

Montcalm Area Intermediate School District

Michigan's **NEW**  
High School  
Graduation  
requirements

A guide for parents of 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade students

**IMPORTANT NOTICE:**

**Implementation guidelines are pending.**

Information is subject to change as guidelines become available.  
For the most current information see your guidance counselor.



## **Montcalm Area Intermediate School District**

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Helping schools help students.

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Strengthen and facilitate collaboration to maximize community resources.

The Montcalm Area Intermediate School District will provide leadership to assure quality support services and learning for all.

### **VISION**

Our vision is to be a service agency second to none helping schools help students succeed.

It is the policy of the MAISD that no person, on the basis of race, creed, color, religion, national origin or ancestry, age, sex, height, weight, marital status, or disability shall be discriminated against, excluded from participation in, denied the benefits of, or otherwise subjected to discrimination in any program or activity for which it is responsible.

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August 2006

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# High School Graduation requirements

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## Introduction

**H**olding students to consistent, high standards that will prepare them for the life and global economy they will face is the focus behind Michigan's new high school graduation requirements. Successfully completing these requirements will give your high school graduate a strong foundation in preparation for higher education and to be competitive in securing the jobs of the 21st Century. In the short-term, the requirements will prepare your student to pass the **Michigan Merit Exam** and assist in college admission.

The State Board of Education introduced the new requirements, called the **Michigan Merit Curriculum**, in December 2005. When the state legislature enacted the requirements as law in March 2006, they became the driving force behind high school reform in Michigan and are among the most rigorous in the nation. In satisfying these requirements, graduates will meet and often surpass the most stringent entry requirements for all colleges and universities in the state, and will provide the academic and applied learning skills business and industry leaders say they need in their workforce.

While the new requirements dramatically change the face of education in Michigan, parent involvement remains critical to a student's success. The failure of even one semester of a required course could result in your son or daughter being in danger of not graduating with his/her class. While local districts will continue to determine the total number of credits needed to graduate, the state has now set the number of credits in each subject area and, in many cases, specified the specific courses that must be taken in English, mathematics, science, social

studies, health/physical education, the arts (visual, performing or applied), and world languages. An online learning experience is also required.

With the exception of world languages, these requirements, are effective with the Class of 2011—8th graders in 2006–2007. If you have children who will graduate in 2011 or later, it is essential that you fully understand the requirements so you can guide your child in making sound academic decisions as she/he moves toward high school graduation.

This document is being provided to all parents of students in grades seven and eight in Montcalm County because of your important role. This parent guide outlines the new requirements and provides basic information. **However, questions dealing with various complex issues still remain and are not addressed in this document.** As these mandated requirements are still new, the Michigan Department of Education is continuing to examine and respond to the many implications of this legislation.

For questions specific to your child, contact your school district curriculum administrator, assistant superintendent of instruction, building principal, or school guidance counselor.

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# Key concepts

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## to help you understand the new high school graduation requirements

Listed below are ten key concepts to help you understand the new high school graduation requirements. This is the lens through which to focus on the new requirements and understand how to help all children succeed in school.

Terms that are in **bold type** throughout this booklet can be found in a glossary at the back of this guide.

1. These requirements apply to ALL students in public schools. Special education students must satisfy these same standards to receive a high school diploma with the Individual Education Plan (IEP) determining the appropriate courses or course of study.
2. Local boards of education may add to the requirements, but cannot reduce them. Local boards determine the total number of requirements.
3. While in very limited cases **modifications** can be made to some class selections, there is no “opt out” provision.
4. Students can meet the requirements in any type of school day schedule set by the district (i.e., six-period day, seven-period day, block schedule, trimesters).
5. There is room left in your child’s high school schedule for electives.
6. Accelerated, honors, and advanced placement classes will count toward meeting the graduation requirements if the content matches the Michigan Merit Curriculum course expectations.

7. Students struggling with or failing required classes can get help to succeed. Parents are encouraged to check with the school about support opportunities available for students.
8. After all other options have been earnestly attempted, parents may request a **Personal Curriculum** that modifies certain of the standard requirements. However, Personal Curriculums have very strict guidelines and all other options must be exhausted before a Personal Curriculum will be considered for a student. It is expected that Personal Curriculums will be very rare.
9. As of June 2006, all public school teachers in the designated content areas are required to meet the *No Child Left Behind* federal certification and degree standards for **highly qualified teachers**.
10. Your child should be prepared to take the classes for these new requirements. Montcalm Area ISD districts have a comprehensive plan for K–12 curriculum based on grade level content expectations (K–8) and **subject area content expectations** (9–12).

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## Michigan Merit Curriculum

High School Graduation Requirements  
PA 123 and PA 124

Subject Area	Description	Personal Curriculum (Modifications)
<b>English Language Arts</b>  <b>4 credits</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Aligned with subject area content expectations developed by the Department and approved by the State Board of Education</li> </ul>	✓ No modification
<b>Mathematics</b>  <b>4 credits</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Algebra 1</li> <li>● Geometry</li> <li>● Algebra 2</li> <li>● 1 additional math or math-related credit</li> <li>● Math or math-related credit in the final year</li> </ul>	<b>All students:</b> ✓ Complete at least 3.5 math or math-related credits ✓ Complete a math or math-related credit in the final year  <b>Algebra 2 modification options:</b> ✓ Complete 2.5 credits including .5 credit of Algebra 2 <b>OR</b> ✓ Complete a two year Career and Technical education curriculum which includes .5 credit of Algebra 2 content <b>OR</b> ✓ Complete Algebra 2 over 2 years with credit given for each year
<b>Science</b>  <b>3 credits</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Biology</li> <li>● Chemistry or Physics</li> <li>● 1 additional Science credit</li> </ul>	✓ No modification
<b>Social Studies</b>  <b>3 credits</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● .5 Civics</li> <li>● .5 Economics</li> <li>● U.S. History and Geography</li> <li>● World History and Geography</li> </ul>	✓ 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 World Languages
<b>Health and Physical Education</b>  <b>1 credit</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Credit guidelines developed by the Michigan Department of Education</li> </ul>	✓ Modification only if student takes additional credit(s) beyond the required credits in English Language Arts, Math, Science, or World Languages
<b>Visual, Performing, Applied Arts</b>  <b>1 credit</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Credit guidelines developed by the Michigan Department of Education</li> </ul>	✓ Modification only if student takes additional credit(s) beyond the required credits in English Language Arts, Math, Science, or World Languages
<b>World Languages</b>  <b>2 credits</b>	<b>Begins with the Class of 2016</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Credits earned in Grades 9–12</li> </ul> <b>OR</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● An equivalent learning experience in grades K–12</li> </ul>	✓ No modification
<b>Online Learning Experience</b>	Online course or learning experience <b>OR</b> Online experience is incorporated into each of the required credits	✓ No modification

Source: Michigan Department of Education

### NOTES:

- The Class of 2011 (students who are 8th graders in the 2006–07 school year) will need **16 credits** in these areas: mathematics, English language arts, science, social studies, health/physical education, the arts (visual, performing or applied), and online.
- The Class of 2016 (students who are 3rd graders in the 2006–07 school year) will need **18 credits** that include the original 16 required credits **plus** 2 credits of world languages.
- Special Education students: The Individualized Education Plan (IEP) shall identify the appropriate course or courses of study and identify the supports, accommodations, and modifications necessary to allow the pupil to progress in the curricular requirements, or in a Personal Curriculum, and meet the requirements for a high school diploma.

What you need to know about  
the new

# Mathematics

## requirements



Requirement	Specifics
<p><b>4 credits</b></p>	<p>1 credit – Algebra 1                      3 credits –                      1 credit – Geometry    <b>OR</b>    Integrated Sequence with                      1 credit – Algebra 2                      same course content</p> <p>1 additional credit, such as:                      Trigonometry, Statistics, Pre-Calculus,                      Calculus, Applied Math, Accounting,                      Business Math, retake of Algebra 2</p> <p>1 credit must be in senior year</p>
<p><b>Personal Curriculum Modification – if applicable</b></p> <p>All pupils must have a minimum of 3.5 credits (including 1 credit in senior year)                      After 2.5 credits, a pupil may modify his/her Personal Curriculum <b>IF</b>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Successfully completed 1 semester of Algebra 2 <b>OR</b></li> <li>■ Elect to spread Algebra 2 over 2 years <b>OR</b></li> <li>■ Successfully completing the same content of 1 semester of Algebra 2 in CTE course as part of a formal CTE program.</li> </ul>	

- A mathematics course must be taken in the senior year, with no exceptions. Taking four credits of mathematics prior to the senior year, including 8th grade, does not satisfy the requirement of having to take a mathematics class in the senior year.
- If a student takes a mathematics class through **dual enrollment** at a college in the 12th grade, it will satisfy the requirement for having a mathematics class in the senior year.
- The 4th credit in Mathematics may be earned in a math-related class as determined by the local district. Examples might include: Business Mathematics, Accounting, Engineering, Medical Careers, Construction Trades.

What you need to know about  
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# English Language Arts requirements



Requirement	Specifics
<b>4 credits</b>	Aligned with subject area content expectations developed by the Michigan Department of Education and approved by the State Board of Education.
<b>Personal Curriculum Modification – if applicable</b>	
No modification allowed.	

- An English Language Arts (ELA) class can include writing, speaking, representing, viewing, literature, and culture and language.

What you need to know about  
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# Science

## requirements



Requirement	Specifics
<b>3 credits</b>	1 credit – Biology 1 credit – Chemistry or Physics 1 additional credit, such as: Physics or Chemistry, Forensics, Astronomy, Earth Science, Geology, Agricultural Science, Environmental Science, Physiology, Microbiology
<b>Personal Curriculum Modification – if applicable</b> No modification allowed.	

- The required science classes—Biology and Chemistry or Physics—may be offered by the district in any order and taken by the student in any sequence.
- The science courses are specified because they are most often the prerequisite courses for additional study in science, mathematics, or engineering.
- Colleges strongly encourage 4 credits.

What you need to know about  
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# Social Studies

## requirements



Requirement	Specifics
<b>3 credits</b>	1 credit – U.S. History & Geography 1 credit – World History & Geography .5 credit – Economics .5 credit – Civics
<b>Personal Curriculum Modification – if applicable</b> After 2 credits, including Civics, substitute with 1 additional credit in ELA, Mathematics, Science, or World Languages	

- The Civics requirement cannot be modified.

What you need to know about  
the new

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# Health and Physical Education requirements

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Requirement	Specifics
<b>1 credit</b>	.5 credit – Health .5 credit – Physical Education
<b>Personal Curriculum Modification – if applicable</b> Substitute with 1 additional credit in ELA, Mathematics, Science, or World Languages	

- The state mandate allows a modification for the Health and Physical Education requirements. However, local boards of education may still require students to take additional classes in Health and Physical Education.

What you need to know about  
the new

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# Visual, Performing, or Applied Arts

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## requirements



Requirement	Specifics
<b>1 credit</b>	1 credit in any <b>one</b> category of arts
<b>Personal Curriculum Modification – if applicable</b> Substitute with 1 additional credit in ELA, Mathematics, Science, or World Languages	

- Students will have room in their schedules to take electives in the visual, performing, or applied arts.
- The Michigan Department of Education will determine credit guidelines for courses in the visual, performing and applied arts.

What you need to know about  
the new

# World Languages requirements



Requirement	Specifics
<b>2 credits</b>	Effective 3rd grade 2006 (Class of 2016): 2 credits in grades 9–12 <b>OR</b> equivalent learning experiences grades K–12
<b>Personal Curriculum Modification – if applicable</b> No modification allowed.	

- This requirement does not go into effect until the Class of 2016—students entering 3rd grade in the 2006–2007 school year.
- American Sign Language will satisfy this requirement.
- The Michigan Department of Education will determine the amount of language instruction needed for a credit if taken in grades three through eight.

What you need to know about  
the new

# Online Experience

## requirements



Requirement	Specifics
<b>Online Learning Experience</b>	Credit may be earned in an online course, online learning experience <b>OR</b> integrated online learning
<b>Personal Curriculum Modification – if applicable</b> No modification allowed.	

- Students must take an online course or learning experience or have the online experience incorporated into each of the required credits of the Michigan Merit Curriculum.
- Every student will have meaningful technology-enabled learning opportunities based on research and best practice that include virtual learning experiences.
- As technology quickly advances, there will be expanded opportunities for districts to meet this online learning requirement.
- The online experience requirement will not go into effect until the district is able to provide the technology necessary to make achievement of the requirement possible.

# Career and Technical Education opportunities

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- Districts will continue to offer Career and Technical Education (CTE) courses. However, some courses may be taught in a manner that will allow credit to be granted for both CTE and the specified content area.
- Eligible students, as determined by local districts, may be able to participate in a co-op, internship, or externship experience.
- Certain requirements, such as some mathematics or science courses, may be satisfied in a CTE environment.
- CTE classes are electives. They are generally taken in a specific sequence and should be considered early in a student's educational career. Since the new graduation requirements leave little room for electives, careful planning will be necessary to schedule CTE courses.
- Graduation requirements taken in the 8th grade, such as Algebra 1 or Spanish 1 (World Languages), will allow more opportunity for CTE classes/electives during the high school experience.

What you need to know about

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## Educational Development Plans

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- **Educational Development Plans (EDPs)** are now required to be completed by all students before they enter high school which would include discussions about **Career Pathways**.
- It is in the best interest of a student to use an EDP to focus and plan in order to successfully complete the graduation requirements, and prepare for the transition to the world of work. Parental guidance is critical.

What you need to know about

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## how credit is granted

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- 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. Credit can be granted in a variety of ways (e.g., end-of-course exams; dual enrollment; **testing out**; accelerated, honors and/or **advanced placement (AP)** courses; summer school make-up classes).
- A student will be given graduation credit for a requirement that is successfully completed prior to high school, as long as it is of the same level of content and rigor associated with the corresponding high school required course. Taking qualifying classes before high school will make room in the student's schedule to take more electives.
- If a student fails a required course for graduation, no credit is granted and the class must be made up. Since there is little room in a student's schedule each year for make-up classes, the failed credit can be recovered in various ways, such as summer school or online.

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# Key terms

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## to help you understand the new high school graduation requirements

**Advanced Placement (AP)** Advanced placement classes are accelerated classes that, when successfully completed in high school, help determine placement in college. Although a student would not get college credit for the class, by passing the class the student would not have to take that class in college, but could move ahead to the next required class.

**NOTE:** Successful completion of certain AP classes counts toward meeting the high school graduation requirements.

**Career Pathways** Broad groupings of careers that share similar characteristics and whose employment requirements call for many common interests, strengths, and competencies. Students opting for Career and Technical Education elective courses will most likely choose courses that fit the career pathway they have chosen as a general area of interest they wish to pursue.

**NOTE:** Some of these courses, if taught by a teacher meeting the highly qualified standards set by the federal No Child Left Behind initiative, can be applied toward the high school graduation requirements.

**CTE** Career Technical Education.

**Dual Enrollment** When a high school student successfully completes a course as part of dual enrollment through a college or university, the student will get credit for that class at either the high school or higher education level or, in some cases, both.

**NOTE:** Successful completion of certain dual enrollment classes counts toward meeting the high school graduation requirements.

**Educational Development Plan (EDP)** An educational development plan documents an ongoing process in which a learner identifies both career goals and a plan of action to achieve them. EDPs are developed for every student in middle/junior high school and periodically revised, throughout their secondary educational experience, to reflect the student's career interests and options.

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# Key terms

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**ELA** English Language Arts.

**Equivalent Learning Experience** Equivalent Learning Experience guidelines will be developed by the Michigan Department of Education.

**Highly Qualified Teacher** To be deemed highly qualified, teachers must have: 1) Bachelor's degree, 2) Full state certification or licensure, and 3) Proof that they know each subject that they teach.

**Michigan Merit Curriculum** The official title for the new high school graduation requirements is the Michigan Merit Curriculum. To get a high school diploma from a Michigan high school, students must successfully complete all the elements in the Michigan Merit Curriculum. The curriculum is shown in full on pages 2–3.

**Michigan Merit Exam** The new Michigan Merit Exam tests English, Mathematics, Science, U.S. History, Government, World History, and Geography in the 11th grade, including the ACT Test that is used by colleges for admission purposes. The new required curriculum is designed so that students will have taken the appropriate courses in preparation for this test.

**Modification** Modifications to a student's curriculum do not allow for an "opt out" of any requirement. However, in certain instances, modifications can be made to adjust the curriculum in Mathematics, Social Studies, Health and Physical Education, and Visual, Performing or Applied Arts.

**NO** modifications are allowed in meeting the English, Science, or World Languages requirements.

Modification allowances must be made as part of a Personal Curriculum requested by the parent or guardian.

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# Key terms

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continued

**Personal Curriculum** The parent/guardian of a student may request a personal curriculum for the student that modifies certain of the Michigan Merit Curriculum standard requirements. If all of the requirements for a personal curriculum are met, then the board of a school district may award a high school diploma to a student who successfully completes his or her personal curriculum, even if it does not meet the requirements of the Michigan Merit Curriculum standard.

The personal curriculum will be considered only after all other options have been attempted, and must meet stringent requirements for determining educational goals and evaluating student progress.

**Subject Area Content Expectations** Content expectations were developed to provide a description of what students should know and be able to do by the end of high school for postsecondary success—college, careers, and community. The expectations provide a foundation for curriculum and assessment development that represents rigorous and relevant learning for all high school students.

**Testing Out** High school students may “test out” or be given credit for a high school course that they are not enrolled in by exhibiting a certain level of mastery in the course. The student must receive a grade of not less than a C+ on a final exam, or other means of basic assessment, in order to receive credit. Testing out guidelines to meet the new graduation requirements will be developed by the Michigan Department of Education.

**World Languages** Any language other than English, including American Sign Language.



**Carson City - Crystal Area Schools**

**Central Montcalm Public Schools**

**Greenville Public Schools**

**Lakeview Community Schools**

**Montabella Community Schools**

**Tri County Area Schools**

**Vestaburg Community School**

