



## COURSE/CREDIT CONTENT GUIDELINES

Since the passage of the new state high school graduation requirements commonly referred to as the Michigan Merit Curriculum, the Michigan Department of Education has worked with hundreds of educators and representatives from professional organizations and higher education to develop documents and materials that outline what students should know and be able to do in required courses/credits during their high school experience.

Two main sets of documents called *High School Content Expectations (HSCE)* and specific *Course/Credit Content Expectations* and Guidelines provide educators with the tools needed to align their curriculum and instruction and provide parents with meaningful information to gauge student progress. These expectations also serve as the basis to determine student proficiency, grant high school credit, and develop various questions for the Michigan Merit Exam.

The Michigan Merit requirements are based on what research shows will provide students with the educational foundation to be successful as they move beyond high school into college and the workplace.

## 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

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

**A:** The goal of 1 credit graduation requirement in the visual, performing, and applied arts is to ensure that all students have a foundation and experience in the complete artistic/creative process 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 1 credit requirement in the Michigan Merit Curriculum meet the needs of students in the visual, performing and applied arts?**

**A:** The 1 credit graduation requirement in the visual, performing, and applied arts is a *minimum* requirement. The Michigan Merit Curriculum provides students 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 local district is to determine which courses or programs will qualify as meeting this requirement. The 1 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 each of the visual, performing, and applied arts. Because of this core focus, the guidelines can be easily adapted to curricular offerings in any of the visual, performing, or applied arts disciplines and /or level of student proficiency. This provides local school districts with the flexibility to determine which of their course offerings in the visual, performing, and applied arts, alone or in combination will prepare students to master all of the credit guidelines.

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

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

The visual, performing, and applied arts guidelines promise to introduce more students to the broad field of the Visual, Performing and Applied Arts.

## **VPAA Additions 9/07**

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

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

**10. 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.