

**Technical Assistance
High School Graduation Requirements
Beginning 2007-2008**

“It’s a Major Opportunity!”

When will the new general requirements for high school graduation take effect?

These new diploma requirements will apply to all students who enter their first year of high school in the 2007-08 school year and thereafter.

What are these new requirements?

Beginning with students entering their first year of high school in the 2007-2008 school year, graduation requires (*new requirements are italicized and bolded*):

1. The successful completion of a minimum of 24 credits, or
2. An International Baccalaureate Curriculum, or
3. ***An Advanced International Certificate of Education Curriculum.***

The 24 credits may be earned through applied, integrated, and combined courses approved by the Department of Education and shall be distributed as follows:

- 16 core curriculum credits:
 - Four (4) credits in English, with a major concentration in composition, ***reading for information***, and literature.
 - ***Four (4) credits in mathematics***, one of which must be Algebra I, a series equivalent to Algebra I, or a high-level mathematic course. ***School districts are encouraged to set specific goals to increase enrollments in, and successful completion of, geometry and Algebra II.***
 - Three (3) credits in science, two of which must have a laboratory component.
 - Three (3) credits in social studies as follows: one (1) credit in American history; one (1) credit in world history; one-half credit in economics; and one-half credit in American Government.
 - ***One (1) credit in fine arts.***
 - One (1) credit in physical education ***to include integration of health.***
 - ***Eight (8) credits in majors, minors, or electives:***
 - ***Four (4) credits in a major area of interest, such as sequential courses in a career and technical program, fine and performing arts, or academic content area, selected by the student as part of the education plan. Students may revise major areas of interest each year as part of annual course registration processes and should update their education plan to reflect such revisions.***
 - ***Four (4) credits in elective courses selected by the student as part of the education plan. These credits may be combined to allow for a second major area of interest, a minor area of interest, elective courses, intensive reading or mathematics intervention courses, or credit recovery courses.***

**Technical Assistance
High School Graduation Requirements
Beginning 2007-2008**

“It’s a Major Opportunity!”

Eight (8) credits in majors, minors, or electives cont.

- ***Four (4) credits in elective courses selected by the student as part of the education plan. These credits may be combined to allow for a second major area of interest, a minor area of interest, elective courses, intensive reading or mathematics intervention courses, or credit recovery courses.***
 - ***Minor areas of interest are composed of three (3) credits selected by the student as part of the education plan and approved by the district.***
 - ***Elective courses are selected by the student in order to pursue a complete education program and to meet eligibility requirements for scholarships.***
 - ***For each year in which a student scores at Level 1 on FCAT reading, the student must be enrolled in and complete an intensive reading course the following year. Placement of Level 2 readers in either an intensive reading course or a content area course in which reading strategies are delivered shall be determined by diagnosis of reading needs.***
 - ***For each year in which a student scores Level 1 or Level 2 on FCAT Mathematics, the student must receive remediation the following year. These courses may be taught through applied, integrated, or combined courses and are subject to approval by the Department for inclusion in the Course Code Directory.***
 - ***Credit recovery courses shall be offered so that students can simultaneously earn an elective credit and the recovered credit.***

How long will districts have to plan for the revised graduation requirements?

School districts are required to implement the revised graduation requirements beginning with students entering their first year of high school in the 2007-2008 school year. Sufficient planning time should be allocated in order to ensure that information related to these requirements is disseminated to students, parents, and school personnel prior to the spring 2007 course selection process. In addition, school districts must begin as soon as possible to identify majors to submit to the DOE by October 1, 2006.

**Technical Assistance
High School Graduation Requirements
Beginning 2007-2008**

“It’s a Major Opportunity!”

What courses fulfill the Algebra I requirement?

Algebra I – 1200310 (1 credit), Algebra I Honors – 1200320 (1 credit), Pacesetter Mathematics I – 1200500 (1 credit), Algebra IA – 1200370 and Algebra IB – 1200380 (2 credits), Applied Mathematics I 1205400 and Applied Mathematics II 1205410 (2 credits), Integrated Mathematics I 1207310 and Integrated Mathematics II 1207320 (2 credits)

Note: Only Algebra I (1200310), Algebra I Honors (1200320), and Algebra IA (1200370) & Algebra IB (1200380) are eligible for middle grades weighted funding.

What is a “major area of interest?”

A major area of interest includes four (4) credits in a common area such as sequential courses in a career and technical program, fine and performing arts, or academic content area, selected by the student as part of the student’s education plan. A student must earn a total of four (4) credits in a major area of interest. One (1) of these credits may be earned in a practicum, as described in the Course Code Directory. Major areas of interest will be proposed by school districts to the Commissioner of Education and, once approved, will be available for students to consider. When a student is selecting a major area of interest, it is important for educators providing academic advisement to review the student’s transcript to advise the student and to help ensure that the student is on track to meet the requirements for the Florida Bright Futures Scholarship Program and the 18 units course distribution requirements for state university system (SUS) admission, if applicable, based on the student’s desired postsecondary education goals.

What are the purposes of a “major area of interest?”

The purposes of a major area of interest are to provide students:

- Opportunities to earn additional credit toward college or technical school, or beginning certification in an occupation
- Opportunities to learn more in areas that students might be considering as future professions or lifetime skills
- Opportunities to receive credit and recognition for high level accomplishments outside of the school day for a supervised activity directly related to the major area of interest
- Opportunities to increase the relevance of the high school experience through more in-depth study in an area students find engaging
- Opportunities to increase the value of “elective” classes
- Opportunities to increase the value of the high school diploma

**Technical Assistance
High School Graduation Requirements
Beginning 2007-2008**

“It’s a Major Opportunity!”

What is the student’s “education plan?”

As part of the newly passed requirements for middle grades promotion, each student should be enrolled in a career and education planning course in 7th or 8th grade. The course must include educational planning using the online student advisement system known as Florida Academic Counseling and Tracking for Students at the Internet Web site FACTS.org and shall result in the completing of a personalized academic and career plan. Each student’s plan must be signed by the student, the student’s parent, and the student’s guidance counselor or academic advisor.

How is the high school “major area of interest” different from a college “major?”

The focus is on the student’s interest. These are broader than college majors, and once a student chooses a major area of interest in high school, they are not locked into that as a permanent decision. Unlike a college major that is the major area of study required for the degree in a specific area, a high school major area of interest is part of the eight (8) high school credits that are not part of the identified core courses that students must take for completion of high school.

The high school major area of interest is a means by which a student can explore areas of interest in depth. Students may revise major areas of interest each year as part of annual course registration processes, without penalty. However, a student MAY choose to take courses in an area that they will later pursue in postsecondary education.

What is a “minor area of interest?”

Minor areas of interest are composed of three credits selected by the student as part of the education plan required by S. 1003.4156, F.S., and approved by the local district school board.

Does a student have to be enrolled in a major area of interest to graduate?

Yes, each student must identify and be enrolled in courses that are part of a major area of interest.

Does a student have to complete a major area of interest to graduate?

No, a student does not have to complete a major area of interest to graduate but does have to be enrolled in a major area of interest each year. In addition to the sixteen (16) core curriculum credits, students must complete eight (8) additional credits. These credits may be in any combination of majors, minors, or electives.

Will the diploma of a student who has completed a major area of interest be any different from that of a student who has not completed a major area of interest?

The Department of Education is currently considering ways to differentiate diplomas for students who have completed a major area of interest as part of their graduation requirements.

**Technical Assistance
High School Graduation Requirements
Beginning 2007-2008**

“It’s a Major Opportunity!”

Why is Florida reforming high schools by implementing major and minor areas of interest?

This part of high school reform is designed to give students the ability to explore an area of interest and to make their education more relevant to their lives. It empowers students to take charge of their own education. Students are provided the opportunity to focus on one of their interests. Students will earn four credits in a major area of interest - similar to college students - which may be in the arts, advanced academic studies, or career preparation. There will be flexibility so students can change their areas of emphasis, if they wish. The remaining four elective credits may be used to earn a second major area of interest, a minor, or for other elective classes.

Where can I find examples of major areas of interest?

The Department of Education will post approved major areas of interest on the Department’s Web site.

Where can I find the proposal form for submitting a major area of interest?

The form is available on the DOE Web site at <http://www.fldoe.org/APlusPlus>.

What if a district wants to create a new course for inclusion in a major area of interest?

Districts first will have to submit the course for approval through the Course Code Directory course approval process. Once the course has been approved and added to the Course Code Directory, it can be submitted as a course for a major area of interest, or the district can submit it to be added to a major area of interest that has already been approved.

How often does the State Board of Education approve new courses?

The State Board of Education approves new courses three times a year, but courses must be approved by April of each year to be part of course offerings the following school year.

Can the courses in an approved major area of interest change after a student has enrolled in the area of interest?

Yes, courses can be added for a major area of interest to provide more options for a student. However, once a student has begun a major area of interest, the district cannot change the requirements to complete the major area of interest by deleting courses that were provided at the time the student chose their major are of interest.

How will students know what new courses are approved for their major area of interest?

Students are encouraged to meet with their guidance counselor and schools should notify students of new courses.

**Technical Assistance
High School Graduation Requirements
Beginning 2007-2008**

“It’s a Major Opportunity!”

What is the process for seeking approval of a major area of interest?

Annually, by October 1, the district school board shall approve major areas of interest that will be available at each school that serves high school level students and submit the list to the Commissioner of Education for approval. Only those major areas of interest that are integrated--meaning include courses from different content areas, career and technical areas, dual enrollment and/or virtual classes--have to be submitted for approval prior to enrolling students in them.

The basic steps of the process are:

1. The district evaluates their programs and decides which areas they want to emphasize as majors. Surveying the students to determine their areas of interests is strongly encouraged. Guiding questions include:
 - a. Who needs to be part of the committee in developing our major areas of interest?
 - b. What courses currently exist to develop possible major areas of interest?
 - c. What courses are needed to create non-traditional major areas of interest?
 - d. What educational resources are available such as teacher interest areas, dual enrollment, Florida Virtual School, technology, etc.?
 - e. What partnerships are available such as businesses, postsecondary, and community organizations?
 - f. What are the fiscal and physical plant considerations?
 - g. How can we collect input from students, postsecondary, parents, and community partners?
2. The district contact completes the “major area of interest” proposal form and submits it to their district school board for approval. Guiding questions include:
 - a. Do courses need to be submitted for approval?
 - b. How can our major areas of interest support programs such as Gold Seal, Talented Twenty, Career Academies, IB, Bright Futures, Advance Placement, Vocational certification programs, occupational completion points, state university admissions, NCAA requirements, students working toward special diplomas, etc.?
 - c. What major areas of interest have already been approved by the Department?
 - d. How do we generate stakeholder buy-in?
3. Once approved by the district school board, the major area of interest is submitted to the Department of Education. All major areas of interest for the next school year must be submitted for approval no later than October 1.
4. The Department will review each proposal and make a recommendation to the Commissioner to approve or not to approve a major. The Commissioner has 60 days to approve or not approve the major area of interest from the date of submission.