

GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

The long-standing practice in American high schools has been the awarding of a high school diploma based on the accumulation of credits awarded for courses passed. This practice of awarding credits has not ensured competency based on demonstrated performance. Thus, many students have received a high school diploma but are not prepared adequately to be successful in their postsecondary pursuits.

Acting upon this concern and to ensure that our graduates meet standards and are adequately prepared for post-secondary pursuits, RSU 29 will incrementally implement a proficiency-based system of learning. Beginning with students who enter Houlton High School as members of the Class of 2018, every graduate, in order to be successful in the workplace and in postsecondary learning experiences – to be college and career ready -- will need to demonstrate what they *know*, what they *can do*, and how *well they can do it*. This Houlton High School standards and proficiency-based diploma provides evidence that our graduates have acquired the knowledge and skills – the competency -- to move on to postsecondary experiences.

Further, the proficiency-based diploma system guides the implementation of interventions, supports, and flexible learning pathways for students.

Communicating Graduation Requirements

Prior to entering high school, students and their parents need to know and will be informed of the standards for attaining a high school diploma in order to plan an appropriate, sequential, educational program to meet that goal.

The Superintendent, through the high school principal or other designee, shall be responsible for making accurate information concerning diploma requirements available to incoming students and their parents in the spring prior to the start of their ninth grade school year. An overview of graduation 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 school district website.

The Board has approved the following schedule of minimum requirements for graduation, which meets or exceeds minimum requirements specified by the State of Maine. The Board is aware that current law and regulations are subject to change.

The Board expects the Superintendent/designee to inform students and parents as soon as practical of any additional standards established by the State that must be met before students may be awarded a high school diploma.

Academic Requirements for Graduation from Houlton High School

A. For students up to and including the classes of 2015, 2016 and 2017, the student must successfully complete a total of 24 credits, including credits in the following areas. These requirements satisfy the 12 ½ (twelve and one-half) credits specified by the State of Maine and include additional requirements set by the Board. They are:

English Language Arts	4 credits
Mathematics	3 credits
Social Studies & History, including U.S. History, Government and civics	3 credits
Science, including at least one year of laboratory study	3 credits
Fine Arts	1 credit
Health	1/2 credit
Physical Education	1 credit

B. In addition, to satisfy State law, students in the Class of 2018 and beyond must be engaged in educational learning experiences in the content areas of English Language Arts, Mathematics, Science and Technology in each year of their secondary school program. Also for the Class of 2018, RSU 29 will require students to

demonstrate proficiency in English Language Arts, Mathematics, Health and PE. Students in the Class of 2018 will also have to demonstrate proficiency in two (2) of the five (5) Guiding Principles.

Commencing with the Class of 2018, every Houlton High School student will demonstrate proficiency in meeting core standards in the following content areas of the Maine Learning Results. Meeting the core standards entails demonstrating proficiency on each standard prior to graduation. Students will need to meet the graduation standards in each course along with the additional course standards of each course in order to obtain credit or experience in the content area.

English Language Arts	4 credits *
Mathematics	4 credits *
Science & Technology	4 credits *
Social Studies	3 credits *
Health Education	1/2 credit *
Physical Education	1 credit *
Career / Education Development	1 credit *

* or pre-approved equivalent experiences that generate evidence of proficiency in all required graduation standards.

C. All graduating students must meet the cross content performance standards set forth by the Maine Learning Results' "Guiding Principles" as they are selected and outlined in the Program of Studies so that the Classes of 2018 will be assessed and proficient in two (2) of the Guiding Principles (Responsible Involved Citizen (RIC) and Self-Directed Learner (SDL), the Class of 2019 will be responsible for three (3) Guiding Principles (Responsible and Involved Citizen (RIC), Self-Directed and Life Long Learner (SDL), and A Clear and Effective Communicator (CEC). The Class of 2020 will be assessed and proficient in all five (5) of the Guiding Principles.

D. Most students will satisfy graduation requirements during a four-year experience; however, students may fulfill the requirements for a diploma in a time period that is accelerated or lengthened, based on their individual needs. These students are expected to develop a Personal Learning Plan with assistance from counselors, teachers and/or administrators.

Additional Considerations Applicable to the Awarding of a Diploma

In order to create a multiple pathway to graduation a student may have a Personal Learning Plan (PLP) detailing how the student will demonstrate competency when a pathway is in lieu of core academic experiences. Each student's PLP must have prior approval of the high school principal. Each option must provide a quality, rigorous learning experience that is aligned to one or more graduation/course standard. Multiple pathway experiences will be determined, assessed, and documented through the school. Pathway options may include the following:

- Early College / Dual Enrollment Courses
- Career and Technical Education Programming
- Online / Virtual Learning
- Alternative / At-Risk Programming
- Apprenticeships / Internships & Additional Field Work and/or Exchange Experiences
- Adult Education

Timelines for the establishment of PLPs may be outlined in the Program of Studies.

Transfer Students

For students who transfer to Houlton High School from another state, country, home schooling program, or from an educational program that is not required to be aligned with the content standards of the Maine Learning Results, the Principal shall determine the value of the student's prior educational experience towards meeting graduation requirements for a high school diploma. These students will need to satisfy all

credit requirements, assessment requirements, and proficiency requirements in the appropriate content subject areas. The Superintendent will ultimately determine whether these students are certified to receive a diploma.

Home-schooled Students

For home-schooled students wishing to receive a diploma from Houlton High School, the Principal shall determine the value of the student's prior educational experience toward meeting graduation credit requirements. A home-schooled student must have attended Houlton High School his/her junior and senior years for a minimum of four (4) semesters in order to receive a Houlton High School diploma.

Students Receiving Special Education Services

Students who successfully meet the graduation requirements, as specified in the goals and objectives of their Individualized Education Plans (IEP), will be awarded diplomas. Students, as determined by their IEP, who may not meet graduation standards may be issued a certificate of completion.

Delayed Awarding of Diplomas

A student who leaves 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.

Extended Study

Students are eligible for extended years of study to complete the requirements of a diploma if they have not reached the age of 20 at the start of the school year. Students eligible for extended years of study may be referred to adult education or other resources.

Participation in Graduation Ceremony

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

Students who are eligible for a certificate of completion may be allowed to participate in the graduation ceremony up approval by the superintendent and building administrator.

Legal Reference: 20-A M.R.S.A.
§ 4722 (as revised) Ch. 127 § 7
(Me. Dept. of Ed. Rule) (as
revised)

Cross Reference: IHCDA – Post-Secondary Enrollment Options
IK – Assessment of Student Performances
IKFA – Early Graduation

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