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Introduction

On April 20, 2006, Governor Jennifer M. Granholm signed into law one of the most comprehensive sets of high school graduation requirements in the nation called the *Michigan Merit Curriculum*. This law is a result of an extraordinary partnership between Governor Granholm, the State Board of Education, the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, the Legislature, and numerous education associations who worked together to better prepare students for greater success and to secure the economic future of our state.

As a result, a high school diploma in Michigan will soon say a lot more about the graduate whose name it bears. It will tell employers that our students have mastered the reading, writing, and math skills required for success in the workplace. It will tell college and university admissions officers and career and technical schools the student is ready for the rigors of post-secondary education. It will tell the world -- Michigan is committed to having the best-educated workforce.

The Michigan Merit Curriculum defines a common set of required credits for graduation and provides educators with a common understanding of what student's should know and be able to do for credit. It also provides students the learning opportunity, knowledge and skills they need to succeed in college or the workplace.

MICHIGAN MERIT CURRICULUM

The Michigan Merit Curriculum requires students entering 8th grade in 2006, to obtain a minimum of 16 credits for graduation which could be met using alternative instructional delivery methods such as alternative course work, humanities course sequences, career and technology courses, industrial technology or vocational education courses, or through a combination of these programs.

The new law also requires students to have an online course or learning experience. For a student to meet this requirement, the student must meet either of the following, as determined by the school district or public school academy: 1) Has successfully completed at least 1 course or learning experience that is presented online, as defined by the Michigan Department of Education (MDE); and 2) The student's school district or public school academy has integrated an online experience throughout the high school curriculum by ensuring that each teacher of each course that provides the required credits of the Michigan merit curriculum has integrated an online experience into the course.

In addition, students entering the 3rd grade in 2006 will need to complete two credits of a language other than English in grades 9-12; OR an equivalent learning experience in grades K-12 prior to graduation. High School Content Expectations and Course/Credit Content Expectations and Guidelines are available on the Michigan Department of Education's high school web page at www.michigan.gov/highschool.

* Content expectations have been completed by the Michigan Department of Education.

** Content expectations under development.

See page 19 for information on Personal Curriculum Modification Options.

Michigan Merit Curriculum High School Graduation Requirements	
MATHEMATICS* - 4 Credits	
Algebra I*	Geometry*
Algebra II*	One math course in final year of high school
ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS - 4 Credits	
English Language Arts 9*	English Language Arts 11**
English Language Arts 10*	English Language Arts 12**
SCIENCE - 3 Credits	
Biology*	One additional science credit
Physics* or Chemistry*	
SOCIAL STUDIES** - 3 Credits	
.5 credit in Civics**	.5 credit in Economics**
U.S. History and Geography**	World History and Geography**
PHYSICAL EDUCATION & HEALTH** - 1 Credit	
VISUAL, PERFORMING AND APPLIED ARTS* - 1 Credit	
ONLINE LEARNING EXPERIENCE* Course, Learning or Integrated Learning Experience	
LANGUAGE OTHER THAN ENGLISH** - 2 Credits In grades 9-12; OR an equivalent learning experience in grades K-12	

This document is intended to provide general guidance. Due to the complexity of the law, policies and guidance will continue to evolve. For specific information regarding the law, please refer to Public Acts 123 and 124 of 2006. 11/15/06

MICHIGAN MERIT CURRICULUM

Questions & Answers

1. Q: What's the difference between the state's current graduation requirements and the new Michigan Merit Curriculum high school graduation requirements?

A: Prior to the passage of the Michigan Merit Curriculum, the state of Michigan required only one semester of Civics for high school graduation. The new law, which goes into effect beginning with students entering the 8th grade in 2006, is designed for the 21st Century student. The curriculum is required of each and every student. It supports the need for personalization, acceleration, and innovation in an atmosphere of high expectations and high support for students.

The Michigan Merit Curriculum is crafted around the philosophical belief that all students will need extended learning opportunities for extended learning beyond high school. As the learning skills for college and the workplace have merged, this curriculum will prepare students with the skills and knowledge needed to be successful in our global economy and workplace.

2. Q: Don't most school districts already have similar graduation requirements?

A: While most districts have adopted graduation requirements, the number and type of credits vary widely throughout the state. The Michigan Merit Curriculum will provide all students a common set of credit requirements for graduation and will provide educators with a common understanding of what students should know and be able to do for credit.

3. Q: How does the Michigan Merit Curriculum compare with other states' graduation requirements?

A: Michigan's new high school graduation requirements are regarded as among the best in the nation. In addition to requiring students to earn a full complement of math, science, English and other credits to receive their diplomas, Michigan is the first state to require students to have an online learning experience to prepare them for postsecondary education and the workplace. In addition, in order to work in our global economy, students entering 3rd grade in 2006 and beyond will also need to complete two credits of languages other than English or equivalent K-12 experience prior to graduation.

4. Q: Does the Michigan Merit Curriculum allow decisions to be made by local school districts?

A: Yes. Local school districts will continue to issue diplomas, align curriculum, determine what constitutes a credit, establish a credit award system, identify assessments, set school calendars, select and purchase textbooks, etc. Local school boards and districts will continue to have flexibility to determine "how" to implement these new graduation requirements and when students have earned the credits. The Michigan Department of Education will continue to develop content expectations and guidelines to determine "what" students should know and be able to do to receive Michigan Merit Curriculum high school graduation credit.

Local boards of education also will continue to establish additional graduation requirements beyond those in the Michigan Merit Curriculum and the total number of credits required for graduation. However, a district cannot establish lesser requirements.

5. Q: Different school districts have varying ways in which they schedule their high school class day. Will these new requirements force districts to change their high school class day schedules?

A: No. The requirements allow districts the flexibility to maintain their current scheduling system or to develop other systems to meet the individual needs and desires of each district.

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

A: The Michigan Merit Curriculum continues to allow districts to determine the number of electives offered to their students. It also provides students the flexibility to select additional electives and/or earn graduation credit through online courses, by testing out, attending summer school, and other local options.

7. Q: Why can't we take longer to implement new graduation requirements – it feels like we are rushing toward this change?

A: Michigan's economic future is on the line. Today, far too many students are graduating from high school without the knowledge and skills they need to be successful in college or the workplace. The implementation of this new curriculum will not only help students, but will benefit the state as a whole. If we implement this change with next year's 9th graders, we will still be four years away from preparing 100% of Michigan students for work and postsecondary education in the 21st Century.

8. Q: Will this push some struggling students to drop out rather than attempt to meet the demands of a harder curriculum?

A: Research tells us that students do not drop out because they have a more rigorous curriculum and/or are asked to work harder. Rather, studies show students of all abilities are more likely to pass high-level courses than low-level courses, graduate from school, get better grades, succeed in college without requiring remedial education classes, be better prepared for the workforce, and earn higher wages. For more information, go to <http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ovae/pi/hsinit/papers/highex.doc>

9. Q: Don't you think that making the high school credit requirements so rigorous is an invitation to return to "tracking" kids?

A: On the contrary. The Michigan Merit Curriculum is intended to provide all students with the same rigorous curriculum and credit content.

NON-PUBLIC AND HOME SCHOOL REQUIREMENTS

Questions & Answers

- I. **Q: Do the new graduation requirements apply to home schools, private schools, and parochial schools?**

A: No, the legislature did not specifically require this as a condition to earn a high school diploma in a non-public Michigan school. However, currently the requirement for one semester credit in Civics/Government does apply to all public and non-public schools in Michigan.

Currently, many private and parochial schools choose to follow the Michigan Merit Curriculum in order for their students to qualify for the Michigan Merit Award and succeed in being ready for college and workplace demands.

EARNING CREDIT

What the Michigan Merit Curriculum Law Says

Sec. 1278a(4)(a) A student is considered to have completed a credit if the student successfully completes the subject area content expectations or guidelines developed by the Michigan Department of Education that apply to the credit. A school district or public school academy shall base its determination of whether a student has successfully completed the subject area content expectations or guidelines developed by the department that apply to a credit at least in part on the student's performance on the assessments developed or selected by the Department or on 1 or more assessments developed or selected by the school district or public school academy that measure a student's understanding of the subject area content expectations or guidelines that apply to the credit.

Sec. 1278a(4)(c) A school district or public school academy also must grant a credit if the student earns a qualifying score, as determined by the Department, on the assessments developed or selected for the subject area by the Department or the student earns a qualifying score, as determined by the school district or public school academy, on 1 or more assessments developed or selected by the school district or public school academy that measure a student's understanding of the subject area content expectations or guidelines that apply to the credit.

Sec. 1278b(2) If a student successfully completes 1 or more of the high school credits required in the Michigan Merit Curriculum before entering high school, the student shall be given high school credit for that credit.

Background Information

The Michigan Merit Curriculum lays out a new foundation for “credit” by requiring that credit be awarded not by the commonly used Carnegie unit, which is based on seat time, but based on a student’s demonstration that he or she has successfully met the content expectations for the credit area.

The Michigan Merit Curriculum content expectations can be met in various learning settings such as career and technical education; work-based learning programs; integrated sequences such as humanities (e.g., combining English, social studies, and art); integrated math and science classes; project-based learning; college credit opportunities like dual enrollment; advancement placement and International Baccalaureate programs; and online learning. Regardless in what setting, students must demonstrate they have met the subject area content expectations for that credit.

Questions & Answers

1. Q: What is a credit?

A: A credit is a completed unit of study as measured by proficiency in a predetermined set of content expectations (e.g., Algebra I, Biology, English Language Arts 12, etc.). Students *earn* credit -- students *take* a course.

2. Q: How can a student earn credit?

A: Students may earn credit if they successfully complete subject area content expectations or guidelines for the credit. The assignment of credit must be based, at least in part, on student performance on subject area assessments which measure the extent to which they meet the credit expectations and guidelines.

Beyond earning credit through a traditional course setting, a student may earn a credit in a variety of ways, including, but not limited to:

- A related course(s) in which content standards are embedded (e.g., math standards embedded in a career-technical program, industrial technology course, or vocational course)
- Non-traditional course work
- Independent teacher-guided study
- Testing out

In addition, the district may allow students to satisfy credit requirements through:

- Dual Enrollment
- Advanced Placement Courses
- International Baccalaureate or other “early college” experiences or programs

3. Q: Do students have to earn credits in the Michigan Merit Curriculum in a particular sequence?

A: No. The law provides local districts and students with the flexibility to establish the sequence and pace of instruction.

4. Q: Is a student allowed to receive high school credit for coursework prior to high school?

A: Yes. The law states if a student successfully completes one or more high school credits before entering high school, the student **must be given graduation credit** for that credit **if:** 1) the district determines a student has met Michigan Department of Education high school course/credit content expectations; and, 2) the district uses an assessment to certify that the student is proficient in the course/credit content expectations, and the expected level of proficiency is the same as for high school. While a student must receive graduation credit, a district continues to have the ability to establish graduation requirements beyond the Michigan Merit Curriculum.

In other words, if middle school students meet the same expectations and proficiency level as high school students, they must receive credit. This is true even if textbooks and other resources are different. The key is mastering the course content expectations.

5. Q: Must a school provide students with the opportunity to take all required Michigan Merit credits/classes? For example, if a district is able to offer only Chemistry and is not able to offer Physics, may the district require all students to take Chemistry without the option of choosing Physics? What if a school is not able to hire enough teachers trained in these areas?

A: Under the law, a district should make every effort to offer the curriculum necessary for the student to meet the Michigan Merit Curriculum credit requirements. However, the law provides districts with a great deal of flexibility to meet credit requirements, including, but limited to: alternative instructional delivery methods such as teaching certain subjects in certain years, district partnerships, online courses, dual enrollment, community college partnerships, etc.

If a district is still unable to meet all curricular or other requirements outlined in the law, a district may apply to the Michigan Department of Education for permission to phase in one or more requirements. To apply, the school district must submit a proposed phase-in plan to the Department which outlines its strategy to make satisfactory progress toward full implementation of the requirements. If the plan is not approved, the Department must work with the school district to develop a satisfactory plan.

If a school district demonstrates to the Department it is unable to hire enough highly qualified teachers, the Department will work with the school district to develop a plan to hire enough highly qualified teachers to meet the requirements. However, for a high school to be accredited, it is required to ensure all curriculum credit requirements are made available to the affected students. For a definition of “Highly Qualified”, see page 8.

6. Q: Will districts be allowed to give ½ credits?

A: Yes. The sequence, pace, and "packaging" of credits is the prerogative of the district. Districts may award credit units even smaller than ½, if appropriate.

7. Q: How can students receive credit without passing a class?

A: A student may demonstrate proficiency in the credit area by testing out (passing a test or battery of assessments approved by a district), which measures a student's understanding of the content expectations for that credit.

8. Q: Does the content and assessment for a credit offered in both middle and high school need to be the same?

A: While the textbook and other resources may vary, students should learn the same content and be held to the same level of proficiency whether they earn the high school graduation credit in middle or high school.

TESTING OUT

What the Michigan Merit Curriculum Law Says

Sec. 1278(a)(4)(c) A school district or public school academy shall also grant a student a credit if the student earns a qualifying score, as determined by the department, on the assessments developed or selected for the subject area by the department or the student earns a qualifying score, as determined by the school district or public school academy, on 1 or more assessments developed or selected by the school district or public school academy that measure a student's understanding of the subject area content expectations or guidelines that apply to the credit.

Previous law regarding testing out -- credit awarded to student not enrolled in course

Credit awarded to pupil not enrolled in course

380.1279b The board of a school district shall grant high school credit in any course to a pupil enrolled in high school, but who is not enrolled in the course, who has exhibited a reasonable level of mastery of the subject matter of the course by attaining a grade of not less than C+ in a final exam in the course, or, if there is no final exam, by exhibiting that mastery through the basic assessment used in the course which may consist of a portfolio, performance, paper, project, or presentation. For the purpose of earning credit under this section, any high school pupil may take the final examination in any course. Credit earned under this section shall be based on a "pass" grade and shall not be included in a computation of grade point average for any purpose. Credit earned under this section may or may not be counted toward graduation, as the board of the school district may determine, but the board's determination shall apply equally to all such credit for all pupils and credit earned under this section shall be counted toward fulfillment of a requirement for a subject area course and shall be counted toward fulfillment of a requirement as to course sequence. Once credit is earned under this section, a pupil may not receive credit thereafter for a course lower in course sequence concerning the same subject area.

History: Add. 1993, Act 335, Imd. Eff. Dec. 31, 1993 **Popular Name:** Act 451

Questions & Answers

1. Q: Is the previous law on testing out, outlined above still in effect?

A: Yes. However, the two laws do different things. "Testing out" in the Michigan Merit Curriculum is an option to demonstrate that a student meets or exceeds the content expectations associated with the subject credit area. The instruction needed to test out does not necessarily have to be delivered in a traditional "course sequence," and testing out can occur at any time. The existing testing out law speaks specifically about courses. The final examination should be aligned with the content expectations or guidelines to assign credit. Districts may have to revisit current policies to make sure the two laws are compatible.

2. Q: If a student "tests out" of a class, say Algebra I, but NEVER takes the Algebra I class (they knew the material, but didn't put in time IN CLASS), can they receive graduation credit?

A: Yes. If students test out of the CREDIT for Algebra I, then the earned credit would count as a required credit for graduation and reduce the total number math credits under the Michigan Merit Curriculum by one credit. Part of the reform initiative is to change the way we think about "seat time" as the criteria for learning - if a student knows the content and can demonstrate this knowledge on course/credit assessment(s), they will get credit.

3. Q: Can a student test out of a credit required for graduation under the Michigan Merit Curriculum? To test out, does a student need to have a C+ or better?

A: Yes. Public Acts 123 and 124 require a school district or public school academy to grant a student credit if the student earns: 1) a qualifying score, as determined by the department, on the assessments developed or selected for the subject area by the department; OR, 2) the student earns a qualifying score, as determined by the school district or public school academy, on one or more assessments developed or selected by the school district or public school academy that measure a student's understanding of the subject area content expectations or guidelines that apply to the credit.

In addition, based on a previous law still in effect, if using a final exam to measure proficiency, a student must attain a grade of not less than C+, or, if there is no final exam, by exhibiting that mastery through the basic assessment used in the course which may consist of a portfolio, performance, paper, project, or presentation. This law also requires that credits earned through testing not be included in a computation of grade point average for any purpose.

ASSESSMENT

What the Michigan Merit Curriculum Law Says (from various sections of law)

Sec. 1278a(4)(b) A school district or public school academy shall base its determination of whether a pupil has successfully completed the subject area content expectations or guidelines developed by the department that apply to a credit at least in part on the pupil's performance on the assessments developed or selected by the department or on 1 or more assessments developed or selected by the school district or public school academy that measure a pupil's understanding of the subject area content expectations or guidelines that apply to the credit.

Sec. 1278a(4)(c) A school district or public school academy shall also grant a pupil a credit if the pupil earns a qualifying score, as determined by the department, on the assessments developed or selected for the subject area by the department or the pupil earns a qualifying score, as determined by the school district or public school academy, on 1 or more assessments developed or selected by the school district or public school academy that measure a pupil's understanding of the subject area content expectations or guidelines that apply to the credit.

Sec. 1278a(3) The requirements for a high school diploma are in addition to any local requirements imposed by the board of a school district or board of directors of a public school academy. The board of a school district or board of directors of a public school academy, as a local requirement for a high school diploma, may require a pupil to complete some or all of the subject area assessments, the Michigan Merit Examination, or MI Access assessments, if appropriate for the pupil.

Questions & Answers

1. Q: Who determines the type of secondary course/credit assessment a district could choose?

A: The local district has the flexibility to determine when an assessment(s) is given, as well as develop or select district or state assessments that measure students' understanding of the content expectations for credit.

2. Q: Who determines the score a student or students must meet to pass or meet the assessment requirements?

A: A district can select or develop a local assessment for which it establishes a passing score. Alternatively, the district can elect to use a state assessment, in which the state establishes a passing or cut score.

3. Q: What if the student has passed the class, but fails the assessment? Does the student fail the course?

A: Districts continue to have authority to establish policy on this issue. While the law requires a district to base a student's successful completion, at least in part, on student performance on subject area assessments, the amount the assessment counts toward a student's total grade is up to the district. Therefore, awarding credit is a local district decision.

4. Q: Will the state be developing credit assessments?

A: By April 20, 2009, the Michigan Department of Education must develop or select and approve assessments that school districts and public school academies may use to determine whether a student has successfully completed a credit required by the Michigan Merit Curriculum. The assessments for each credit must measure a student's understanding of the content expectations or guidelines for that credit. The Department must develop or select and approve assessments for at least each of the following credits: Algebra I, Geometry, Algebra II, Earth Science, Biology, Physics, Chemistry, World History and Geography, United States History and Geography, Economics, Civics, and English in grades 9 through 12.

The department is currently naming these Secondary Credit Assessments will be developed in two formats, 1) end of course assessments, which can be used for testing out purposes, and 2) testlets or modular tests that could be used as formative assessments throughout instruction. The Department is currently developing assessments for Algebra I and Geometry that will be piloted in January 2007.

In addition, MDE will be developing material to assist school districts and Public School Academies in implementing the Michigan Merit Curriculum, including developing guidelines for alternative instructional delivery methods.

5. Q: Will assessments be created for integrated math sequences and integrated science sequences?

A: Not at this time. These sequences are optional versus mandated in the Michigan Merit Curriculum. Therefore, districts using an integrated math approach should determine at what point in the integrated math sequence students are ready to be assessed on the course content expectations for Algebra I, etc. Districts also will be responsible for selecting the credit assessment to measure a student's understanding of the content expectations for credit. The goal of creating the testlets or modular tests is to permit students who are receiving integrated or applied instruction to be assessed on the state's Secondary Credit Assessments. Districts would need to determine how the Secondary Credit Assessments would be divided among the grade levels and courses.

HIGHLY QUALIFIED TEACHERS AND PERSONNEL

Questions & Answers

1. **Q: Do teachers need to be highly qualified to teach Michigan Merit Curriculum Requirements?**

A: Yes. Districts are required under the federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) to now have 100% of their teachers of core academic subjects highly qualified. This means that in addition to holding state certification, the teacher must hold a major or the equivalent of a major in the content, or pass the Michigan Test for Teacher Certification (MTTC) subject area content exam, or complete one of the High Objective Uniform State Standards of Evaluation (HOUSSE) options for demonstrating that he/she is highly qualified.

Long before NCLB was passed, Michigan law required that teachers be appropriately assigned to teach within the grade level and subject area endorsement(s) indicated on their teaching certificates. For example, only a teacher with a secondary certificate with endorsements in mathematics and Biology (grades 7-12) should be assigned to teach math and/or Biology courses in grades 7-12. It would be inappropriate to assign this teacher to teach Chemistry, Physics, or General Science.

In order to assist local districts in the appropriate placement of teachers, the Michigan Department of Education has developed a document entitled "Classes Which Can Be Taught by Holders of Various Endorsements as Impacted by NCLB." This document is available at the following URL:

[http://www.michigan.gov/documents/What can be taught composite TQ CI07355 A112320 7 123436 7.d oc](http://www.michigan.gov/documents/What_can_be_taught_composite_TQ_CI07355_A112320_7_123436_7.d oc)

2. **Q: Does a middle school teacher have to be "highly qualified" at the high school level in order for students to receive high school credit?**

A: In order for a student to receive credit, a teacher must be appropriately endorsed and highly qualified in the subject, whether elementary or secondary certificated. The secondary teaching certificate authorizes a person to teach in subject area endorsements in grades 6-12, and the elementary certificate authorizes a person to teach in grades K-5 (all subjects) and grades 6-8 in subject area endorsements.

3. **Q: Does a teacher, teaching a math-related class such as accounting need to be highly qualified in mathematics for students to receive their 4th math-related credit?**

A: No. If the accounting or other math-related class is to be counted as a student's 4th math-related credit, the teacher does not need to be highly qualified in mathematics. However, the school through their internal record keeping system should record the student has fulfilled their 4th math credit, given the student's transcript would list the accounting course.

If a student wants to take a math course like pre-calculus and have it count as their 4th credit, the teacher would need to be highly qualified in mathematics.

4. **Q: Will there be enough highly qualified teachers available to meet the need in required course credit areas?**

A: While schools currently have math and science teachers and require various math and science credits for graduation, the new law requires all students to complete specific math, science and social studies credits. Hiring and scheduling continue to remain the responsibility of local schools and districts.

In addition, post-baccalaureate individuals enrolled in alternative preparation programs who can demonstrate competency in the content by holding a major in the content or passing the MTTC content examination can be employed to teach the merit curriculum. Such individuals would have three years to complete their teacher preparation programs and still be considered highly qualified under NCLB.

Teachers who are currently assigned to teach mathematics or science classes who need additional training to teach the more rigorous content can take advantage of professional development opportunities offered by various entities and programs such as Michigan Virtual University, Teacher-to-Teacher, Title II A(3) Higher Education Professional Development Grant projects, and courses offered online through institutions of higher education.

STUDENTS ELIGIBLE FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES

What the Michigan Merit Curriculum Law Says

Sec. 1278b(6) If a pupil receives special education services, his or her individualized education program, in accordance with the Federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, must identify the supports, accommodations, and modifications necessary to allow him or her to progress in the Michigan Merit Curriculum requirements, or in a personal curriculum, and meet the requirements for a high school diploma.

Questions & Answers

1. **Q: What about students who receive special education services?**

A: Special Education students are general education students first, and by law must be given access to, and support for success in, the general curriculum. Studies show all students learn and achieve more when they take a challenging curriculum rather than low-level high school courses. However, some high school students are going to need support to meet the more rigorous high school graduation requirements.

All students receiving special education services in Michigan must have an Individualized Education Program (IEP) that details the appropriate education plan of support for student success. The State Board of Education firmly believes that special education students can learn and participate in the general education setting and that special education students should be given every opportunity to be successful in the Michigan Merit Curriculum.

2. **Q: If a student is cognitively impaired and was not able to take the MEAP/HST or the new Michigan Merit Exam, is the student still required to complete the Michigan Merit Curriculum to earn a high school diploma?**

A: Yes. The student must do so either through the general curriculum or the “personal curriculum” defined in the law. The decisions related to a student’s educational program should be discussed and determined within the student’s Individual Education Plan (IEP) process by the IEP Team. A decision to assess the student with the MEAP or MI-Access tests should be a subject of considerable discussion during these meetings and conclusions based on multiple factors, (present level of academic achievement and functional performance, the student’s stated post school outcomes or desires, student performance on standardized, normative, criterion referenced, summative, formative or curriculum based assessments, etc.).

The standards set by the state legislature are the curriculum standards for the state and, therefore, become the foundation for educating all students in the state of Michigan. The requirement of a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) project requires that educators provide students with disabilities full access to these standards. The standard for FAPE is clear in the federal regulations that these curriculum standards must be the foundation for all instruction. However, for students with more significant disabilities, the IEP may modify content and instruction to achieve the desired outcomes for a student. Beyond curriculum modification, students also can have specific accommodations that assist them to learn within these standards. The federal Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) is very clear that all students with disabilities have a right to access, participate and perform in the general education curriculum. While IDEA guarantees FAPE, it does not provide a guarantee that a student with disabilities is entitled to a diploma. Diploma granting is a local board decision, but school boards now have specific graduation requirements they must address, and these are spelled out in state law.

DUAL ENROLLMENT, ADVANCED PLACEMENT AND INTERNATIONAL BACCALAUREATE

What the Michigan Merit Curriculum Law Says

Sec. 1278b(14) This law does not prohibit a pupil from satisfying or exceeding the credit requirements of the Michigan Merit Curriculum through advanced studies such as accelerated course placement, advanced placement, dual enrollment in a postsecondary institution, or participation in the International Baccalaureate program or an early college/middle college program.

Questions & Answers

1. **Q: How will these new graduation requirements affect advanced learners?**

A: The new requirements should not affect students who have already chosen a rigorous curriculum. Such a student is likely to already have decided on and included in his/her high school plan the credits in the new requirements.

Students taking an Advanced Placement (AP) class in mathematics, science, English language arts, social studies, or Visual, Performing and Applied Arts also would be satisfying the credit requirements, providing the AP class is in one of the credit areas specified in the requirements (for example, AP Biology).

Michigan schools offering the International Baccalaureate (IB) program also would be providing students the opportunity to meet the new graduation requirements since the IB program covers the credit areas listed in the requirements.

Students who are “dual-enrolled” in community college or university classes in the credit areas specified in the graduation requirements also would be considered as meeting these requirements.

Students who successfully complete a credit-earning online class through the Michigan Virtual High School, another provider of online courses, a community college, or a university (in a required graduation credit area, for example, U. S. History/Geography) would also be considered as having met the particular graduation requirement. In addition, by successfully completing the online course, the student also would be considered to have met the further graduation credit of taking an online course (for credit or not for credit) or learning experience.

2. **Q: Is a student allowed to count a math class taken through dual enrollment at a 2-year or 4-year institution for a mathematics credit required under the Michigan Merit Curriculum?**

A: Yes. If the district determines the class meets the Michigan Merit Curriculum course/credit content expectations for that credit or the district's requirements for a 4th math credit. In addition, all students, regardless of where the credit is offered, should be held to the same level of proficiency (passing standards). This could be accomplished by working with 2-year or 4-year institution to align their content and assessment to the credit content expectations. A district could also establish a policy requiring a student who successfully completed a credit at a 2-year or 4-year institution to take the credit assessment to earn credit.

CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION

What the Michigan Merit Curriculum Law Says

Sec. 1278b(7) 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. The board or board of directors may provide this curriculum by providing the credits 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.

Educational Development Plan

Sec. 1278b(11) The board of a school district or board of directors of a public school academy shall ensure that each pupil in grade 7 is provided with the opportunity to develop an educational development plan, and that each pupil has developed an educational development plan before he or she begins high school. An educational development plan shall be developed by the pupil under the supervision of the pupil's school counselor or another designee qualified under section [380.1233](#) or [380.1233a](#) selected by the high school principal and shall be based on a career pathways program or similar career exploration program.

Questions & Answers

1. Q: The description of the new graduation requirements implies some academic credit could be earned in Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs. How can this be done?

A: This is an area where districts are encouraged to be innovative and involve career education and academic teachers in a dialogue to explore this issue. There are a few models being utilized by other states. In one case, an academic teacher (Algebra, for instance) meets with a career education teacher (e.g. Electronics), and the two review the expectations for the Algebra class and determine how many of those expectations can be met in the Electronics class. Depending on how many expectations are not covered in Electronics, the school organizes a short-course (semester, 9-weeks, summer class) in Algebra to cover the expectations not covered in the Electronics course.

Another approach is collaborative teaching between academic and career education teachers. Teachers line up their respective expectations against each other, determine the overlap, and then, periodically teach their subject to each other's students. For an example of collaborative teaching model, visit the University of New York web site at <http://www.highered.nysed.gov/nclb04-2003c.htm>

2. Q: Can students earn credit through a CTE program?

A: Yes. Career and Technical courses may be used to help students earn the necessary credits in a variety of required credit areas. For example, a district may allow a student to receive credit for Algebra or Geometry in building trades classes. It is also possible for Career and Technical Education courses to be used to help students in an electronics class earn credit for the "one additional year" of math required in the Michigan Merit Curriculum. In addition, students, have the flexibility to earn merit core credits through online courses, testing out, summer school, and other local options.

Work is underway to align the CTE career cluster curriculum with the high school content expectations to identify the level of credit that can be awarded in each cluster for each core curriculum area.

3. Q: How will a CTE student demonstrate proficiency in the Michigan Merit Curriculum required course/credit?

A: A local district continues to have the authority to develop a method for determining and tracking student proficiency in meeting one or more course/credit content expectations for partial or full credit.

4. Q: Are CTE teachers required to be “highly qualified” to teach CTE courses that are subject to NCLB?

A: Yes. If the courses will be used to meet the course/content standards required for high school graduation, the CTE teacher must be highly qualified in the subject area OR participate in collaborative teaching with a highly qualified academic teacher. The CTE instructor also must be highly qualified and appropriately endorsed in the CTE subject area in which he/she are teaching. For more information on the collaborative teaching model, visit: <http://www.highered.nysed.gov/nclb04-2003c.htm>.

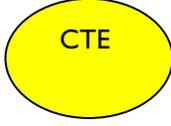
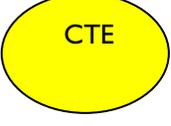
5. Q: Will the Michigan Merit Curriculum requirements impact the scheduling of regional Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs?

A: No. However, forward planning will be key. Students who wish to participate in regional Career and Technical programs should be able to schedule these for a full two-year sequence. Generally, students need one-half of the 6-period day (or three hours) for class instructional time and travel time to and from a center.

The graphic on the following page illustrates how students can participate in the two-year CTE program. It will be important, however, for students entering the 9th grade to know in advance that they will enroll in a CTE program in their junior and senior years and include this in their four-year high school plan. In addition, CTE classes may be able to meet some of the credit requirements in mathematics, science, English language arts, and social studies. After conducting alignment studies, districts may choose to offer special classes to supplement core content in CTE classes.

SAMPLE CTE STUDENT SCHEDULES

Career and Technical Education

	Grade 9	Grade 10	Grade 11	Grade 12
Period 1	English 9	English 10	English 11	English 12
Period 2	Algebra I	Geometry	Algebra II	Math-Related
Period 3	World History	US History	Gov/Econ	Science
Period 4	Biology	Chemistry		
Period 5	Health/PE	Visual, Performing, and Applied Arts (VPAA)		
Period 6	Language Other Than English	Language Other Than English		

A similar schedule could be developed for students who are interested in the Visual and Performing Arts, outlined below.

Sample Student Schedule - Instrumental Music Emphasis

	Grade 9	Grade 10	Grade 11	Grade 12
Period 1	English 9	English 10	English 11	English 12
Period 2	Algebra I	Geometry	Algebra II	Math-Related
Period 3	World History	US History	Government/Economics	Science
Period 4	Biology	Chemistry	Language Other Than English	Elective/Elective
Period 5	Health/PE	Language Other Than English	Elective/Elective	Elective/Elective
Period 6	Band	Band	Band	Band

Many schools have expanded student course offerings with little or no additional costs, by going to an alternative schedule like:

- 4x4 or A/B Block A modified
- 6-period block
- Trimester
- Zero and 7th hour (modified staff reporting time)

EFFECT ON HIGH SCHOOL SCHEDULING

Questions & Answers

I. Q: Different school districts have varying ways in which they schedule their high school class day. Will these new requirements force districts to change their high school class day schedules?

A: No. There is flexibility provided to school districts to maintain their current scheduling system or develop other systems to meet the individual needs and desires of each district. Sample scheduling options may be found on the following page.

Sample 7 Period Day Schedule

	Grade 9	Grade 10	Grade 11	Grade 12
Period 1	English 9	English 10	English 11	English 12
Period 2	Algebra I	Geometry	Algebra II	math-Related
Period 3	Earth Science	Biology	Gov/Econ	CTE or Elective
Period 4	World History	US History	Government/Economics	CTE or Elective
Period 5	Health/PE	Visual, Performing and Applied Arts	CTE or Elective	CTE or Elective
Period 6	Language Other Than English	Language Other Than English	CTE or Elective	CTE or Elective
Period 7	Elective/ Elective	Elective/ Elective	CTE or Elective	CTE or Elective

Sample 4 x 4 Block / AB Block Schedule

First Semester or A Schedule

	Grade 9	Grade 10	Grade 11	Grade 12
Block 1	English 9	English 10	English 11	English 12
Block 2	Algebra I	Geometry	Algebra II	Math-Related
Block 3	Health/PE	Language Other Than English	CTE or Elective	CTE or Elective
Block 4	Elective	Elective	CTE or Elective	CTE or Elective

Second Semester or B Schedule

	Grade 9	Grade 10	Grade 11	Grade 12
Block 1	World History & Geography	US History & Geography	Physics	Govt/Economics
Block 2	Biology	Chemistry	CTE or Elective	CTE or Elective
Block 3	Visual, Performing and Applied Arts	Elective	CTE or Elective	CTE or Elective
Block 4	Elective	Elective	CTE or Elective	CTE or Elective

Sample Trimester Schedule (Note: To provide educators ample time to cover all required content expectations in typical trimester schedule, longer class periods, which provide students with additional class time, may be required.)

Trimester 1	Grade 9	Grade 10	Grade 11	Grade 12
Period 1	English 9 A	English 10 A	CTE or Elective	CTE or Elective
Period 2	Biology A	US History & Geography A	CTE or Elective	CTE or Elective
Period 3	World History & Geography A	Elective	CTE or Elective	CTE or Elective
Period 4	Visual/Performing Arts A	Elective	English 11 A	English 12 A
Period 5	Algebra I A	Elective	Algebra II A	Math-Related A

Trimester 2	Grade 9	Grade 10	Grade 11	Grade 12
Period 1	Health/PE A	Elective	CTE or Elective	CTE or Elective
Period 2	Biology B	Elective	CTE or Elective	CTE or Elective
Period 3	Algebra I B	Chemistry A	CTE or Elective	CTE or Elective
Period 4	Visual/Performing Arts B	Geometry A	Algebra II B	math-Related B
Period 5	Language Other Than English IA	Language Other Than English 2B	Economics	science A

Trimester 3	Grade 9	Grade 10	Grade 11	Grade 12
Period 1	English 9 B	English 10 B	CTE or Elective	CTE or Elective
Period 2	Health/PE B	US History & Geography B	CTE or Elective	CTE or Elective
Period 3	World History & Geography B	Chemistry B	CTE or Elective	CTE or Elective
Period 4	Language Other Than English IB	Geometry B	Government	English 12 B
Period 5	Elective	Elective	English 11 B	Science B

ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION

What the Michigan Merit Curriculum Law Says on Alternative Education

Sec 1278b(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.

Sec. 1278b(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

I. 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.

PERSONAL CURRICULUM

What the Michigan Merit Curriculum Law Says

Sec. 1278b(5) The bill allows the parent or legal guardian of a pupil to request a personal curriculum for that pupil that modifies certain requirements of the Michigan Merit Standard requirements. The personal curriculum must be developed by the pupil, at least one of his or her parents or his or her guardian, and his or her high school counselor or other designee selected by the high school principal. Revisions to a personal curriculum may be made if they are developed and agreed to in the same manner as the original personal curriculum.

Sec. 1278b(5)(b) The personal curriculum must incorporate as much of the subject area content expectations of the Michigan Merit Standard as is practicable; establish measurable goals that the pupil must achieve while enrolled in high school; provide a method to evaluate whether he or she met those goals; and be aligned with the pupil's educational development plan (which a pupil must develop before entering high school, under the bill).

Sec. 1278b(5)(c) The pupil's parent or legal guardian and the superintendent of the school district or chief executive of the PSA or his or her designee must agree to the personal curriculum before it takes effect. If a pupil is at least 18 or is an emancipated minor, he or she may act on his or her own behalf under these provisions. The parent or guardian must be in communication with each of the pupil's teachers at least once each calendar quarter to monitor the pupil's progress toward the goals in his or her personal curriculum.

Questions & Answers

1. Q: Will there be guidelines from MDE as to when a personal curriculum modification can be made?

A: Yes. Work is underway on definitions and policies. Guidance will be developed with input from local and intermediate school districts.

2. Q: How can a student develop a personal curriculum?

A: The parent or legal guardian of a student may request a personal curriculum for the student that modifies a limited number of the Michigan Merit Curriculum requirements. A student is required to develop the personal curriculum with his or her parent or legal guardian and his or her guidance counselor or another qualified designee selected by the high school principal. A personal curriculum must be in keeping with the student's career plan. Revisions to a personal curriculum may be made if they are developed and agreed to in the same manner as the original personal curriculum.

If a student is at least 18 years old or is an emancipated minor, he or she may act on his or her own behalf under these provisions. The parent or guardian must be in communication with each of the student's teachers at least once each calendar quarter to monitor the student's progress toward the goals in his or her personal curriculum.

3. Q: Do students following a personal curriculum still get a diploma?

A: Yes. If all of the requirements under the law for a personal curriculum are met, then the board education of a local school district or board of directors of a public school academy may award a high school diploma to a student who successfully completes his or her personal curriculum.

4. Q: What are the accommodations for students receiving special education services?

A: If a student receives special education services, his or her individualized education program, in accordance with the Federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, must identify the supports, accommodations, and modifications necessary to allow him or her to progress in the curricular requirements, or in a personal curriculum, and meet the requirements for a high school diploma.

Michigan Merit Curriculum

Personal Curriculum Modification Options

Credits	Subject Area	Graduation Requirement	Personal Curriculum (Modification)
4 Credits	English Language Arts	Aligned with subject area content expectations developed by the Department and approved by the State Board of Education	No modification
4 Credits	Mathematics	Algebra 1 Geometry Algebra 2 1 additional math or math-related course Math or math-related credit in the final year	All students: Complete at least 3.5 math or math-related credits Complete a math or math-related credit in the final year Algebra 2 modification options: Complete 2.5 credits including .5 credit of Algebra 2 OR Complete a two year Career and Technical education curriculum which includes .5 credit of Algebra 2 content OR Complete Algebra 2 over 2 years with credit given for each year
3 Credits	Science	Biology Chemistry or Physics 1 additional Science credit	No modification
3 Credits	Social Studies	.5 Civics .5 Economics US History and Geography World History and Geography	No modification of Civics 2 credits must be earned Modified only if student takes additional credit(s) beyond the required credits in English Language Arts, Math, Science, or Languages other than English
1 Credit	Physical Education and Health	Credit guidelines developed by the Michigan Department of Education	Modification only if student takes additional credit(s) beyond the required credits in English Language Arts, Math, Science, or Languages other than English
1 Credit	Visual, Performing, Applied Arts	Credit guidelines developed by the Michigan Department of Education	Modification only if student takes additional credit(s) beyond the required credits in English Language Arts, Math, Science, or Languages other than English
2 Credits	Languages other than English	Begins with students entering 3rd grade in 2006 Credits earned in grades 9-12 OR An equivalent learning experience in grades K-12	No modification
	Online Learning Experience	Online course or learning experience OR Online experience is incorporated into each of the required credits	No modification

COURSE/CREDIT CONTENT EXPECTATIONS AND GUIDELINES

The Michigan Department of Education has developed and the State Board of Education has approved *High School Content Expectations (HSCE)* that outline what students should know and be able to do in English language arts, mathematics and science. Content Expectations for social studies are currently in the development process. These expectations serve as the foundation for the development of more specific Course/Credit Content Expectations that outline what students should know and be able to do for each credit required in the Michigan Merit Curriculum.

The Michigan Merit Curriculum Course/Credit Content Expectations and Guidelines will assist school districts and teachers to align their current curriculum, guide what is taught and assessed to earn credit, and provide parents with a tool to gauge student progress. These expectations also will serve as the basis to develop various questions included in the Michigan Merit Exam.

In the future, the Michigan Department of Education will be developing a variety of companion documents to support the implementation of these credits.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

What the Michigan Merit Curriculum Law Says

Sec. 1278b(a) 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 4 credits in English language arts that are aligned with subject area content expectations developed by the Michigan Department of Education and approved by the State Board of Education before graduating from high school.

Sec. 1278b(5)(f) The English language arts credit requirements are not subject to modification as part of a personal curriculum.

Background Information

The English Language Arts High School Content Expectations (HSCE) are organized in four strands, 14 standards, and 91 expectations. The 91 expectations are recursive in that they are addressed repeatedly throughout units of instruction and in increasing complexity and sophistication over the four years of high school English language arts. The overarching goal for the HSCE is for students to exhibit the “habits of mind” or “dispositions” listed in the Successful Post-Secondary Engagement chart on page four of the HSCE document available on the Michigan Department of Education’s high school web site at www.michigan.gov/highschool. These dispositions are developed through reading, writing, listening, speaking, viewing, and expressing experiences encompassing a broad range of literary, nonfiction literary, and informational texts.

The Grade 9 through 12 English Language Arts Course/Credit Requirements define how credit will be assigned for the four English language arts credits required for graduation. The credit requirement documents for each grade provide a model unit framework and model units of instruction for meeting the 14 standards and 91 expectations while developing the disposition assigned to each grade level. The model units focus on specific aspects of the literary experience while building, refining, applying, and extending the knowledge, skills, and strategies students will need for success beyond high school.

What Research Says

Research shows that in order for students to be successful in college and well-paying jobs, high school graduates need four years of English language arts in which all expectations are addressed across units of instruction in increasing levels of complexity and sophistication. In Michigan today, only 37% of high schools require students to take four years of continuous study in English language arts.

Questions & Answers

1. **Q: If a district currently requires a class such as Speech or Technical Writing, rather than English 9, 10, 11, or 12, as one of its required English graduation requirements, would it be allowed as one of the four English language arts requirements, or would it have to be changed to more of a general English 9, 10, 11, or 12-type class?**

A: If the Speech or Technical Writing courses meet all 91 expectations and offer students the opportunity to build, refine, apply, and extend the knowledge, skills, and strategies included in the unit framework and incorporated in the model units of instruction for the grade level, and include opportunities for developing the dispositions, a district could assign credit for these courses.

2. **Q: Are the four dispositions in English Language Arts (ELA) suggested themes to meet the benchmarks or are they mandated? Do all four need to be addressed at each grade level?**

A: Since the dispositions represent an overarching goal of the ELA High School Content Expectations, they are required. The goal is that by the end of high school, students will exhibit the "habits of mind" exemplified in all four dispositions. The Course/Credit requirements for ELA 9, 10, 11, and 12 are designed to focus on and develop one disposition in each grade while offering opportunities for discussing questions that would lead to all four dispositions. The more often each disposition is discussed throughout the grades, the more likely the students will be comfortable discussing issues related to all four dispositions.

COURSE/CREDIT CONTENT EXPECTATIONS

The Michigan Department of Education has developed and the State Board of Education has approved *High School Content Expectations (HSCE)* that outline what students should know and be able to do in English language arts, mathematics and science. Content Expectations for social studies are currently in the development process. These expectations serve as the foundation for the development of more specific Course/Credit Content Expectations that outline what students should know and be able to do for each credit required in the Michigan Merit Curriculum.

The Michigan Merit Curriculum Course/Credit Content Expectations and Guidelines will assist school districts and teachers to align their current curriculum, guide what is taught and assessed to earn credit, and provide parents with a tool to gauge student progress. These expectations also will serve as the basis to develop various questions included in the Michigan Merit Exam.

In the future, the Michigan Department of Education will be developing a variety of companion documents to support the implementation of these credits.

MATHEMATICS

What the Michigan Merit Curriculum Law Says

Sec. 1278a(a)(i) 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 4 credits in mathematics that are aligned with subject area content expectations developed by the Michigan Department of Education and approved by the State Board of Education before graduating from high school.

Students must complete at least Algebra I, Geometry, and Algebra II, or an integrated sequence of this course content that consists of 3 credits, and an additional mathematics credit, such as Trigonometry, Statistics, Pre-calculus, Calculus, Applied Math, Accounting, Business Math, or a retake of Algebra II. Each pupil must successfully complete at least 1 mathematics course during his or her final year of high school enrollment.

Sec. 1278b(5)(f) The mathematics credit requirements may be modified as part of a personal curriculum only after the pupil has successfully completed at least 2-1/2 credits including Algebra I, Geometry and 1 semester of Algebra II or the same content as 1 semester of Algebra II and only if the pupil successfully completes at least 3-1/2 total credits of the mathematics credits required under that section before completing high school including 1 mathematics course during his or her final year of high school. Under a personal curriculum, a student may elect to complete the same content as Algebra II over 2 years, with a credit awarded for each of those 2 years.

Background Information

The Mathematics High School Content Expectations (HSCE) are organized in four strands, 14 standards, and 157 expectations which students are expected to meet by the end of high school. The overarching goal for the HSCE is for students to exhibit the "habits of mind" that will result in the Components of Mathematical Proficiency listed in the Successful Post-Secondary Engagement chart on page four of the HSCE document available on the Michigan Department of Education's high school web site at www.michigan.gov/highschool. These dispositions are developed throughout the four years of high school mathematics instruction by building, refining, applying, and extending the knowledge, skills, and strategies incorporated in the 14 standards and 157 expectations. The Algebra I, Geometry, and Algebra II Course/Credit requirements define the expectations that must be met for the Algebra I, Geometry, and Algebra II credits required for graduation. Course/Credit requirement documents for Pre-calculus and Statistics define the expectations for earning additional optional credits in these areas. A 4th mathematics or math-related credit is also required for graduation.

What Research Says

Studies show students taking four years of challenging math including Algebra I, Geometry, Algebra II, and one additional higher-level course are more likely to succeed in college and the workplace. Eighty-four percent of individuals who currently hold highly paid professional jobs have taken Algebra II or higher as their last high school math course. In Michigan, nearly half of all high school graduates did not take four years of challenging math including Algebra II.

Questions & Answers

1. **Q: If students take Algebra I over two years can they earn credit for both years?**

A: The law implies all graduation requirements other than Algebra II, regardless of the length of time a student spends in a classroom, should count as one credit. In other words, students should earn one credit for Algebra I when they meet the credit requirements outlined in the Algebra I course/credit expectations. However, a district may also allow students to earn their 4th mathematics credit by taking classes that would support meeting the Algebra I expectations such as Algebra Concepts, Pre-algebra, or other “math-related” course. The 4th math credit must be aligned with the math content expectations. Local districts have the flexibility to decide the percent alignment necessary for the 4th mathematics or math-related credit.

2. **Q: Will it still be possible for our high school students to take Pre-algebra for high school credit?**

A: Yes, if a district determines Pre- Algebra, Algebra Concepts or other courses meet their 4th mathematics or math-related credit requirement, the district may decide to give students credit. However, students beginning their high school careers with Pre-algebra may have difficulty in meeting the requirements for Algebra I, Geometry, and Algebra II in four years without some additional mathematics support.

3. **Q: If a student is not successful in completing Algebra II the first semester and completes the mathematics requirements through an alternative approach such as CTE, does this mean that the student will be allowed to graduate with three and one-half credits of Mathematics, rather than the required four credits?**

A: If the district determines that the student has fulfilled all the Algebra II content expectations through an alternative approach, the district can give the student the full credit. If the student has not met the Algebra II requirements, the student and his/her parents would need to request a personal curriculum modification.

4. **Q: If a student has taken Algebra I, Geometry, Algebra II, and Pre-calculus prior to the senior year, is the student still required to take Math in the senior year?**

A: Yes. The requirement is that a student must earn a mathematics or math-related credit in the final year of high school. Based on the options listed in the law for possible 4th credits in mathematics, this requirement can be met by taking either a mathematics course or a math-related course. Guidance is being developed to help schools designate the classes that are math-related, but it is the discretion of the local district to determine what credits would count as “math-related”.

5. **Q: Does the required 4th credit in math have to be in math beyond Algebra II (for example, Pre-calculus or Trigonometry)?**

A: No. The law requires a 4th mathematics credit aligned with the HSCE, but provides local districts with the flexibility to determine what counts for the 4th mathematics credit. The credit could be in a basic or an applied math area, such as Business Math, Accounting, Consumer Math, Applied Math, General Math, Pre-algebra, etc.

6. Q: If a student has to take a math-related class in the final year, doesn't that preclude participation in relevant senior year experiences like a practicum, independent study, or cooperative employment?

A: No. A practicum, independent study, or cooperative employment experience can be structured to include math-related elements and fulfill the requirement for a 4th credit in mathematics aligned with the HSCE as determined by the district.

COURSE/CREDIT CONTENT EXPECTATIONS

The Michigan Department of Education has developed and the State Board of Education has approved *High School Content Expectations (HSCE)* that outline what students should know and be able to do in English language arts, mathematics and science. Content Expectations for social studies are currently in the development process. These expectations serve as the foundation for the development of more specific Course/Credit Content Expectations that outline what students should know and be able to do for each credit required in the Michigan Merit Curriculum.

The Michigan Merit Curriculum Course/Credit Content Expectations and Guidelines will assist school districts and teachers to align their current curriculum, guide what is taught and assessed to earn credit, and provide parents with a tool to gauge student progress. These expectations also will serve as the basis to develop various questions included in the Michigan Merit Exam.

In the future, the Michigan Department of Education will be developing a variety of companion documents to support the implementation of these credits.

SCIENCE

What the Michigan Merit Curriculum Law Says

Sec. 1278b(1)(b) 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 3 credits in science that are aligned with subject area content expectations developed by the Michigan Department of Education and approved by the Michigan State Board of Education, including completion of at least biology and either chemistry or physics. The law strongly encourages pupils to complete a 4th credit in science, such as Forensics, Astronomy, Earth Science, Agricultural Science, Environmental Science, Geology, Physics or Chemistry, Physiology, or Microbiology.

Sec. 1278b(5)(f) The science credit requirements are not subject to modification as part of a personal curriculum.

Background Information

The Science High School Content Expectations (HSCE) were designed to include essential general science understandings as well as discipline-specific descriptions for Earth Science, Biology, Physics, and Chemistry. The HSCE are organized in four disciplines/strands, 19 standards, 92 content statements, and prerequisite, essential, core, and recommended content expectations. Students are expected to meet all essential expectations (those describing essential general science knowledge and skills and assessable on the Michigan Merit Exam) by the end of high school. The overarching goal for the Science HSCE is for students to engage in the four Practices of Science Literacy listed in the Successful Post-Secondary Engagement chart on page 3 of the HSCE document available on the Michigan Department of Education's high school web site at www.michigan.gov/highschool. These practices are developed throughout the four years of high school science instruction by building, refining, applying, and extending the useful and connected knowledge, skills, and strategies incorporated in the standards and expectations.

Course/Credit requirements have been developed for Earth Science, Biology, Physics, and Chemistry. They define the expectations that must be met for high school credit in Earth Science, Biology, Physics, or Chemistry. All students are required to earn three science credits aligned with the HSCE. These three credits must include Biology and either Chemistry or Physics. The 3rd science credit may be met by taking another science course designed to meet other expectations included in the HSCE. The Michigan-developed science component of the high school Michigan Merit Exam (MME) will be based on the essential expectations from all four disciplines.

Districts are encouraged to offer opportunities for meeting both the graduation requirements and the essential science expectations identified as necessary for science literacy. The graduation requirement legislation recommends, but does not require, a fourth year of science credit.

What Research Says

Research shows students taking courses in Biology, Chemistry, and Physics and upper-level mathematics beyond Algebra II (such as Trigonometry) are more likely to be college ready. However, only 26% of ACT-tested high school graduates in Michigan met ACT's College Readiness Benchmark, demonstrating their readiness for their first credit-bearing college course in Biology.

Most modern technology came from physics. Any technology involving electricity, magnetism, mechanics, heat, light, sound, optics, etc. comes from physics. In addition, Physics is one of the few high school-level classes that requires both high level mathematical and verbal skills. All problems in physics are word problems that require students to think logically, use analogies, and deal with subtle shades of meaning as well as use mathematics. Physics courses teach students to think, a valuable skill apart from the knowledge content of physics.

In Michigan, approximately 40 percent of students took chemistry and 25 percent took physics prior to high school graduation.

Questions & Answers

1. **Q: What was the thinking behind the choice of science courses listed in the Michigan Merit Curriculum?**

A: Students are required to take a minimum of three credits of science: Biology, Physics or Chemistry, and one additional science credit aligned the HSCE, such as Earth Science. These courses are specified because they are most often the prerequisite courses for additional study in science, mathematics, or engineering. However, these recommendations do not specify a sequence, nor do they represent the only courses that could meet the requirement. The law strongly encourages students to take a 4th science credit such as Forensics, Astronomy, Earth Science, Agricultural or Environmental Science, Geology, Physiology, Microbiology, etc.

2. **Q: What subject can a student take to fulfill the 3rd science credit required in the Michigan Merit Curriculum?**

Can Advanced Placement (AP) Environmental Science be counted as a "science" under the new state curriculum?

A: Under the Michigan Merit Curriculum, students are required to take three credits of science including Biology, Chemistry or Physics and one additional credit aligned with the HSCE. Students may select the 3rd credit from the menu of science credits offered and approved for credit by each district. These offerings could include AP courses. Since the MME will assess the essential expectations in all four science disciplines, districts should offer opportunities to meet all essential expectations.

3. Q: With respect to Physics and Chemistry classes, will a basic level of those classes be acceptable or will students have to take the more rigorous classes that require higher-level mathematics?

A: The Course/Credit Requirements for assigning credit for Physics and for Chemistry include meeting all essential and core expectations. Students earn the required credit for Chemistry or Physics when they have met the course/credit expectations. The law states that the assignment of credit must be based, at least in part, on assessments designed for the purpose of determining whether the expectations have been met. Since students are required to earn four credits in mathematics, they should be prepared for the mathematics infused in the science credits.

4. Q: Can students earn science credit for conceptual Physics and Chemistry classes, or for other classes designed to address science concepts at a basic level?

A: The law does provide districts with the flexibility to determine which classes or credits contain enough science that is aligned with the HSCE to count as the 3rd science credit. Therefore, a district could decide to grant students their 3rd science credit for Basic Chemistry, Conceptual Physics, or for Physical Science, but students still would be required to earn a full credit for either Physics or Chemistry.

5. Q: Can a student take a Physics class and count it for both a math/math-related and physics credit?

A: No. If a student takes Physics as one of three required science credits, it could not be counted as a math-related credit. However, if a student takes Physics as an elective after fulfilling his/her science requirements, it could qualify as a math-related class as determined by the district.

6. Q: Would an Earth Science class need to include the entire essential and core expectations for Earth Science. In other words, once a class is deemed Earth Science must it then meet ALL the expectations for that course?

A: If a course is designed to provide students with a high school Earth Science credit, it must meet all course/credit content expectations.

Earth Science is not a required science credit, but it could be used as a 3rd year science credit. A course should only be named Earth Science if it designed to meet all of the Earth Science course/credit content expectations. If a student takes a general science or other course designed to meet some of the Earth Science expectations, that course could count as a 3rd science credit if it is aligned with the HSCE, as determined by the district.

7. Q: While Earth Science is not a required credit under the Michigan Merit Curriculum, will it be tested on the new Michigan Merit Exam (MME)?

A: While Earth Science is not a high school graduation requirement, the essential skills listed for Earth Science are expectations for high school and will be tested on the MME, along with the essentials for the other three science credit areas.

COURSE/CREDIT CONTENT EXPECTATIONS

The Michigan Department of Education has developed and the State Board of Education has approved *High School Content Expectations (HSCE)* that outline what students should know and be able to do in English language arts, mathematics and science. Content Expectations for social studies are currently in the development process. These expectations serve as the foundation for the development of more specific Course/Credit Content Expectations that outline what students should know and be able to do for each credit required in the Michigan Merit Curriculum.

The Michigan Merit Curriculum Course/Credit Content Expectations and Guidelines will assist school districts and teachers to align their current curriculum, guide what is taught and assessed to earn credit, and provide parents with a tool to gauge student progress. These expectations also will serve as the basis to develop various questions included in the Michigan Merit Exam. In the future, the Michigan Department of Education will be developing a variety of companion documents to support the implementation of these credits.

SOCIAL STUDIES

What the Michigan Merit Curriculum Law Say

Sec. 1278a(ii) 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 3 credits in social science that are aligned with subject area content expectations developed by the Michigan Department of Education and approved by the Michigan State Board of Education, including completion of at least 1 credit in United States history and geography, 1 credit in world history and geography, ½ credit in economics, and ½ credit of civics.

Sec. 1278b(5)(h) The social science credit requirements may be modified as part of a personal curriculum only if the pupil has successfully completed 2 credits of the required social science credits including the civics course. 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.

Background Information

High School Content Expectations for Social Studies are being written at this time and should be approved by the State Board of Education in July 2007. The Social Studies HSCE will define what students should know and be able to do by the end of high school.

Social Studies Course/Credit Requirement documents will also be produced. They will define the expectations for earning the three required Social Studies credits as defined by law: U. S. History and Geography (1 credit), World History and Geography (1 credit), Economics (1/2 credit), and Civics (1/2 credit). As stated above, the new law requires both U.S. History and World History credits to contain a geography component.

Until the above content expectations are developed, a school district or PSA should align the content of social studies credits required under the Michigan Merit Curriculum with the current Michigan Curriculum Framework for Social Studies.

What Research Says

Studies show students taking more social studies coursework have higher ACT reading test scores, knowledge of basic concepts of democracy and government and the basic foundation necessary to be responsible citizens. In Michigan, 87 percent of districts currently require students to complete three or more credits of social studies.

Questions & Answers (This section will be completed upon completion of the Social Studies Content Expectations)

This document is intended to provide general guidance. Due to the complexity of the law, policies and guidance will continue to evolve. For specific information regarding the law, please refer to Public Acts 123 and 124 of 2006. 11/15/06

COURSE/CREDIT CONTENT GUIDELINES

The Michigan Department of Education has developed and the State Board of Education has approved *High School Content Expectations (HSCE)* that outline what students should know and be able to do in English language arts, mathematics and science. Content Expectations for social studies are currently in the development process. These expectations serve as the foundation for the development of more specific Course/Credit Content Expectations that outline what students should know and be able to do for each credit required in the Michigan Merit Curriculum.

The Michigan Merit Curriculum Course/Credit Content Expectations and Guidelines will assist school districts and teachers to align their current curriculum, guide what is taught and assessed to earn credit, and provide parents with a tool to gauge student progress. These expectations also will serve as the basis to develop various questions included in the Michigan Merit Exam.

In the future, the Michigan Department of Education will be developing a variety of companion documents to support the implementation of these credits.

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.

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.

Currently, less than half of all Michigan high schools require students to have one or more visual and performing arts credits prior to graduation.

Questions & Answers

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

A: The goal of one 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 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 were the credit guidelines for the visual, performing and applied arts developed?

A: The Michigan Department of Education established an Advisory Committee to develop the Visual, Performing and Applied Arts credit guidelines. This committee was composed of active, respected, and award-winning scholars and practitioners from: K-12 schools, intermediate and local school districts, postsecondary and teacher preparation institutions, industry, education associations, career and technical education, and cultural institutions.

The State Board of Education approved the Visual, Performing and Applied Arts guidelines on September 12, 2006.

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

A: The one credit graduation requirement in the visual, performing, and applied arts is a *minimum* requirement. The Michigan Merit Curriculum provides students desiring to specialize in or have more learning experiences in the visual, performing, and applied arts the flexibility to select additional electives, and to earn merit core credits through online courses, testing out, summer school, and other local options.

4. Q: What are the visual, performing, and applied arts credit guidelines based on?

A: The credit guidelines are based on national and state standards and career pathway and program guidelines for the visual, performing, and applied arts. They are aligned with No Child Left Behind and the Michigan School Improvement Framework. In addition to the new visual, performing, and applied arts credit guidelines, 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.

5. 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 through Industrial Technology programs.

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

A: All 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 are eligible for consideration by the local district. The one credit requirement is frequently equivalent to one year of traditional coursework.

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 the 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 one 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.

COURSE/CREDIT CONTENT EXPECTATIONS AND GUIDELINES

The Michigan Department of Education has developed and the State Board of Education has approved *High School Content Expectations (HSCE)* that outline what students should know and be able to do in English language arts, mathematics and science. Content Expectations for social studies are currently in the development process. These expectations serve as the foundation for the development of more specific Course/Credit Content Expectations that outline what students should know and be able to do for each credit required in the Michigan Merit Curriculum.

The Michigan Merit Curriculum Course/Credit Content Expectations and Guidelines will assist school districts and teachers to align their current curriculum, guide what is taught and assessed to earn credit, and provide parents with a tool to gauge student progress. These expectations also will serve as the basis to develop various questions included in the Michigan Merit Exam.

In the future, the Michigan Department of Education will be developing a variety of companion documents to support the implementation of these credits.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND HEALTH

What the Michigan Merit Curriculum Law Says

Sec 1278a At least 1 credit in subject matter that includes both health and physical education aligned with guidelines developed by the Michigan Department of Education and approved by the Michigan State Board of Education.

Sec 1278b(5)(g)(i) The health and physical education credit 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 under subsection (1) and section.

What other Relevant Michigan Law Says

380.1502 Health and physical education; establishment; course in physical education required; extracurricular athletics as meeting requirement.

Sec. 1502(1) Health and physical education for pupils of both sexes shall be established and provided in all public schools of this state. Subject to subsection (2), each pupil attending public school in this state who is physically fit and capable of doing so shall take the course in physical education.

(2) A school district may credit a pupil's participation in extracurricular athletics or other extracurricular activities involving physical activity as meeting the physical education requirement for the pupil under subsection (1).

History: 1976, Act 451, Imd. Eff. Jan. 13, 1977 ; -- Am. 1993, Act 335, Imd. Eff. Dec. 31, 1993

Popular Name: Act 451

What Research Says

Both research and intuition tell us that when students are fit, healthy, and ready to learn, they achieve more success in all areas of their lives, including the classroom. Research shows effective health education helps students stay in school and better achieve in their classes. Research also shows regular physical activity has a positive impact on cognitive functioning and supports better student learning.

Questions & Answers

1. Q: Do the requirements give the option for students to take just physical education OR health?

A: No. One credit that includes both physical education AND health must be earned by high school students for graduation. The requirement could be met in two separate courses each earning ½ credit.

2. Q: How should the one credit for physical education/health be divided?

A: Schools have flexibility in meeting the requirements as long as they meet the intent of the requirement. They are able, under the law, to organize the health education and physical education requirement at the high school in whatever way makes sense in their district.

They must ensure that:

The standards and credit guidelines for both health education and physical education are thoroughly addressed in the required content; and persons assigned to teach health education have a teaching certificate with an endorsement that qualifies them to teach health, and those assigned to teach physical education must have a teaching certificate with an endorsement that qualifies them to teach physical education.

Districts may find that the simplest solution is offering a semester of health and a semester of physical education to meet the requirement, using qualified teachers to do so. Even if the school teaches health in some other class, such as physical education or biology, the teacher must have the health endorsement to teach health education.

3. Q: How does the High School Graduation Requirement for one credit in physical education and health affect teachers?

A: Some teachers who currently are teaching health education and/or physical education are qualified to teach both. Not all are. The state's health education endorsements are MA, MX and KH. The physical education endorsements are MB, MX, and SP.

4. Q: How can high school teachers who lack the endorsement to teach health education become qualified?

A: Certain institutions of higher education are collaborating to offer alternative preparation/ endorsement options for teachers who are already teaching health, but who do not have the endorsement. Some institutions will give teachers significant credit toward the additional endorsement for experience gained in teaching health and professional development received from the regional School Health Coordinator. Some institutions also are planning to offer distance learning courses, evening and/or weekend courses, and summer institutes for the convenience of teachers.

5. Q: I thought No Child Left Behind didn't require health and physical education teachers to be highly qualified.

A: That's true. However, state law and administrative rules define what it means to be a qualified teacher in Michigan schools. For the definition of a qualified teacher of health education, go to www.michigan.gov/mde. Click on K-12 Curriculum/ Curriculum Subjects/ Health. Look for the document titled, "Fully Qualified Teachers of Health Education." For the definition of a qualified teacher of physical education, go to: www.Michigan.gov/physed. Under professional development, you will find the document titled, "Qualified Teachers of Physical Education."

6. Q: Can districts still choose to replace extracurricular activities (e.g. marching band and sports) for the physical education requirement? What about health?

A: Under MI law, 380.1502(1) "Health and physical education for pupils of both sexes shall be established and provided in all public schools of this state. Subject to subsection (2), each pupil attending public school in this state who is physically fit and capable of doing so shall take the course in physical education."

"(2) A school may credit a student's participation in extracurricular athletics or other extracurricular activities involving physical activity as meeting the physical education requirement for the student under subsection (1)." This law is still in effect as well as the new Michigan Merit high school graduation requirements."

Therefore, a district may still determine that outside activities involving physical activity may be used as credit toward the physical education requirement. Please note, however, that this pertains **only** to the physical education credit guidelines of the Michigan Merit Curriculum, not the health education credit guidelines.

7. Q: What do the credit guidelines refer to?

A: The credit guidelines refer to the content standards, benchmarks and grade level content expectations that have been developed for both physical education and health education.

COURSE/CREDIT CONTENT GUIDELINES

The Michigan Department of Education has developed and the State Board of Education has approved *High School Content Expectations (HSCE)* that outline what students should know and be able to do in English language arts, mathematics and science. Content Expectations for social studies are currently in the development process. These expectations serve as the foundation for the development of more specific Course/Credit Content Expectations that outline what students should know and be able to do for each credit required in the Michigan Merit Curriculum.

The Michigan Merit Curriculum Course/Credit Content Expectations and Guidelines will assist school districts and teachers to align their current curriculum, guide what is taught and assessed to earn credit, and provide parents with a tool to gauge student progress. These expectations also will serve as the basis to develop various questions included in the Michigan Merit Exam.

In the future, the Michigan Department of Education will be developing a variety of companion documents to support the implementation of these credits.

ONLINE COURSE OR LEARNING EXPERIENCE

What the Michigan Merit Curriculum Law Says

Sec. 1278a(1)(b) A school district or public school academy shall provide the basic level of technology and internet access required by the state board to complete the online course or learning experience. For a pupil to meet this requirement, the pupil shall meet either of the following, as determined by the school district or public school academy:

Has successfully completed at least 1 course or learning experience that is presented online, as defined by the Michigan Department of Education.

The pupil's school district or public school academy has integrated an online experience throughout the high school curriculum by ensuring that each teacher of each course that provides the required credits of the Michigan merit curriculum has integrated an online experience into the course.

What Research Says

Thirty-eight million fulltime workers in the nation have Internet access at their jobs and two-thirds of them (67%) go online at least once per day. Seventy-two percent of full-time workers with Internet access at work say it has improved their ability to do their jobs.

Questions & Answers

I. Q: Why has an online learning experience been added to the Michigan Merit Curriculum?

A: Today, technology plays an integral role in school, at home and in the workplace. Completing a meaningful online learning experience in grades 9-12 will allow students to become familiar with the key means of increasing their own learning skills and knowledge. It also will prepare them for the demands they will encounter in higher education, the workplace, and personal lifelong learning.

Already, many universities and colleges require students to have a laptop with them when they arrive on campus. Businesses conduct training sessions online, and cities now are providing wireless Internet access in businesses to attract customers to their establishments. To give our students an experience of learning in a virtual world, the online learning experience is included in the Michigan Merit Curriculum requirements.

2. Q: What counts for the online learning requirement?

A: The Michigan Department of Education has developed Online Learning Guidelines that were approved by the State Board in October 2006. You can access these guidelines at www.michigan.gov/highschool.

3. Q: Will the online learning experience cost money? Who is going to pay for this?

A: The Michigan Merit Curriculum requires an online learning experience, which can be met in a variety of ways at no cost and does not necessarily have to be met through an online course. A free online course called *Career Forward* has been developed by the Michigan Department of Education and the Michigan Virtual University (MVU) with funding from the Microsoft Corporation. For more information visit the [Career Forward](#) website at MVU.

4. Q: Can the online learning requirement be met prior to 9th grade?

A: Yes, the requirement may be satisfied by an online experience at the middle school level, but students are encouraged to continue with online learning throughout high school.

5. Q: Does the online learning experience need to go on a transcript?

A: While districts will need to assure students complete this requirement, the law does not mandate that a student be given credit for this experience. If a credit is not awarded, the online learning experience does not need to be on the transcript. However, a district would need to keep a record of students meeting this requirement. If the district offers students the ability to earn credit for an online learning class or experience, the credit should appear on the transcript.

6. Q: If a student is taking a high school class via distance learning, does this fulfill the requirement of an online course or learning experience?

A: Yes, if the class meets the guidelines. Distance learning does not automatically qualify. The distance learning experience must meet the guidelines.

7. Q: Does an online course or online learning experience need to be teacher led or can it be self-paced?

A: It depends. If the online course or online learning experience is being used to earn credit for graduation, it must be teacher led. However, students can participate in online courses and online learning experiences without a teacher if credit is not being granted.

COURSE/CREDIT CONTENT GUIDELINES

The Michigan Department of Education has developed and the State Board of Education has approved *High School Content Expectations (HSCE)* that outline what students should know and be able to do in English language arts, mathematics and science. Content Expectations for social studies are currently in the development process. These expectations serve as the foundation for the development of more specific Course/Credit Content Expectations that outline what students should know and be able to do for each credit required in the Michigan Merit Curriculum.

The Michigan Merit Curriculum Course/Credit Content Expectations and Guidelines will assist school districts and teachers to align their current curriculum, guide what is taught and assessed to earn credit, and provide parents with a tool to gauge student progress. These expectations also will serve as the basis to develop various questions included in the Michigan Merit Exam.

In the future, the Michigan Department of Education will be developing a variety of companion documents to support the implementation of these credits.

LANGUAGES OTHER THAN ENGLISH

What the Michigan Merit Curriculum Law Says

Sec. 1278a(2) Beginning with pupils entering grade 3 in 2006, 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 during grades 9 to 12 at least 2 credits, as determined by the Michigan Department of Education, in a language other than English, or the pupil has successfully completed at any time during grades K to 12 course work or other learning experiences that are substantially equivalent to 2 credits in a language other than English, based on guidelines developed by the department. Schools must consider American Sign Language to be a language other than English. A student may meet all or part of this requirement with online course work.

What Research Says

Students who learn a second language benefit in practical ways. They are better able to communicate with native speakers in this country and in other nations; they have a better understanding of other cultures; and they are better prepared for potential careers. Moreover, students' learning skills in general are enhanced through foreign language study.

Students who study two years of a language other than English score significantly higher on the SAT verbal and math test than students who do not complete two years of a language. Higher wages are also linked to students who studying a language other than English for two years. In Michigan, 85% of school districts currently do not require a world language credit.

Questions & Answers

1. **Q: Has the Michigan World Language Association been included in the development of guidelines for the languages other than English requirement?**

A: Yes

2. **Q: If a student is fluent in two or more languages, does he or she still need two credits for graduation?**

A: The guidelines currently under development will address this issue.

3. **Q: If we currently offer world language to juniors and seniors via Michigan Virtual High School, can this course count for both of the world language and the online requirement?**

A: Yes.