

This DCPS Graduation Requirements Policy rescinds and supersedes all previous policy, memoranda, and/or guidance promulgated by DCPS on this subject matter.

Chancellor Approval: 
Effective: August 13, 2018

DCPS Graduation Requirements

I. Purpose

The District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS) is committed to ensuring every student feels loved, challenged, and prepared to positively influence society and thrive in life. This policy conveys DCPS requirements on high school graduation.

II. Authority¹

Source	Citation
Code of the District of Columbia	DC Code § 38-202 - Establishment of School Attendance Requirements
District of Columbia Municipal Regulations (Office of the State Superintendent of Education)	5-A DCMR §§ 2200 et seq. - Graduation
District of Columbia Municipal Regulations (District of Columbia Public Schools)	5-E DCMR §§ 2200 et seq. - Grades, Promotion, and Graduation

III. Key Terms and Definitions

- A. **Carnegie Unit** refers to 120 hours of classroom instruction over the course of an academic year.²
- B. **Competency-based Unit** means a unit equivalent to a Carnegie Unit that is earned toward graduation for successful completion of an approved competency-based learning course or course series.³
- C. **Individualized Education Program (IEP)** is a written statement that specifies the special education programs and services to be provided to meet the unique educational needs of a child with a disability, as required under Section 614(d) of IDEA (20 U.S.C. § 1414(d)) and 5-E DCMR §§ 3000 *et. seq.*⁴

IV. Required Activities

A. General Graduation Requirement

Relevant portions of OSSE regulations set forth at 5-A DCMR § 2203 provide general requirements for graduation from DCPS.

¹ Nothing in this directive shall supersede federal, state, or local law.

² 5-A DCMR § 2299.1.

³ *Id.*

⁴ 5-E DCMR § 3001.1.

2203.1	The course work set forth in Subsections 2203.3 shall be required of students who enrolled in ninth (9 th) grade in school year 2007-2008 and thereafter in order to be certified as eligible to receive a high school diploma.																						
2203.3	<p>(a) A total of twenty-four (24) Carnegie Units in corresponding subjects and required volunteer community service hours shall have been satisfactorily completed for graduation.</p> <p>(b) The following Carnegie Units in the following subjects shall be required:</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="365 514 1323 1039"> <thead> <tr> <th>COURSES</th> <th>UNIT(S)</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>English</td> <td>4.0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Mathematics; must include Algebra I, Geometry, and Algebra II at a minimum</td> <td>4.0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Science; must include three (3) lab sciences</td> <td>4.0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Social Studies; must include World History 1 and 2, United States History; United States Government, and District of Columbia History</td> <td>4.0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>World Language</td> <td>2.0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Art</td> <td>0.5</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Music</td> <td>0.5</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Physical Education/Health</td> <td>1.5</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Electives</td> <td>3.5</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Total</td> <td>24.0</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>(c) At least two (2) of the twenty-four (24) Carnegie Units for graduation must include a College Level or Career Preparatory (CLCP) course approved by the LEA and successfully completed by the student. The course may fulfill subject matter or elective unit requirements as deemed appropriate by the LEA. CLCP courses approved by the LEA may include courses at other institutions.</p> <p>(d) All students must enroll in Algebra I no later than tenth (10th) grade commencing with the 2016-2017 school year, unless the school is approved for a waiver pursuant to Subsection 2203.7.</p> <p>(e) For all students entering the ninth (9th) grade beginning school year 2009-2010, one (1) of the three (3) lab science units, required by paragraph (a) of this subsection, shall be a course in Biology.</p> <p>(f) In addition to the twenty-four (24) Carnegie Units, one hundred (100) hours of volunteer community service shall be satisfactorily completed. The specific volunteer community service projects shall be established by the LEA.⁵</p> <p>(g) One and one half (1.5) Carnegie Units in health and physical education shall not be required for the evening program high school diploma.</p>	COURSES	UNIT(S)	English	4.0	Mathematics; must include Algebra I, Geometry, and Algebra II at a minimum	4.0	Science; must include three (3) lab sciences	4.0	Social Studies; must include World History 1 and 2, United States History; United States Government, and District of Columbia History	4.0	World Language	2.0	Art	0.5	Music	0.5	Physical Education/Health	1.5	Electives	3.5	Total	24.0
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Relevant portions of DCPS regulations set forth at 5-E DCMR §§ 2201.8, 2202.2, 2202.8 provide additional requirements for graduation from DCPS.

⁵ The 100-hour requirement of community service in DCPS may be completed at 501(c)(3) organizations, schools, federal or local agencies, or other organizations as long as it is non-paying voluntary service for the benefit of the community. The service shall not be performed during the hours the student is required to be in class and cannot be of a political nature. Beginning in the 2018-2019 year, students can begin accruing community service hours at the start of 8th grade and can accrue up to 25 hours of community service prior to 9th grade. These community service hours will be applicable toward their 100 required hours of community service for graduation as long as the hours are completed in alignment with this policy, the activity is approved by the student's school, and District of Columbia Public Schools | August 2018

DCPS Graduation Requirements

the service is appropriately documented.

2201.8	Students may complete the high school graduation requirements over a three, four, or five-year period, depending upon the time and support they need to complete graduation requirements as stated in their individualized graduation plan signed and verified by the counselor.
2202.2	Each student who meets the requirements set forth in this section shall be certified as eligible to receive the high school diploma by the principal or other person in charge of the school or program in which the student is enrolled.
2202.8	The course work credits received by the student prior to transfer into D.C. Public Schools may be used to meet the D.C. Public Schools graduation requirements of that school system upon verification of successful completion of this comparable course work.

B. Graduation Planning

5-A DCMR § 2203.2 provides that all high school students should have an individualized graduation plan. Per DCPS policy, this plan should be updated annually, at a minimum.

2203.2	At the beginning of the ninth (9 th) grade, students shall develop a graduation plan pacing the courses they will take to complete high school. This shall be done with the assistance of the school counselor or other school official designated by the local education agency (LEA).
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C. Notification of Graduation Status

5-E DCMR § 2204 states when students and parents should be notified regarding graduation status.

2204.1	Each adult student, or the parent or guardian of a student who is a minor, shall be informed in writing not later than twelve (12) school days after the close of the third (3rd) [term] ⁶ period of the student's graduation status.
2204.2	The notice required by this section shall include a warning that the student may not be eligible for graduation in June, if applicable.

Schools shall comply with the timelines and related activities set forth in the DCPS Annual Graduation Verification Calendar.

D. Commencement Activities

1. Participation in Graduation Exercises

Every effort should be made to allow participation in graduation exercises for all graduates. An earned diploma cannot be withheld for nonparticipation in class activities or the graduation exercises.

5-E DCMR § 2202.9 further provides:

2202.9	If the D.C. Public School student is receiving a diploma from another school system but is unable to attend graduation exercises held by the school system, the student may be allowed to participate in the graduation exercises of the D.C. Public School being attended upon the approval of the [Chancellor].
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2. Name on Diploma

⁶ DCPS divides its academic calendar into four "terms," each consisting of a nearly equal number of school days. An "advisory" period as referenced in the DCMR is equivalent to a DCPS "term."

DCPS diplomas will reflect the student’s name as it appears in the DCPS student information system (SIS). Any student who wants his/her diploma to reflect a name other than the name appearing in the SIS must complete a DCPS name change form at least three months prior to graduation.⁷

3. Graduation Dress Codes

5-E DCMR §2207 establishes regulations related to graduation dress codes. Additionally, schools shall implement gender-neutral dress code guidelines that apply to graduation ceremonies.⁸ Schools shall not require male and female students to wear different caps and gowns for graduation.

2207.6	The decisions whether to wear cap and gown, and whether to utilize rental facilities for graduation exercises, shall involve school staff, students, and parents or guardians.
2207.7	No student shall be required to wear a cap and gown in order to participate in graduation exercises.

4. Class Fees and Gift

5-E DCMR §§ 2207 and 2208 establish regulations related to class fees and gifts.

2207.1	The assessment of a class fee to cover expenses in connection with graduation exercises shall be permitted subject to the requirements and restrictions set forth in this section.
2207.2	The maximum amount of the class fee shall be uniformly established by the [Chancellor].
2207.3	The appropriate Assistant Superintendent shall be authorized to exempt a student from the payment of the class fee in instances of hardship.
2207.4	The expense of caps and gowns, yearbook subscriptions, proms, class gifts, and other activities that may be associated with graduation shall not be included in the class fee.
2207.5	Activities such as those listed in § 2207.4, if offered, shall be made available to students on an individual basis at the option of each student.
2208.1	The decision whether to present a class gift shall involve school staff, students, and parents or guardians.
2208.2	Class gifts to the school, if any, shall consist of or be paid for only by donations, including the creative work of students.
2208.3	Class gifts shall not be made to any individual(s).

5. Senior Designations

Schools that choose to designate a valedictorian and salutatorian must follow the requirements in this section. Valedictorians are students with the highest weighted grade point average (GPA) in their graduating class, and salutatorians are students with the second highest weighted GPA. Selection of the valedictorian and salutatorian is based on weighted GPA, class ranking, and the following requirements:

- The valedictorian or salutatorian must be a student in 12th grade who will graduate with their cohort class; and
- The student must have attended the high school they are graduating from for at least four (4) consecutive semesters or eight (8) consecutive terms prior to graduation to be eligible for either valedictorian or salutatorian status. Students who transfer to high schools after the first semester of the junior year are ineligible to be included in the GPA calculations for valedictorian or salutatorian⁹.
- A student selected for such distinction shall follow the school’s code of conduct.

⁷ For additional information, see DCPS Student Name and Gender Change Policy (June 2018).

⁸ For additional information, see DCPS Transgender and Gender-Nonconforming Policy Guidance (June 2015).

⁹ At Opportunity Academies students must have attended for at least two (2) consecutive semesters or 4 consecutive terms to be eligible for either designation.

The selection process for valedictorian and salutatorian should follow these rules:

- The GPA should be determined based on all courses taken prior to graduation where the student receives a lettergrade, including courses taken in summer and evening school.
- All grades with an assigned value of A-F earned in all subjects will count toward the GPA calculation.
- GPAs will be calculated to the ten-thousandths place and rounded to the hundredths place with .005 or higher rounded upward.
- In the event of a tie between top students with the same GPA, schools will recognize them as co-valedictorians and co-salutatorians.

V. Special Considerations

A. Specialized High School Diplomas and Seals of Recognition

Students at specialized high schools or programs are required to complete the above requirements in addition to any supplementary requirements of the specialized high school or program. If students have completed the DCPS requirements listed above, but do not complete the specialized high school or program’s additional requirements, they may receive a standardized DCPS diploma that does not specify a school without having to transfer back to their in-boundary high school.

5-A DCMR § 2203 provides the following as a basis for specialized high school diplomas and seals of recognition:

2203.4	An LEA may establish specialized or career-focused programs or courses of study, which lead to the high school diploma in accordance with Subsection 2203.3. These courses of study can include academic, performing arts, science and mathematics, and career or vocational education focuses or other areas of concentration. The programs or courses of study may require additional coursework.
2203.6	Each student who completes the requirements for specialized or career focused courses of study established under Subsection 2203.4 shall receive appropriate recognition on the student's diploma.

B. Certificates of IEP Completion

5-A DCMR § 2203 authorizes certificates of IEP completion for students with IEPs who are not pursuing a DCPS diploma.

2203.8	A student with special needs who does not achieve a diploma, as set forth in Subsection 2203.3 shall be eligible to receive an Individual[ized] Educational Program (IEP) Certificate of Completion. The decision to pursue a program leading to an IEP Certificate of Completion shall be made by the IEP team including the parent(s) and where possible, the student. The decision shall be made no earlier than the ninth (9 th) grade and shall be attached in writing to the student's IEP. An LEA shall comply with the requirements of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004 (20 U.S.C. §§ 1400 et seq.) (IDEA) and District law with regard to appropriate transition assessments.
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C. Children of Members in the Military

In order to facilitate the on-time graduation of children of military families, the District of Columbia has adopted the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children. DCPS shall follow all requirements of the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children as set forth in DC Code §§ 49-1101 et seq.

D. Students at Non-Public Special Education Schools or Programs,¹⁰ Inspiring Youth Program, and Youth Services Center

DCPS students with disabilities who attend non-public special education schools or programs are eligible to receive a DCPS diploma upon completion of the graduation requirements.

DCPS students in the Inspiring Youth Program or Youth Services Center are eligible to receive a DCPS diploma upon completion of the graduation requirements.

E. Posthumous Diplomas

In the unfortunate event of a student's death while enrolled in a DCPS high school, the family may request a posthumous diploma from the deceased student's home school. Diplomas may not be requested retroactively for students who attended DCPS prior to school year 2009–2010. There are two diploma options available depending on a student's academic progress at the time of death.

1.) DCPS High School Diploma

- The student must have already completed all of his or her minimum high school graduation requirements.
- At the time of the student's death, the student must have been officially enrolled as a DCPS student.

2.) Honorary DCPS High School Diploma

- At the time of the student's death, he or she must have been officially enrolled as a DCPS high school student.

VI. Technical Assistance, Monitoring, and Compliance

All DCPS employees are required to comply with the requirements set forth in this policy. In order to support its implementation, principals are expected to make all staff aware of required activities and timelines on an annual basis.

Implementation of this policy will be reinforced through a central oversight process which includes regular data reviews, record sampling, reviews of underlying documentation, and, as needed, site visits.

This framework will ensure that together we build a system of continuous improvement and prevent noncompliance.

For key guidance and support with questions, training, or implementation, please visit dcps.dc.gov.

DCPS is committed to serving every student with equity, excellence, transparency, and accountability. For any concerns about or violations of this directive, contact the Chief Integrity Officer either by completing the [Online Referral Form](#) or sending an email to dcps.cio@dc.gov.

¹⁰ DC Code § 38 – 2561.03.