

## High School Graduation Programs 2003-2004

The 2003 Legislature passed Senate Bill 30A to amend several laws related to high school graduation. The purposes of these amendments are to provide students with accelerated high school graduation programs and align the number of university admission credits with these new options.

The goal of the Legislature is that students and their parents have the opportunity to select the graduation option that will most appropriately prepare students for their chosen postsecondary path. To that end, the following options have been established:

- a four-year, 24-credit standard program (Sections 1003.429(1)(a) and 1003.43 Florida Statutes)
- a three-year, 18-credit standard college preparatory program (Section 1003.429(1)(b), Florida Statutes)
- a three-year, 18-credit career preparatory program (Section 1003.429(1)(c), Florida Statutes).

This legislation

- amends Section 1003.02, Florida Statutes (District school board operation and control of public K12 education within the school district.—), to require that at the beginning of each school year, each school district must notify parents of students in or entering high school of the opportunity and benefits of advanced placement, International Baccalaureate, Advanced International Certificate of Education, dual enrollment, and Florida Virtual School courses
- creates Section 1003.429, Florida Statutes (Accelerated high school graduation options.—), to require that, beginning with the 2003-2004 school year, each district school board must provide each student in grades six through twelve and their parents with the three-year and four-year high school graduation options, including curriculum for students and parents to select the postsecondary education or career plan that best fits their needs; this includes students graduating in 2004

REFER QUESTIONS TO:

Mary Jo Butler  
Intervention & Prevention Services  
325 West Gaines Street, Room 614  
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0400  
[maryjo.butler@fldoe.org](mailto:maryjo.butler@fldoe.org)  
850/245-0479



TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PAPERS (TAPs) are produced periodically by the Bureau of Instructional Support and Community Services to present discussion of current topics. The TAPs may be used for inservice sessions, technical assistance visits, parent organization meetings, or interdisciplinary discussion groups. Topics are identified by state steering committees, district personnel, and individuals, or from program compliance monitoring.

BUREAU OF INSTRUCTIONAL SUPPORT AND COMMUNITY SERVICES

- amends Section 1007.261, Florida Statutes (State universities; admissions of students.—), to require that students must successfully complete a college-preparatory curriculum of 18 credits to meet the minimum academic standards for undergraduate admission to a state university, instead of the current 19 credits.

To graduate with a standard diploma, students must earn passing scores on the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT), achieve a cumulative grade point average of 2.0 on a 4.0 scale, and successfully complete credits in the required number and distribution.

## Questions and Answers

### *Selection of Graduation Programs/Options*

**1. Can districts establish and enforce a deadline for selection of a graduation program?**

Yes. At the time of the initial selection, a district can establish and enforce a reasonable deadline by which a student and his or her parents must select a graduation program or be considered to have selected the four-year general requirements for graduation. A district can also establish and enforce such a deadline for periodic opportunities to revisit the selection and for the “final” determination of a student’s graduation program.

**2. Can students attend school on a part-time basis in order to meet the requirements of one of the three-year graduation programs?**

No. A student choosing one of the three-year graduation programs must attend high school as a full-time student for three full school years, which may include summer school. The only exceptions to this policy are fourth-year students in the 2003-2004 school year who have already completed three years as full-time students and may be allowed, consistent with district policy, to attend school on a part-time basis to complete the credits required by one of the three-year graduation programs by the end of the first semester.

**3. Does the new law allow districts to offer a three-year graduation program for students working toward a special diploma?**

No. The new law provides that students may select one of three high school graduation programs in order to earn a standard high school diploma. There is no provision for a three-year special diploma program for students with disabilities since these students are entitled to remain in school through the year in which they turn 21 or graduate with a standard diploma.

**4. Can districts offer the three-year graduation programs to adult students working toward an adult standard diploma?**

No. Individuals participating in the adult standard diploma program are not eligible to choose one of the three-year, 18-credit high school graduation programs since the new statute only provides the three-year graduation programs for students in grades 9-12. However, these students should already be provided a variety of options designed to reduce the amount

of time needed to meet their graduation requirements as provided for Section 1003.43(6), Florida Statutes (General requirements for high school graduation.—).

### ***Graduation Test Requirement***

**5. When may a student participate in the Grade 10 FCAT in order to meet graduation requirements for one of the three-year programs?**

Only students classified by the district as 10th grade students or above are eligible to participate in the Grade 10 FCAT. Students choosing one of the three-year graduation programs will have four opportunities to earn passing scores on the Grade 10 FCAT, beginning with the March administration during their second year in high school. Regardless of which graduation program a student and his or her parents select, the student must earn passing scores on the Grade 10 FCAT to be eligible for a standard diploma.

**6. Can a student who has selected one of the three-year graduation programs utilize an alternate assessment as outlined in House Bill 23B to meet the FCAT requirement?**

Not unless the legislature extends the policy by formal action. House Bill 23-B authorized the Commissioner of Education to study alternate assessments to determine their concordance with the Grade 10 FCAT. The Legislature amended Section 1008.22, Florida Statutes (Student assessment program for public schools.—), to allow students scheduled to graduate in 2003 the opportunity to meet the FCAT graduation requirement with a concordant score on such an alternate assessment. It further states that the Legislature will review the continued use of such alternate assessments prior to their application in subsequent years.

### ***Grade Point Averages (GPAs) and Class Ranking***

**7. How will grade point averages (GPAs) be calculated for students in each of the graduation programs?**

Section 1003.429(5)(b), Florida Statutes (Accelerated high school graduation options.—), requires that students must achieve a cumulative GPA of 2.0 on a 4.0 scale or its equivalent in the courses required by the selected option (only the 18 credits that meet the distribution required by law).

A student who selects the four-year graduation program must achieve a cumulative GPA of 2.0 on a 4.0 scale or its equivalent in the courses required for graduation as identified in Section 1003.43(1), Florida Statutes (General requirements for high school graduation.—) Section 1003.43(5)(e), Florida Statutes, requires that any course grade not replaced according to the district school board forgiveness policy be included in the calculation of the cumulative GPA required for graduation via the four-year graduation program. This includes all course grades earned by a student and all courses, even if “forgiven,” must be listed on the student’s high school transcript.

**8. How will students selecting one of the three-year programs be included in the overall class ranking?**

Students selecting one of the three-year programs must be included in the overall class ranking for their graduation year based on the relative ranking of his or her cumulative GPA. These students are also eligible for consideration as valedictorian, salutatorian, and for the Talented 20 program.

***Selection of Coursework—General***

**9. Must the 18 credits required for the three-year standard college programs meet the admission requirements into the state university system?**

Yes. This program is designed for students who are interested in graduating from high school in three years to further their academic and career goals through postsecondary education. Therefore, the 18 credits required for the three-year college preparatory program, including the three electives, must satisfy the course distribution requirements for state university admissions. Guidance counselors should refer to the *Florida Counseling for Future Education Handbook* for specific courses approved for satisfying the admission requirements of the state university system. Students should be encouraged to access [FACTS.org](http://FACTS.org) for resources for planning high school courses, personal academic transcript information, and career guidance programs.

**10. Can districts require specific courses and programs of study for students who choose one of the three-year programs?**

Yes. Within the course distribution requirements of the three-year programs, a district school board may require specific courses or programs of study, as long as the same courses or programs of study are required of students who select the four-year general requirements for high school graduation. A student who transfers into one Florida school district from another and has met the subject-specific coursework requirements in the district from which he or she has transferred must be considered to have met the coursework requirements for the subject area in the new district.

***Selection of Coursework—Algebra***

**11. Do Algebra Ia and Ib or Applied Mathematics I and II count as two of the three required mathematics credits for the three-year college preparatory graduation program?**

No. Algebra Ia and Ib or Applied Mathematics I and II will count as one credit for Algebra I equivalency for the college preparatory program. Students are required to complete two

additional credits in mathematics higher than Algebra I from the list of courses that satisfy state university admissions.

**12. Do Algebra Ia and Ib or Applied Mathematics I and II count as two of the three required mathematics credits for the three-year career preparatory graduation program?**

Yes. Algebra Ia and Ib or Applied Mathematics I and II will count as two credits for the career preparatory option. Students are required to take one additional mathematics credit.

**13. What courses should a student who demonstrates competency in a language other than English take to meet the requirements for graduation through one of the three-year graduation programs?**

If a student is a native speaker or otherwise demonstrates competency in a language other than English, the student must replace the language requirement with two credits in other academic courses. If the student selects the college preparatory program, the two credits must satisfy course requirements for state university admissions.

**14. For students transferring from out of the country, may credits earned in another language count toward the two credits required in foreign language for the three-year graduation programs?**

Yes. For example, if a transcript from a Spanish-speaking, foreign-born student documents that he or she earned two credits of Spanish and one credit in English, these transfer credits would count as two credits in language arts for the courses in Spanish and one credit in foreign language for the English course. The Spanish courses for this student count as English because this is the student's primary language of instruction and includes literature, writing, and reading performance standards. The "English course" counts as a foreign language course since it is not the student's native language.

**15. How can proficiency be documented in the same second language?**

School districts must provide a process to document proficiency in a second language for students who select one of the three-year graduation programs. This procedure or process must ensure equitable participation for all students. State universities may require documentation of proficiency, such as test scores, on students' transcripts. The following processes are currently available at high schools in Florida:

- teacher-developed assessment administered to students who have completed two credits (two years)
- exit tests or assessments used in International Baccalaureate, advanced placement, or Advanced International Certificate programs

- language placement tests used by the modern languages department at the local community college or state university.

**16. How can schools document proficiency for foreign languages that are not currently offered by the high school?**

A school district may use the process implemented by the local community college or university in the service area or may accept passing scores from a language proficiency test obtained by the student from a private vendor. The Department of Education is currently developing a database for collecting and sharing resources from other school districts to facilitate this process.

**17. What commercially-developed language proficiency tests are currently available?**

The following commercially-developed language proficiency tests are available:

- College Level Examination Program (CLEP) in languages other than English
- Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI) by the American Council on Education
- SATII (formerly, Achievement Test) by the College Board.

***Three-Year College Preparatory Graduation Program—Admission to Post-Secondary Programs and Eligibility for Financial Aid***

**18. How will students who graduate through the three-year college preparatory program be considered for admission to the state university system as compared to students who graduate through the four-year general requirements program?**

State university admission standards have been revised to align the number of credits required for admission into the state university system with the two new graduation options. The 18 credits required for the college preparatory program must satisfy course distribution requirements for state university admission. These courses are identified in the *Florida Counseling for Future Education Handbook*.

In choosing this graduation option, students and their parents should be advised that these students will compete for admission with students who may have taken additional rigorous academic courses. There are 11 state universities and 28 community colleges, plus numerous independent universities found within Florida. Students should be encouraged to consider all options and apply to more than one institution. High school guidance counselors are available to help students with this process. It should be noted that admissions requirements for institutions outside of Florida's state university system (SUS), including out-of-state colleges and universities, may vary greatly.

**19. Are students who choose one of the three-year graduation programs eligible for a National Merit Scholarship?**

Yes. Students who plan to leave high school early to enroll in college full time after spending three years in grades nine through twelve usually can participate in the Merit Program if they take the PSAT/NMSQT in either the next-to-last year or the last year they are enrolled in high school. Those who take the PSAT/NMSQT in their last year of high school will be entering competition for awards to be offered as they are completing their first year of college.

Students who elect to graduate under the three-year college preparatory program in the 2003-2004 year and believe they are eligible for an award should contact the National Merit Program Office in writing by October 15, 2003.

**20. Will students who choose one of the three-year graduation programs be eligible for Bright Futures Scholarship?**

Yes. Under the new law, a student may be eligible for a Bright Futures Scholarship whether he or she completes the general requirements for high school graduation or one of the three-year graduation programs.

A student completing the general requirements for high school graduation or the three-year standard college preparatory program may be eligible for the Florida Academic Scholars (FAS) or Florida Medallion Scholars (FMS) awards. The requirements for the FAS and FMS awards are based on the 15 credits of academic courses required for SUS admissions (with up to three additional credits from courses in the academic areas and/or AP or IB fine arts courses to raise the GPA, if necessary).

A student completing the general requirements for high school graduation or the three-year standard college or career preparatory program may be eligible for the Florida Gold Seal Vocational Scholars (GSV) award. The requirements for the GSV award are based on the credits required for high school graduation (which may vary based on the student's selected program) and must include three vocational credits in one vocational program.

**21. Will students with a prepaid contract who graduate through one of the three-year graduation programs be able to use their prepaid plan?**

Yes, both the prepaid administrative rules and Master Covenant provide for the "early use of benefits." However, to advance the benefits by one year, the purchaser may be required to pay an additional amount to pay off the contract a year earlier, if the purchaser is paying on a monthly basis.

**22. Will students who graduate through one of the three-year graduation programs be eligible to participate in college athletics?**

Yes, if the student is entering a Division I college and has completed the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) specified 13 core academic courses, and has the required core-course grade point average and a combined score on the SAT verbal and math sections or a sum score on the ACT based on the NCAA qualifier index scale. The courses required under the three-year college preparatory option meet the NCAA core curriculum. Students graduat-

ing under the three-year career preparatory program will have the ability to select courses that meet both high school diploma and minimum state university admission/NCAA requirements.

***Three-Year Career Preparatory Graduation Program—Career and Technical Education (CTE), Admission to Community Colleges and State University Programs, and Funding for District Workforce Programs***

**23. Must a student participating in the three-year standard career preparatory program take career and technical education courses for the three required electives?**

Yes. The three-year career preparatory program is designed to prepare students for postsecondary career education and training. Completion of career and technical education (CTE) coursework at the secondary level is essential in this process. Students choosing the career preparatory program must complete a minimum of three vocational job preparatory or technical education program credits in one sequential CTE program. This will also allow them to meet the requirements of the GSV award.

**24. Besides the math and electives, is the three-year career preparatory program the same as the college preparatory program?**

No. While the courses taken could be the same as the college preparatory courses, students have additional flexibility to take other career courses that also meet the eligibility requirements for the GSV award. Those courses are not necessarily the same as the courses that are required for SUS admissions. For example, Business English I and II will be accepted for the career preparatory program and for GSV, but do not meet SUS admission requirements. The courses that meet GSV and career preparatory program can be found on the FACTS.org web site. Click on High School Evaluations, select guest audit, select the course summary button, and then click on the Comprehensive Course Table. The list of courses that meet SUS admissions requirements and GSV as well as other programs are listed there.

**25. Does the three-year career preparatory program allow students to enter community colleges and technical center programs?**

Yes, this program allows students to enter community college and technical center programs. Students must take CTE courses relating to their career goals as electives. Also, dual enrollment opportunities exist for students choosing any of the three graduation programs.

**26. Can a district allow a student to take his or her first course in a job preparatory CTE program in the 8th grade?**

This depends on the program or course the student wants to take. Some programs have age requirements imposed by outside regulatory agencies, are not structured so that the first course is appropriate for 8th graders, and/or have safety issues. Section 1003.43(1)(k),

Florida Statutes, allows students below 9th grade to take any 9-12 grade level course identified in the Course Code Directory as long as the district follows certain requirements.

**27. May CTE courses taken as substitutes for academic graduation requirements be used to count as one of the three CTE credits necessary for Gold Seal Vocational Scholarship?**

Yes. Section 1011.62(1)(c)l, Florida Statutes (Funds for operation of schools.—), requires school districts to provide graduation requirement substitutions. CTE program substitutions have been identified in the Course Code Directory, but cannot exceed two credits in each of the non-elective subject areas of English, mathematics, and science. Specific information is available on line at <http://www.firn.edu/doe/curriculum/pdf/ccd20032004.pdf>.

**28. Will students who take the three-year graduation programs and leave after three years affect workforce funding for district programs?**

No. Students at the secondary level are funded based on full-time equivalency (FTE).