

ALTERNATIVE and ADULT EDUCATION (Updated 9.07)

What the Michigan Merit Curriculum Law Says on Alternative Education

380.1278(b)(7) Requires the Michigan Department of Education to develop and make available material to assist school districts and public school academies in implementing the Michigan Merit Curriculum requirements. This shall include developing guidelines for alternative instructional delivery methods.

380.1278(b)(3)(e) The board of a school district or board of directors of a public school academy that operates a high school shall ensure that each pupil is offered the curriculum necessary for the pupil to meet the Michigan Merit Curriculum requirements. The board or board of directors may provide this curriculum by using alternative instructional delivery methods such as alternative course work, humanities course sequences, career and technical education, industrial technology courses, or vocational education, or by a combination of these. School districts and public school academies that operate career and technical education programs are encouraged to integrate the credit requirements into those programs.

Questions & Answers

1. Q: Will students attending alternative education programs have to meet all of these requirements to receive a diploma?

A: While alternative schools often have alternative methods to deliver the high school curriculum, the law requires that all students, beginning with those in 8th grade in 2006, meet the Michigan Merit Curriculum requirements to receive a high school diploma. If the alternative education program leads to a high school diploma (and not a GED) and the student was in 8th grade or an earlier grade in 2006, the student attending the program is expected to meet the Michigan Merit Curriculum credit requirements.

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2. Q: Are you aware of any changes that will be made to the requirements pertaining to Alternative Education students?

A: There are two recent developments pertaining to students in Alternative Education programs. First, the Michigan Department of Education has applied to the U.S. Department of Education for permission, on a case by case basis, to count as high school graduates students in alternative high schools that are enrolled for a fifth year and graduate after that fifth year. This will provide districts with additional flexibility to ensure students in this setting have additional time to make up credits or obtain the appropriate support necessary to graduate.

Secondly, there are discussions regarding a change to the law to allow a district to continue to receive state aid for a student who is still 21 years old by September 1st. Currently, the law will not provide funding for students 20 years of age by September 1st.

3. Q: How do the new graduation requirements apply to Adult Education students?

A: The new requirements are effective for all students who were in the 8th grade during the 2006-07 school year or later. Adult education students who entered 8th grade during the 2005-06 school year or earlier are not subject to the new Michigan Merit Curriculum state high school graduation requirements. These students qualify for a high school diploma under the conditions and requirements in effect in the programs in which they are enrolled.

Adult education programs, beginning in 2010 or 2011 (when it might be expected that an 8th grader this year would not have finished high school and might be enrolling in adult education) should maintain separate records for students to whom the new requirements apply and older students to whom they do not.

4. Q: How do the new graduation requirements apply to the GED?

A: They do not. The General Educational Development (GED) is an equivalency diploma issued by the U. S. government and is subject to its own criteria.