

REGULATION

ANNE ARUNDEL COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Related Entries: II, II-RA, IIC, IIE

Responsible Office: OFFICE OF ACADEMICS, DIVISION OF CURRICULUM, INSTRUCTION, AND ASSESSMENTS, OFFICE OF STUDENT AND SYSTEMIC SUPPORTS, DIVISION OF STUDENT SERVICES

GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

A. PURPOSE

To establish the requirements for students graduating with a Maryland High School Diploma from Anne Arundel County Public Schools (AACPS).

B. BACKGROUND

The mission of the public high school is to challenge and prepare students to enter employment directly or through post-secondary education. Through intellectual, personal, physical, and social growth, graduates should be able and willing to take the appropriate first steps into their chosen field of work or study, to act responsibly as citizens, and to enjoy a productive life.

C. DEFINITIONS

1. ***Homeless Youth*** – has the meaning stated in the *McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act*.

D. PROCEDURES

In accordance with State law and regulations and local policies and regulations, the graduation requirements for AACPS students include enrollment requirements, State assessments, credit requirements, and service learning mandates. These graduation requirements are described below.

1. Enrollment Requirement

A student shall be in attendance at an Anne Arundel County public high school one full semester immediately preceding graduation and satisfactorily complete 4 years of approved study beyond grade 8, unless one of the alternatives described in this regulation is satisfied.

2. State Assessments

- a. Students shall satisfactorily complete all Maryland graduation assessment requirements as defined by the Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR).

3. Credit Requirements

- a. Credit requirements for a student to be awarded the Maryland High School Diploma from AACPS are based on the year a student enters grade 9. To be awarded the Maryland High School Diploma, an AACPS student shall have earned a minimum of 23 credits at the completion of grades 9 - 12.
- b. A student shall earn the following specified core and elective credits as part of the 23 credit requirement. All courses shall align with the appropriate State or national standards in accordance with COMAR and shall be approved by AACPS.
 - i. **English** – four credits of high school English to fulfill requirements for English 9, 10, 11, and 12 as outlined in the AACPS Program of Study;
 - ii. **Fine Arts** – one credit in visual arts, music, theatre, dance, or a combination of these;
 - iii. **Mathematics** – four credits, including one with instruction in algebra aligned with the Maryland Comprehensive Assessment for algebra and one with instruction in geometry aligned with the content standards for geometry;
 - iv. **Physical Education** – one-half credit in Fitness for Life and one-half credit in Physical Education;
 - v. **Health Education** – one credit;
 - vi. **Science** – three credits:
 - a) One credit in biology;
 - b) One credit in physical science; and
 - c) One credit in Earth space science.
 - vii. **Social Studies** – three credits:
 - a) Including one credit in United States history;
 - b) One credit in United States government; and
 - c) One credit in world history.

- viii. **Technology Education** – one credit that includes the application of knowledge, tools, and skills to solve practical problems and extend human capabilities;
- ix. **Global Community Citizenship** – one-half credit;
- x. **Financial Literacy** – one-half credit;
- xi. **Electives** – four credits; and
- xii. In addition to meeting the specific credit requirements in this regulation, a student shall earn one of the following:
 - a) Two credits of the same World or Classical Language; or
 - b) Successful completion of a State-approved career and technology program.
- c. In accordance with COMAR, in addition to earning credits during the regular school day and year, credits may be earned through various other programs. These programs are:
 - i. **Summer School** – as determined by the needs of students for limited original and remedial or recovery credit. Original credit and remedial or recovery credit courses shall be offered based on the requirements set by the Division of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessments. Credit may be given for acceptable summer study offered by approved public and non-public institutions in or outside of Maryland, if the principal of the school which the student attends authorizes the study in advance.
 - ii. **Evening High School** – serves as an extension of the regular school day for original and remedial or recovery credits as determined by the needs of students. Requirements for those subjects being used by students for original and remedial or recovery high school diploma credit shall be the same as those required for subjects in the day school.
 - iii. **Online Courses** – only students who are enrolled in AACPS or who are placed by AACPS in an approved non-public school are eligible to register for online courses. Eligible students must gain prior approval from their parent(s)/guardian(s) and principal; however, eligible students are not guaranteed enrollment in any online course.
 - a) Registration information shall be processed through the Office of Academics. Online courses shall be evaluated for alignment to Maryland’s College and Career Readiness standards or other nationally recognized standards approved by AACPS and shall meet all requirements

for AACPS accreditation. Grades from an online course shall be included in the grade point average of the student in accordance with AACPS policies and regulations.

- b) As a condition of participating in Maryland Virtual Learning Opportunities (MVLO) courses, students shall accept the terms of the *AACPS Academic Integrity and Ethics Agreement MVLO Student Participation Agreement*. If MVLO credit is to be applied toward minimum graduation requirements, the cost of courses shall be borne by the school system after successful completion of the course.
- iv. **Internship Programs, Work Based Learning, Job Entry Training, or Approved Experiences Outside of School** – experiences such as internships, work-based learning, or job training outside of school are recognized as valuable ways to learn. The time students spend in these activities may count toward required hours for credit when they are part of an approved program. If the experience is identified in the AACPS Program of Study and supervised by AACPS, students may earn up to nine elective credits from these opportunities toward their graduation requirements.
- v. **College Courses** – with prior approval of the Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessments or Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessments' designee, credit toward high school graduation may be given for courses at accredited colleges.
- vi. **Independent Study** – credit toward high school graduation may be earned in grades 9 - 12 for independent study in which students successfully demonstrate the school system's pre-established curricular objectives.

4. Service Learning

To satisfy the Service Learning requirement, students shall complete one of the following:

- a. Seventy-five hours of service learning that is embedded in the curriculum and includes preparation, action, and reflection components;
 - b. A program in service learning that has been approved by the State Superintendent of Schools; or
 - c. A student who enters the school system in grade 12 shall complete the service learning graduation requirement at a pro-rated level of engagement, but no student may be exempt from meeting the service learning requirement, including second semester transfers.
5. In accordance with COMAR, AACPS may develop alternatives to 4-year enrollment

in a public high school. In recognition of the fact that 4-year enrollment in a public high school may not serve the best interests of some students, the following alternatives shall be made available:

a. Early College, Technical, or Other Post High School Admission

A student may receive a Maryland High School Diploma through acceptance in the early college admission program, provided that:

- i. The student is accepted for early admission to an accredited college or approved technical or post high school before high school graduation;
- ii. State competency prerequisite and student service requirements have been met;
- iii. A written request by the student and the student's parent(s)/guardian(s) is made to and approved by the Superintendent or the Superintendent's designee, asking the waiver of the 4-year enrollment in a public school requirement and certifying the early admission acceptance;
- iv. The student's program for the first year of college or approved technical or post high school is approved by the Superintendent or the Superintendent's designee if this program is included toward the issuance of a high school diploma; and
- v. At the conclusion of a full year of study, a written request for the high school diploma is submitted to the Superintendent together with a transcript or letter from the college or approved technical or post high school to the high school principal indicating that the student has successfully completed a year of college or approved technical or post high school work.

b. Early Graduation

A student may graduate at the end of grade 11 if:

- i. The student develops a plan with the school counselor to complete all graduation requirements including credits, state-mandated tests, and service learning hours;
- ii. The request for the waiver of the fourth year of high school is submitted to the principal by August 15 of grade 11;
- iii. The Assistant Superintendent reviews the request and determines that the exception to the 4-year enrollment in a public high school requirement is in the best interest of the student; and

iv. The Superintendent or the Superintendent's designee approves the request.

c. General Educational Development Testing Program

A Maryland High School Diploma may be awarded by the State Board of Education for satisfactory performance on approved general educational development tests, provided that the student meets those requirements as defined in the Education Article of the Annotated Code of Maryland and COMAR, and in accordance with Policy IIE – High School Diploma by Examination.

d. National External Diploma Program

- i. A Maryland High School Diploma may be awarded for demonstrating competencies in general life skills and individual skills on applied performance tests provided that the student meets those requirements as defined in COMAR. AACPS may develop alternatives for structuring programs in accordance with the guidelines set forth in COMAR.
- ii. In accordance with COMAR, AACPS may grant a Maryland High School Diploma to students who transfer from another jurisdiction or a private school.

6. Requirements for a Diploma

- a. To receive a Maryland High School Diploma from AACPS, a student shall be in attendance at an Anne Arundel County public high school one full semester immediately preceding graduation in addition to meeting the other diploma requirements.
- b. In cases where this requirement creates an undue hardship for a student transferring to or from a Maryland non-public school or from an out-of-state school and wishing to receive a Maryland High School Diploma, the Superintendent or the Superintendent's designee may waive the one full semester attendance requirement.
- c. An exception shall be made for special education students in State-approved non-public programs.
- d. Students transferring from one Maryland public high school to another during the second semester of their senior year and meeting all requirements for graduation, shall be given the option of graduating from either high school by agreement of the Superintendent or the Superintendent's designee.
- e. AACPS shall define the high school year in accordance with COMAR.
- f. A student begins grade 9 and each subsequent grade upon successful promotion to

the next grade level.

7. Transcript of Record from MSDE-approved Schools

- a. The Superintendent or the Superintendent's designee shall ascertain whether the school or schools previously attended by the student are MSDE-approved schools. If there is any doubt on this point, an official inquiry shall be addressed to MSDE. If the school or schools are MSDE-approved, credits may be allowed in the subjects that the student has completed successfully.
- b. The Superintendent or the Superintendent's designee shall determine by an evaluation of a student whether credits earned by a student at a non-accredited high school will be accepted at the public high school to which the student transfers. This evaluation may include administration of standardized assessments and examinations, the use of interviews, as well as the inspection of transcripts, report cards, and other documentation. The student shall be notified in writing of the reasons for any failure to transfer credits from a school or schools that are not MSDE-approved schools.

8. Unavailability of Transcript or School Report Card

If the transcript of record or the school report card is not available, the Superintendent or the Superintendent's designee shall determine by an evaluation the appropriate placement of the student within the high school program. The evaluation of the student may include the:

- a. Administration of standardized tests and examination;
- b. Use of interviews; and
- c. Inspection of transcripts, report cards, and other documentation as well as the observation of the student in a classroom setting.

9. Diplomas and Certificates

- a. The diploma awarded to students upon graduation from an Anne Arundel County public high school shall be a Maryland High School Diploma. Students who successfully fulfilled the requirements for a diploma in another state and have since relocated to AACPS may be presented the diploma they earned in their previous location in accordance with other AACPS policies, regulations, and internal guidelines.
- b. There shall be a State certificate for completion of a special education program named the Maryland High School Certificate. This certificate shall only be awarded to students with disabilities who cannot meet the requirements for a

diploma but who meet one of the following standards:

- i. A student is enrolled in an education program and is determined by an Individual Education Plan Team, with the agreement of the parent(s)/guardian(s) of the student with disabilities, to have developed appropriate skills for the individual to enter the world of work, act responsibly as a citizen, and enjoy a fulfilling life, with the world of work including:
 - a) Gainful employment;
 - b) Work activity centers;
 - c) Sheltered workshops; and
 - d) Supported employment; or
- ii. The student has been enrolled in an education program for 4 years beyond grade 8 or its age equivalent and will have access to an education program until the age of 21 by the end of the school year in which the student plans to graduate.

10. Students Who are Homeless or in Foster Care

- a. Notwithstanding any other provision in this regulation and in accordance with State law, AACPS shall waive all high school graduation requirements, including required coursework, established by AACPS that are in addition to the high school graduation requirements established by the Maryland State Board of Education for an AACPS student in foster care or who is a homeless youth, if the student transfers into AACPS from a different local school system in the State while in grade 11 or 12.
- b. In accordance with State law, AACPS may not waive the requirements under paragraph a. of this subsection if it is determined that the student is reasonably able to complete the AACPS high school graduation requirements in time to graduate from high school while the student remains eligible for foster care benefits.

Regulation History: Issued 12/21/16; Revised 11/18/20; 01/14/26

Note Previous Regulation History: Replaces AR608.03, issued 12/02/98 and revised 10/20/04

Legal Reference: *McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act*, Sections 7-205 and 7-205.1 of the Education Article, COMAR 13A.02