

# Michigan Merit Curriculum High School Graduation Requirements

## Overview

Understanding Michigan's graduation requirements will enable you to help your child obtain a high school diploma and ultimately succeed academically. The Michigan Merit Curriculum seeks to ensure that Michigan's high school graduates have the necessary skills to succeed either in postsecondary education or in the workplace.

**Components:** Sixteen mandatory credits, which are aligned with recommended college and work-ready curriculum:



- Four credits in English language arts.
  - Four credits in math, including Geometry and Algebra I and II. At least one math course must be taken during the student's senior year.
  - Three credits in science, with the use of labs, including biology and chemistry or physics.
  - Three credits in social sciences, including U.S. History and Geography, World History and Geography, one half credit in Civics, and one half credit in Economics.
  - One credit in Visual, Performing and Applied Arts.
  - One credit in Physical Education and Health.
  - All high school students must also participate in an online course or learning experience.
  - Effective for the class of 2016, the credit requirement will increase to 18 credits, to include two credits in world languages. Students may receive credit if they have had a similar learning experience in grades K-12.
- Awarding credit is based on proficiency in expectations, not seat time, and can be earned prior to a student entering high school or by testing out.

- Credit may be earned through one or more of the following: alternative course work, humanities course sequences, career and technical education, industrial technology courses, or vocational education.
- Credit can be earned through advanced studies such as accelerated course placement, advanced placement, dual enrollment, an international baccalaureate program or early college/middle college program.
- The Department of Education develops subject area content expectations and subject area assessments to evaluate whether students have met those expectations.
- Option for a student's parent to request a personal curriculum for the student which is developed with the high school counselor or other designee selected by the high school principal. The personal curriculum is for that small percentage of students who seek to exceed the requirements of the MMC or for students with disabilities who need special accommodation and modifications.
- Beginning with students entering 8th grade in 2006 (Class of 2011), schools must give 7th grade students the opportunity to create an educational development plan based on a career pathways program or similar career exploration program. All students must create a plan before entering high school.
- Although this is unlikely to affect your child, the superintendent of public instruction may designate up to 15 specialty high schools that are exempt from certain requirements of the Michigan Merit High School Graduation Requirements. These specialty schools are eligible for exemptions if the school:
  - Incorporates a significant reading and writing component throughout its curriculum.
  - Uses a specialized, innovative and rigorous curriculum in areas such as performing arts, world language, and extensive use of internships or other learning innovations.
  - Demonstrates the following: mean scores from ACT math and science exams that exceed by 10% the district average; an 85% graduation rate; and enrollment of 75% of graduates into a postsecondary institution.<sup>29</sup>

Meet with your child's guidance counselor to ensure that he or she is taking the appropriate classes and is on track for graduation. If your child plans to attend college, ask if these classes will prepare him/her to apply for and succeed in college.

## Personal Curriculum

### Overview

The personal curriculum (PC) can be requested by the parent, legal guardian, or emancipated student. It allows the board of a school district or public school academy to award a high school diploma if the student completes the PC, including as many of the content expectations of the Michigan Merit Curriculum as possible.

According to state law, a PC's may be developed in order to:

- go beyond the academic credit requirements by adding more math, science, English language arts, or world languages credit.
- modify the mathematics requirement.
- modify, if necessary, the credit requirements of a student with an Individualized Education Plan (IEP).
- modify credit requirements for a student who transfers from out of state or from a non-public school and is unable to meet the Michigan Merit Curriculum requirements.

### When is a Personal Curriculum Modification Appropriate?

A personal curriculum may be appropriate for a student who has demonstrated one or more of the following:

- The ability or desire to access advanced or specialized content that cannot be met through electives (e.g., district lacks the resources to provide the course/content, or schedule does not allow student to access district offering).
- The ability to succeed in accelerated or advanced math, science, English language arts, or world languages.
- The academic need to modify the Algebra II credit requirement.

### For a student with an IEP:

- A documented need requires modifications because the student's disability affects access to and/or demonstration of proficiency in the curriculum.
- Lack of progress on the MMC despite documented interventions, supports, and accommodations.

### For a transfer student:

- Transferring from out of state or from a nonpublic school after successful completion of the equivalent of two years of high school credit.<sup>30</sup>

## Additional Information & Resources

1. MDE K-12 Curriculum <http://www.michigan.gov/mde/0,4615,7-140-28753---,00.html>



## Virtual Learning Opportunities

### Overview

In 2006, Michigan became the first state to require an online course or learning experience for high school graduation.

Students in Michigan have two choices for virtual learning experiences:

- Michigan Virtual School
- Michigan Connections Academy

### Michigan Virtual School (MVS)

#### Overview

- Provided more than 16,000 course enrollments through approximately 500 schools during the 2008-09 school year.
- Offers more than 150 courses, including 19 Advanced Placement (AP) courses and seven different foreign languages. Classes are also available in the core areas of math, English, science and social studies, with an emphasis on meeting the Michigan Merit Curriculum requirements. Most courses are at the high school level, but over 50 are available for middle school students.
- Has trained more than 400 teachers as online instructors. These instructors are certified, highly-qualified teachers.
- Enables middle and high school students in Michigan to take courses they otherwise would not be able to access.
- Operated by *Michigan Virtual University*, a private, not-for-profit Michigan corporation.
- Cooperates with individual schools and districts to award course credit and diplomas.
- Students eligible to take classes at MVS include gifted and talented students, special needs students, students who need to “make up” credit, public and non-public school students, and home-schooled students.

### Michigan Connections Academy

#### Overview

- Instruction from state-certified teachers who are recognized as highly qualified under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act/No Child Left Behind.
- Support from trained counselors, principals, and administrative staff.
- Clubs and activities that foster social development and academic growth.
- A tuition-free, K–12 online public school, also known as a cyber charter school, that students attend from home.
- Authorized by Ferris State University Charter Schools Office and operated

- by Michigan Connections Academy, a nonprofit corporation, through a contract with CA of Michigan, LLC.
- Students from kindergarten through age 20 are eligible to take classes at Michigan Connections Academy.
- Instruction from state-certified teachers who are recognized as highly qualified under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act/No Child Left Behind.

## Additional Information & Resources

1. Michigan Virtual School <http://www.mivhs.org/>
2. Michigan Connections Academy  
<http://www.connectionsacademy.com/michigan-school/home.aspx>