

A: The goal of 1 credit graduation requirement in the visual, performing, and applied arts is to ensure that all students have a foundation and experience in the complete artistic/creative process of the visual, performing, and applied arts, by the time they graduate from high school. This process is important to the preparation of all students, throughout life and across careers.

2. Q: How will the 1 credit requirement in the Michigan Merit Curriculum meet the needs of students in the visual, performing and applied arts?

A: The 1 credit graduation requirement in the visual, performing, and applied arts is a minimum requirement. The Michigan Merit Curriculum provides students interested in having additional learning experiences in the visual, performing, and applied arts and/or in specializing in the arts the flexibility to earn merit core credits through online courses, testing out, summer school, and other local options, select additional electives, and earn additional credits in the arts through dual enrollment, and advanced placement.

3. Q: Do the visual, performing, and applied arts credit guidelines replace standards and benchmarks for those areas?

A: No, they work together with the standards and benchmarks for the specific visual, performing, or applied arts discipline. The credit guidelines are based on national and state standards and career pathway and program guidelines for the visual, performing, and applied arts. The arts credit guidelines identify the artistic/creative process while state standards and benchmarks identify the high school level content. The State Board of Education's 1998 Arts Education Content Standards and Benchmarks remain in effect and continue to serve as a guide for K-12 arts education, curriculum development, instruction, and assessment.

4. Q: What is meant by the term Applied Arts?

A: Applied Arts is an inclusive term that refers to the application of design and aesthetics to the artistic/creative process which results in products of function and everyday use, such as ones that could be created, for example, through Industrial Technology, design, visual communications, new music and new media technology programs.

5. Q: What can a student take to meet the visual, performing, and applied arts credit requirement?

A: Visual, performing, or applied arts curricular offerings that alone, or in combination, prepare a student to master all of the visual, performing, and applied arts credit guidelines and content standards for the high school level are eligible for consideration by the local district. The local district is to determine which courses or programs will qualify as meeting this requirement.

6. Q: What does 1 credit equal?

A: The 1 credit requirement is frequently equivalent to one year of traditional coursework. However, seat time is not a factor in determining credit; proficiency with the content is. The iterative nature of the artistic-creative process at the core of the Visual, Performing, and Applied Arts credit assumes students will have opportunities to attempt a variety of approaches and sustain a realm of possible results before achieving proficiency in the guidelines.

7. Q: Why don't the visual, performing, and applied arts guidelines include specific courses?

A: In order to be inclusive and meet the needs of the broad fields of the visual, performing, and applied arts, the credit guidelines focus on the complete artistic/creative process that is central to student learning in each of the visual, performing, and applied arts. Because of this core focus, the guidelines can be easily adapted to curricular offerings in any of the visual, performing, or applied arts disciplines and /or level of student proficiency. This provides local school districts with the flexibility to determine which of their course offerings in the visual, performing, and applied arts, alone or in combination will prepare students to master all of the credit guidelines.

8. Q: Won't this 1 credit requirement reduce the number of students in visual, performing, and applied arts courses?

A: Prior to the passage of the new Michigan Merit Curriculum, less than half of all Michigan students were required to take one or more visual & performing arts credits for graduation. This new requirement should substantially increase the number of students taking one or more Visual, Performing, or Applied Arts courses. A recent analysis of trend data from New York State, which has had high school graduation requirements similar to the Michigan Merit Curriculum in place for several years, indicates increased student enrollment in high school general music and significant increases in performing arts courses since the requirements were put in place. The visual, performing, and applied arts guidelines promise to introduce more students to the broad field of the Visual, Performing and Applied Arts.

9. Q: Can a visual, performing, and applied arts course count toward the 4th credit in math?

A: The law requires a 4th mathematics credit, but provides local districts with the flexibility to determine what counts for the 4th mathematics credit. The credit does, however, need to be a high school level course. The credit could be in a basic or an applied math area, such as geometry in the arts and architecture, mathematics of design, or patterns in art and mathematics. The visual, performing, and applied arts/math course cannot count toward the 4th year math unless the 1 credit minimum visual, performing, and applied arts credit requirement has already been met.

10. Q: Can students earn visual, performing, and applied credit through an integrated sequence?

A. The Michigan Merit Curriculum credit expectations and guidelines can be met in integrated sequences such as humanities (e.g., combining English, social studies, and music); or integrated math and art classes; art and science classes, etc.

An integrated course sequence is designed to intentionally meet the required course expectations and/or guidelines for each of the Michigan Merit Curriculum areas being addressed. Teachers of core academic subjects (which according to NCLB include dance, music, theatre, and the visual arts) must be highly qualified in the areas they are teaching. Therefore, an integrated sequence would need to be taught by a teacher or team of teachers highly qualified in each of the subjects being taught through the integrated course sequence.

11. Q: Can students earn the 1 credit visual, performing, and applied credit through advanced placement courses?

A: The district may allow students to satisfy credit requirements through:

- Dual Enrollment
- Advanced Placement Courses
- International Baccalaureate or other “early college” experiences or programs
- An on-line class that addresses all of the credit guidelines

12. Q: Will the Michigan Merit Curriculum reduce the number of electives students may take?

A: The Michigan Merit Curriculum continues to allow each school district to determine the number of electives offered to their students. It also provides students the flexibility to select additional electives and/or to earn merit core credits through online courses, summer school, and other local options.

13. Q: Can students request a personal curriculum for an exemption from the visual, performing and applied arts in order to take additional credits in mathematics, science, world languages, or English language arts?

A: A student who has used all of their elective credits and wants to take additional credits in mathematics, science, world languages, or English language arts can request this option. The decision to grant the personal curriculum must follow all personal curriculum guidelines and is a local decision.