

## Instruction

### Graduation Requirements<sup>1</sup>

To graduate from high school, unless otherwise exempted, each student is responsible for:

1. Completing all District graduation requirements that are in addition to the State requirements.<sup>2</sup>
2. Completing all courses as provided in the School Code, 105 ILCS 5/27-~~22605~~.<sup>3</sup>
3. Completing all minimum requirements for graduation as specified in State law.<sup>4</sup>
4. Passing an examination on patriotism, ~~and~~ principles of representative government, ~~and~~ proper use ~~and display~~ of the ~~American~~ flag ~~methods of voting, and the Pledge of Allegiance~~.<sup>5</sup>

The footnotes are not intended to be part of the adopted policy; they should be removed before the policy is adopted.

<sup>1</sup> State or federal law controls this policy's content. Graduation requirements are often published in student handbooks. The Illinois Principals Association maintains a handbook service that coordinates with PRESS material, *Online Model Student Handbook (MSH)*, at: [www.ilprincipals.org/msh](http://www.ilprincipals.org/msh).

In accordance with 105 ILCS 5/2-3.159, ~~amended by P.A. 101-503~~, and 23 Ill.Admin.Code Part 680, a school district may establish a program to recognize high school graduates who attained a high level of proficiency in one or more languages in addition to English by designating on a student's diploma and transcript a State Seal of Biliteracy. See [sample policy 6:320, High School Credit for Proficiency](#).

~~105 ILCS 5/10-20.9a(c) and (d), added by P.A. 102-727, and inoperative "on and after three years" from 5-6-22, prohibits public high schools from withholding a student's grades, transcripts, or diploma because of an unpaid balance on the student's school account. See sample policy 6:280, Grading and Promotion, at fn 3, for a discussion about the expiration date of this law.~~

<sup>2</sup> Optional. 23 Ill.Admin.Code §1.440(f). A school board should ensure that all district graduation requirements that are in addition to the State requirements are aligned with the district educational objectives. See [sample policy 6:10, Educational Philosophy and Objectives](#).

<sup>3</sup> 105 ILCS 5/27-~~60522~~(e), ~~amended by P.A.s 101-464, 101-654, 102-366, 102-551, and 102-864~~renumbered by P.A. ~~104-391~~, contains the list of required courses in effect ~~for students entering 9th grade~~ through the 2023-2024 school year. 105 ILCS 5/27-~~60522~~(e-5), ~~amended by P.A. 104-387 and renumbered by P.A. 104-391~~added by P.A. ~~101-654 and amended by P.A. 102-864~~, contains the list of required courses ~~for students entering 9th grade~~effective beginning with the 2024-2025 school year (to include two years of laboratory science). 105 ILCS 5/27-~~60522~~(e-10), ~~added by P.A. 101-654~~renumbered by P.A. ~~104-391~~, increases the foreign language requirement from one to two years beginning with the 2028-2029 school year. 105 ILCS 5/27-~~60522~~(e)(3) and (e-5)(3) allow the substitution of an advanced placement computer science course for a year of mathematics, and it further states that a mathematics course that includes geometry content may be offered as an integrated, applied, interdisciplinary, or career and technical education course that prepares a student for a career readiness path. 105 ILCS 5/27-~~60522~~(e)(5), ~~amended by P.A. 102-366~~, and 105 ILCS 5/27-~~60522~~(e-5)(5), ~~both renumbered by P.A. 104-391~~amended by P.A. ~~102-864~~, require students entering the 9th grade in the 2016-2017 school year and each year thereafter to complete one semester of civics. As part of the two-year social studies requirement, districts may include a financial literacy course that is one semester or part of one semester. *Id.* For specific requirements, see [sample exhibit 6:300-E2, State Law Graduation Requirements](#), and [sample policy 6:310, High School Credit for Non-District Experiences; Course Substitutions; Re-Entering Students](#). The Ill. State Board of Education (ISBE) may adopt rules modifying graduation requirements for students in grades 9-12 if the Governor has declared a disaster due to a public health emergency under 20 ILCS 3305/7. 105 ILCS 5/27-~~60522~~(i), ~~renumbered by P.A. 104-391~~added by P.A. ~~101-643~~.

<sup>4</sup> 105 ILCS 5/27-~~60522~~(e), ~~renumbered by P.A. 104-391 and (e-5), amended by P.A. 104-387 and renumbered by P.A. 104-391~~amended by P.A.s ~~101-464, 101-654, 102-366, 102-551, and 102-864~~; 23 Ill.Admin.Code §1.440.

<sup>5</sup> Required by 105 ILCS 5/27-~~5103~~, ~~amended by P.A. 101-643~~ added by P.A. ~~104-391~~.

5. Participating in State assessments that are required for graduation by State law. <sup>6</sup>
6. Filing one of the following: (1) a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) with the U.S. Dept. of Education, (2) an application for State financial aid, or (3) an Ill. State Board of Education (ISBE) waiver form indicating that the student understands what these aid opportunities are and has chosen not to file an application. If the student is not at least 18 years of age or legally emancipated, the student's parent/guardian must file one of these documents on the student's behalf.

A student is exempt from this requirement if: (1) the student is unable to file a financial aid application or an ISBE waiver due to extenuating circumstances, (2) the Building Principal attests the District made a good faith effort to assist the student or the student's parent/guardian with filing a financial aid application or an ISBE waiver form, and (3) the student has met all other graduation requirements. <sup>7</sup>

The Superintendent or designee is responsible for: <sup>8</sup>

1. Maintaining a description of all course offerings that comply with the above graduation requirements.
2. Notifying students and their parents/guardians of graduation requirements.
3. Developing the criteria for #4 above.

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<sup>6</sup> 105 ILCS 5/2-3.64a-5(c), ~~amended by P.A. 101-643~~, states that “[s]tudents who do not take the State’s final accountability assessment or its approved alternate assessment may not receive a regular high school diploma unless the student is exempted.” Assessments are not required if ISBE receives a waiver from the administration of assessments from the U.S. Dept. of Education. *Id.*

105 ILCS 5/2-3.64a-5(c), ~~amended by P.A. 101-643~~; 23 Ill.Admin.Code §1.30. Section 2-3.64a-5(c) requires that the assessment administered by ISBE for the purpose of student application to or admissions consideration by institutions of higher education be administered on a school day during regular student attendance hours.

105 ILCS 5/2-3.64a-5(e) no longer requires that the scores attained by a student on an assessment that includes a college and career readiness determination be entered on the student’s transcript. The student’s final accountability assessment scores, however, must be placed in the student’s permanent record. See also 23 Ill.Admin.Code §375.10.

<sup>7</sup> 105 ILCS 5/22-87, ~~amended by P.A.s 104-13 and 104-14~~ ~~added by P.A. 101-180~~; 23 Ill.Admin.Code §1.440(c)(4). See [sample exhibit 6:300-E3, Form for Exemption from Financial Aid Application Completion](#). ISBE provides a waiver form, the FAFSA Nonparticipation Form, for a parent/guardian or eligible student to opt of this graduation requirement, which is available through the Ill. Student Assistance Commission's (ISAC) student portal, see <https://studentportal.isac.org/Instructionsfortheformareavailable> at: [www.isbe.net/Pages/FAFSA.aspx](http://www.isbe.net/Pages/FAFSA.aspx). The Alternative Application for Ill. Financial Aid referenced in that form is intended for use by qualifying undocumented and transgender students and is available at: <https://studentportal.isac.org/alternativeapp>.

Beginning with the 2025-2026 school year, each high school must: (1) designate at least one staff member as a contact for matters related to the financial aid application graduation requirement; (2) inform high school seniors of the designated staff member who is available to answer their questions about this requirement or refer them to an appropriate resource, such as ISAC (see [www.isac.org/students/before-college/financial-aid-planning/index.html](http://www.isac.org/students/before-college/financial-aid-planning/index.html)); and (3) annually provide the name and contact information of the designated staff member to ISBE and ISAC. 105 ILCS 5/22-87(b), amended by P.A.s 104-13 and 104-14. The designated staff member must complete an initial orientation and is encouraged to participate in annual briefings, for which the individual may receive professional development hours, if applicable. *Id.*

Additionally, beginning with the 2025-2026 school year, each district must offer appropriate supports to each high school student to educate and assist them with completion of the financial aid application. How, when, and where this support is offered is at a district's discretion; however, a district must provide an opportunity for students to get help during the school day completing the student portion of the application. Districts may request free assistance from ISAC to support completion of financial aid applications. *Id.*

<sup>8</sup> Items #1 and #2 are required by 23 Ill.Admin.Code §1.440(d) and (e), respectively. Item #3 must be addressed because the law leaves many implementation issues unanswered. A comprehensive Student Handbook can provide notice of the district’s graduation requirements, conduct rules, and other important information. Item #4 includes discussion of the adjustments required by the Educational Opportunity for Military Children Act, 105 ILCS 70/35(d).

4. Complying with State law requirements for students who transfer during their senior year because their parent(s)/guardian(s) are on active military duty. This includes making reasonable adjustments to ensure graduation if possible, or efforts to ensure that the original (transferor) school district issues the student a diploma.
5. Taking all other actions needed or necessary to implement this policy.

#### Early Graduation<sup>9</sup>

The Superintendent or designee shall implement procedures for students to graduate early, provided they finish seven semesters of high school and meet all graduation requirements.

#### Certificate of Completion<sup>10</sup>

A student with a disability who has an Individualized Education Program prescribing special education, transition planning, transition services, or related services beyond the student’s four years of high school, qualifies for a certificate of completion after the student has completed four years of high school. The student is encouraged to participate in the graduation ceremony of his or her high school graduation class. The Superintendent or designee shall provide timely written notice of this requirement to children with disabilities and their parents/guardians.

#### Service Member Diploma<sup>11</sup>

The District will award a diploma to a service member who was killed in action while performing active military duty with the U.S. Armed Forces or an honorably discharged veteran of World War II, the Korean Conflict, or the Vietnam Conflict, provided that he or she (1) resided within an area currently within the District at the time he or she left high school, (2) left high school before graduating in order to serve in the U.S. Armed Forces, and (3) has not received a high school diploma.

LEGAL REF.: 105 ILCS 5/2-3.64a-5, 5/22-27, 5/22-87, 5/27-[5103](#), 5/27-[60522](#), and 5/27-[61522-40](#).  
105 ILCS 70/, Educational Opportunity for Military Children Act.  
23 Ill.Admin.Code §1.440.

CROSS REF.: 6:30 (Organization of Instruction), 6:310 (High School Credit for Non-District Experiences; Course Substitutions; Re-Entering Students), 6:315 (High School Credit for Students in Grade 7 or 8), 6:320 (High School Credit for Proficiency), 7:50 (School Admissions and Student Transfers To and From Non-District Schools)

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<sup>9</sup> This is optional. State law and rules are silent regarding early graduation. As an alternative, a board may delete the phrase “finish 7 semesters of high school and.”

<sup>10</sup> Required by 105 ILCS 5/14-16.

<sup>11</sup> Optional. 105 ILCS 5/22-27, ~~amended by P.A. 101-131~~, does not designate a time requirement for when the service member killed in action or veteran “resided within an area currently within the district.” Thus, a reasonable interpretation may be adopted locally. The sample policy designates “at the time he or she left high school” as the pertinent time for residence. See [sample exhibit](#) 6:300-E1, *Application for a Diploma for a Service Member Killed in Action or for Veterans of WWII, the Korean Conflict, or the Vietnam Conflict*.