

Graduation Requirements

Awarding a high school diploma based on the accumulation of credits earned for passing courses has been a longstanding practice in American high schools, but this system has not ensured that students meet high academic standards and demonstrate proficiency. Consequently, many graduates leave high school unprepared to succeed in postsecondary education and modern careers.

To ensure that all students graduate from our schools with the knowledge, skills, and work habits they will need in adult life, the South Portland School Department has adopted a proficiency-based system of teaching, learning, promotion, and graduation. Beginning with the South Portland High School Class of 2020, all students will need to demonstrate achievement of all cross-curricular and content-area graduation standards before receiving a high school diploma. These new graduation requirements will ensure that each student provides evidence that they have achieved expected learning standards, and acquired the knowledge, skills, and work habits that will prepare them for postsecondary education and modern careers.

The district's proficiency-based diploma system also requires our schools and educators to provide the interventions, support systems, and personalized-learning pathways that each student needs to meet the expected standards and graduate college and career ready.

A. Communicating Graduation Requirements

To ensure that every student and family has the information and resources they need to appropriately plan and sequence the student's educational decisions, our schools, educators, and staff will clearly and consistently communicate—prior to entering high school and throughout the student's educational career—the graduation standards and diploma requirements that must be met to earn a high school diploma.

The Superintendent, through the high school principal or other designee, shall be responsible for ensuring that accurate, up-to-date information concerning all graduation standards and diploma requirements are (1) readily available to all incoming students and their families in the spring preceding the start of each school year, and (2) published on the district and high school websites. A detailed guide to graduation standards, academic expectations, and diploma requirements will be disseminated to all incoming ninth-grade students at the time of course selection. This policy will also be referenced in each edition of the high school student handbook and on the district and high school websites.

As soon as it is practical and feasible, the Board expects the Superintendent or designee to inform all students and their families of any modifications made to the district's graduation requirements, which extends to all applicable changes in relevant state law, rules, or regulations.

The Board has approved the following schedule of minimum requirements for graduation, which encompasses minimum graduation requirements specified by the state and described in relevant

laws, rules, and regulations. The Board is aware that current law and regulations are subject to change.

B. Academic Requirements for Graduation

For the South Portland High School classes of 2013–2019, the following graduation requirements remain in effect:

GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

1. Satisfactory completion of a minimum of twenty four (24) credits
2. Satisfactory completion of four (4) credits of English.
3. Satisfactory completion of three (3) credits of social studies. (American History, World History, and American Traditions)
4. Satisfactory completion of one (1) credit of physical education and one-half (.5) credit of health.
5. Satisfactory completion of three (3) credits of science.
6. Satisfactory completion of three (3) credits of mathematics.
7. Satisfactory completion of one (1) credit of fine arts.
8. Satisfactory completion of one-half (.5) credit of Real Life to include evidence of computer literacy.
9. Satisfactory participation in the Maine High School Assessment for third year students per guidelines as provided by the Maine Department of Education, including exceptions provided for through MDOE allowable exemptions.

Notwithstanding the foregoing:

All students at South Portland must carry six credit bearing courses each semester, unless waived by the principal due to extenuating circumstances.

A student may meet these requirements through a post-secondary course, a State-approved adult education course, a State-approved summer school program, or an online course approved by the school principal in advance of registration. The student may participate in the next regular graduation ceremony following successful completion of the requirements.

Students who experience education disruption, as defined in section 5001-A, subsection 4, paragraph F, who successfully demonstrate achievement of the content standards of the system of learning results in addition to any other diploma requirements applicable to secondary school students as set forth in their school work recognition plans as defined in section 5161, subsection 6 must, with the approval of the commissioner, be awarded a Department of Education diploma as defined in section 5161, subsection 2.

A student who leaves South Portland High School to attend an accredited, degree-granting institution of higher education may upon satisfactory completion of the freshman year be awarded a high school diploma, provided that the student has notified the principal at the time of the early admission.

Commencing with the Class of 2020, all students attending South Portland High School must meet the following graduation requirements:

B1. All students will demonstrate that they have achieved proficiency in the content-area graduation standards of the Maine Learning Results. Meeting the standard entails demonstrating proficiency in each of the following content areas prior to graduation:

1. English Language Arts E
2. Mathematics M
3. Social Studies S
4. Science and Technology S
5. Health Education and Physical Education H
6. Visual and Performing Arts V
7. World Languages W
8. Career and Education Development C

B2. All students must engage in six educational experiences each year of their high school program. Any exceptions to this must be pre-approved by the Principal. The experiences will meet the following guidelines (A-H)

- A. Engage in educational experiences in the content areas of English Language Arts, Mathematics, and Science and Technology in each year of their high school program. E
- B. Engage in at least three educational experiences in the content area of Social Studies during their high school program. E
- C. Engage in at least one educational experience in the content area of Visual and Performing arts during their high school program. E
- D. Engage in at least one and one half educational experiences in the content area of Health and Physical education during their high school program. E
- E. Engage in at least one educational experience in the content area of World Languages during their high school program. E

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| F. | engage in at least one year of an educational experience in the content area of Career and Education Development to include evidence of digital literacy during their high school program. | E |
| G. | engage in ten (10) hours of Community Service | E |
| H. | engage in all State and Federal required assessments | E |

Students enrolled in a fifth year for the purpose of meeting proficiency targets will develop an individualized plan with assistance from counselors and teachers. The plan will be approved by the Principal.

The South Portland High School administration, faculty, and staff will develop and apply a set of graduation standards and performance indicators that align with the content-area standards of the Maine Learning Results.

B3. All students will demonstrate that they have achieved proficiency in the cross-curricular Guiding Principles of the Maine Learning Results.

The Guiding Principles state that each Maine student must leave school as:

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| 1. | clear and effective communicator | A |
| 2. | self-directed and lifelong learner | A |
| 3. | creative and practical problem solver | A |
| 4. | responsible and involved citizen | A |
| 5. | an integrative and informed thinker | A |

The South Portland High School administration, faculty, and staff will develop and apply a set of graduation standards and performance indicators that align with the cross-curricular standards of the Guiding Principles of the Maine Learning Results.

B4. Our structure will allow our students to distinguish themselves through academic rigor. Students who show proficiency on the Learning Targets beyond the guaranteed and viable curriculum will have an opportunity to earn recognition through endorsements.

B5. While most students will satisfy graduation requirements over the course of a four-year academic program, students may also satisfy South Portland High School's graduation requirements during a period of time that is either accelerated or lengthened, based on their

distinct learning needs. If a student is accelerating or lengthening their academic program, they are expected to develop a personal learning plan with assistance from counselors, teachers, and/or an administrator that allows them to meet the expected proficiency targets at the pace and with the support they need.

C. Multiple Pathways

South Portland High School offers all students multiple learning options that allow students to demonstrate proficiency on expected learning standards, earn academic credit, and satisfy graduation requirements. South Portland High School also encourages its students to explore a broad range of learning experiences, including outside-of-school options.

Prior to pursuing outside-of-school learning options, students must describe their learning experiences in a Personal Learning Plan, including how the experience satisfies both graduation requirements and expected cross-curricular and content-area standards. The plan will be reviewed and approved by guidance and the department chair. Appeals will be brought to the principal. Decisions of the Principal shall be final.

Learning options may include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. Academic courses offered by the school A
2. Dual enrollment or early college courses D
3. Career and technical education programming C
4. Online or blended learning options O
5. Alternative or at-risk programming A
6. Apprenticeships, internships, field work, or exchange experiences A
7. Independent studies or long-term projects I
8. Adult education A

D. Transfer Students

For students who transfer to South Portland High School from another state, country, school, program, or home-schooling situation, including educational programs that are not aligned with South Portland High School's cross-curricular and content-area graduation standards, Guidance and the Principal shall evaluate the value of the student's prior educational experiences and determine to what degree the student has met the school's graduation requirements. After enrolling in South Portland High School, these students will need to satisfy all assessment, proficiency, and graduation requirements in the appropriate subject areas, as determined by

guidance and the Principal. The decision of the Principal shall be final. The Superintendent will ultimately determine whether these students are eligible to receive a diploma.

E. Home-Schooled Students

For home-schooled students wishing to receive a diploma from South Portland High School, the Principal shall evaluate the value of the student's prior educational experiences and determine to what degree the student has met the school's graduation requirements. After enrolling in South Portland High School, these students will need to satisfy all assessment, proficiency, and graduation requirements in the appropriate subject areas, as determined by Guidance and the Principal. The decision of the Principal shall be final. A home-schooled student must have attended South Portland High School for a minimum of two (2) years or four (4) semesters to be eligible for a diploma.

F. Students Receiving Special-Education Services

Students, who successfully meet South Portland High School's cross-curricular and content-area graduation standards, as specified in the goals and objectives of their Individualized Education Plans (IEP), will be awarded diplomas.

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tudents Receiving ELL Services

Students, who successfully meet South Portland High School's cross-curricular and content-area graduation standards, as specified in their personal learning plan, will be awarded diplomas.

H. Delayed Awarding of Diplomas

If a student leaves high school to attend an accredited, degree-granting institution of higher education, the student may, upon satisfactory completion of the freshman year, be awarded a high school diploma, provided that the student has notified the Principal at the time of the early admission.

I. Extended Study

Students are eligible for extended years of study to complete the school's graduation requirements if they have not reached the age of 20. Students eligible for extended years of study may be referred to adult education or other programs and resources.

J. Participation in Graduation Ceremony

A student must complete all Board requirements for a high school diploma to participate in graduation exercises.

Legal Reference

20-A M.R.S.A. § 4722-A (as revised) Proficiency-Based Diploma Standards
Ch. 127 § 7 (Me. Dept. of Ed. Rule) (as revised)

Cross References

IGBI: LAU Plan

IK: Assessment of Student Learning

IKA: Grading and Reporting System

IKC: Transcripts

IHCDA: Dual Enrollment and Early College
IKD: Academic Recognition
IKE: Promotion, Retention, and Acceleration
IKFF: Multiple Pathways

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