

Career & College Ready

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Michigan Merit Curriculum

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**Leveraging Career and Technical Education
(CTE) to Support Implementation of the
Michigan Merit Curriculum
For State-Approved CTE Programs**



MICHIGAN
Department
of **Education**

Introduction

The Michigan Merit Curriculum (MMC) is crafted around the philosophical belief that all students will need post-secondary learning opportunities beyond high school. It is not a curriculum in the traditional sense in that it doesn't prescribe instructional materials and approaches. Instead it specifies that all students who earn a diploma, at a minimum, have demonstrated proficiency with the content outlined by the state academic standards or guidelines. While traditional course taking pathways are an option under the MMC, the legislation is specific in stating that schools "may provide this curriculum by providing the credits specified ... by using alternative instructional delivery methods such as alternative course work, humanities course sequences, CTE, industrial technology courses, or vocational education, or by a combination of these" ([MCL 380.1278\(b\) \(7\)](#)). This flexibility within the MMC supports the need for personalization, acceleration, and innovation in an atmosphere of high expectations and high support for students earning a diploma in Michigan.

As the learning skills for college and the workplace have merged, the MMC, if properly implemented, will prepare students with the skills and knowledge needed to be successful in our global economy and an emerging workforce. In addition to promoting alternative delivery methods as outlined above, [MCL 380.1278\(b\) \(7\)](#) calls out CTE yet again by encouraging districts to consider the learning pathways offered by Career and Technical Education. According to the American Institutes for Research, Career and Technical Education "programs and pathways ensure that coursework is simultaneously aligned to rigorous academic standards and postsecondary expectations ... CTE pathways and programs use applied, contextual learning

to help students see the relevance of what they are learning and its connection to career opportunities and life goals... CTE pathways have the potential to engage many more students and increase high school graduation rates and postsecondary success."¹

The purpose of this document is to provide guidance around the integration of credit into CTE programs and to differentiate that integration from the waiver options available to program completers.

Integration of Credits

As discussed in the introduction, [MCL 380.1278\(b\) \(7\)](#) provides for alternative credit delivery options including CTE. Specifically, the law states that "School districts and public school academies that operate CTE programs are encouraged to *integrate* the credit requirements of [the MMC] into those programs."

In those CTE programs where there is already a connection between specific academic standards and the CTE content, CTE program experts and academic experts should work together to identify the academic content, the amount of credit associated with that content and how it makes sense to surface that content within the CTE context. They should co-create lesson plans and the measures that determine proficiency with the academic content. In some cases, the CTE teacher and the academic teacher may choose to co-teach, with the academic teacher delivering the content within the CTE class. With integration, the intended result is that the student leaves the CTE class proficient in and earning credit for both the academic content and the CTE content.

1 [How Career and Technical Education Can Help Students be College and Career Ready: A Primer](#)

Waiver of Credits

The MMC legislation allows for waivers of credit for those students who complete a program . This is different from the integration option in two ways:

- Students must be completers of the CTE program to waive a credit whereas any student in any CTE program may earn credit for academic content integrated into the CTE class.
- A waived credit is a credit not earned; the academic credit does not show up anywhere in the student's record.

There are two types of credit waivers for CTE program completers: waivers that require a personal curriculum and waivers that do not. The table below provides a summary of the credit that can be waived.

Credit Waived Up to:	Personal Curriculum Required ²	Legislation Authorization
1 Science	no	MCL 380.1278b(1)(b)
1 World Language	no	MCL 380.1278a(2)(2)
1 Social Studies ³	yes	MCL 380.1278b(5)(h)
1 Health and Physical Education ⁴	yes	MCL 380.1278b(5)(i)
1 Visual, Performing and Applied Arts (VPAA)	yes	MCL 380.1278b(5)(j)

Transcript Considerations

Districts determine how the credit earned through a CTE program appears on a transcript.⁵ Districts might choose to list the CTE course along with the CTE and/or academic credit earned in that course. Waived credit should not appear on the transcript as credit earned, but a district might choose to indicate that the credit was waived because the student was a program completer.

2 For more information on how to waive a credit using a personal curriculum please see [A Parent's Guide to Personal Curriculum: Focus on Enrichment](#).

3 Cannot exclude civics content

4 The availability of this option is left to the discretion of the local district, as separate laws remain in effect requiring students who are physically fit and capable to take a physical education course and to receive instruction regarding the spread and prevention of HIV and AIDS, which may present conflict with state law regarding the PC.

5 [MCL 380.1279g\(4\)](#) states that districts must include a student's Michigan Merit Exam score and days in attendance while in high school. Legislation is moot regarding transcription of courses and/or credits.

Appendix

Definition of a “department-approved formal CTE program or curriculum:”

According to R 395.241, Rule 11 in [Michigan Administrative Code](#), a “Department-approved formal CTE program or curriculum” consists of:

- A coherent sequence of courses so that students gain academic, technical, and work behavior skills
- Instruction that includes classroom, laboratory, work based learning, and leadership opportunities
- Instruction that is supervised, directed, or coordinated by an appropriately certificated CTE teacher
- Consists of standards approved by the State Board (R395.243, Rule 13).
- Must receive approval from MDE/OCTE through an application process (R 395.244, Rule 14 (8))

Definition of a CTE Completer:

The definition of a CTE completer for CTE accountability measures is different than the definition of a CTE program completer for purposes of earning MMC credit.

In other words, CTE reporting of completer status in the Career and Technical Education Information System (CTEIS) is different than allowing a student to waive the 3rd Science credit or 2nd World Language credit. For federal reporting, a completer has passed each course in the CTE program and successfully achieved all the competencies.

For the purposes of earning a credit for graduation, if the student meets the district’s definition of passing then that meets the intent of the law. To waive the 3rd Science credit and/or 2nd World Language credit, the student must still complete the entire sequence of courses in the program; however, whatever grade the district determines meets passing in those courses is acceptable to make the exchange for graduation credits.