

Policy GRAD-006: Accelerated Pathway for Early Graduation **in Three Years**

Status: ADOPTED

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## NORTH CAROLINA STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

### Policy Manual

Item	Description
<b>Policy Title</b>	Accelerated Pathway for Early Graduation in Three Years
<b>Policy Category</b>	Graduation Requirements and Related Policies (GRAD)
<b>Policy ID</b>	GRAD-006
<b>Policy Date</b>	02/01/2024
<b>Previous Policy Dates</b>	11/03/2005
<b>Statutory Reference</b>	<del>HB 259</del> G.S. 115C-12(9d); 115C-83.31; 115C-218.85; 115C-238.66
<b>NC Administrative Code</b>	16 NCAC 06D .0503; 06D .0510

All students will graduate from a rigorous, relevant academic program that equips them with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary to succeed in their chosen post-secondary plan, enrollment, employment, or enlistment. Academic rigor and relevance are based on established expectations that ensure that all students develop the capacity to master content that is complex and challenging.

In this environment, school counselors and other guiding adults in the middle and high school settings:

- shall provide information regarding the opportunity of an accelerated pathway to complete high school graduation requirements in three years prior to ninth grade selections;
- shall provide guidance and information to students about course selections and requirements;
- shall know and understand the number and nature of credits required for high school graduation;
- shall help students to set up schedules that promote their early completion (within three years) of requirements, to the extent appropriate for the individual student, as they assist and advise ninth

grade students in annual/semester course selection and in career planning activities;

- shall inform students about opportunities to accelerate completion of graduation requirements;
- shall distribute and explain this information to school staff and parents; and
- shall obtain written commitment from parent/guardian and student prior to ninth grade and beginning on this pathway, **provided that the failure to obtain such a commitment prior to ninth grade shall not keep a student from graduating after three years if the student has satisfied the SBE graduation requirements (GRAD-004) and SBE policy GRAD-001 is followed.**

~~Based on HB 259, Public School Units (PSUs)~~ **In accordance with G.S. 115C-83.31, Local Education Agencies** shall provide students with an option of an accelerated pathway for graduation in three years of high school, in addition to the typical four years of high school. **Charter schools and regional schools may offer an accelerated pathway in accordance with G.S. 115C-218.85 and GS. 115C-238.66, respectively.**

To graduate early from high school, a student must **satisfy the state graduation requirements (SBE Policy GRAD-004) and** follow the process for early graduation from high school (SBE Policy GRAD-001).

Offering the SBE minimum graduation requirements in a three-year pathway takes intentional planning and a commitment from both the ~~PSU~~ **LEA** and the student in ~~Grade 9.~~ **ninth grade.**

Students choosing to be part of an accelerated pathway must have an accelerated learning plan that both the student and parent/guardian will agree to before Grade 9. Students may withdraw from this pathway prior to completion with written communication to the school from the parent and student.

Course offerings vary in each PSU based on local context, such as schedule, teacher availability, classroom lab space, and student enrollment and interest. Below are recommended course sequencing options; however, a PSU may adapt the sequence as needed to their local context.

#### **1. High School with a Traditional Schedule of 6 Courses/Year**

- a. Students attending a high school with a traditional schedule will need to have at least four courses accelerated through Credit by Demonstrated Mastery, High School Courses in Middle School, NC Virtual Public Schools, summer courses, or other options to meet the minimum graduation requirements in three years. The course sequence will vary greatly based on how and when the student is accelerated.
- b. **Recommended Course Sequence:**
  - English: English I, English II, English III, and English IV.
  - Math: Math I, Math 2, Math 3, 4<sup>th</sup> Math course.
  - Science: Earth/Environmental Science, Biology, Chemistry, Social Studies: World History, American History, Founding Principles of the USA and NC: Civic Literacy, Economics and Personal Finance.
  - Six Electives: Based on interest, must include two credits from Career and Technical Education (CTE), World Languages, or Arts.

## 2. High School with a Block Schedule or 8 Courses/Year

a. Students attending a high school with block schedule will have enough time in their schedule to complete minimum state graduation requirements within the three years of the accelerated pathway.

b. **Recommended Course Sequence:**

- **Grade 9 (first year of pathway):**

English I, English II  
Math 1, Math 2  
Earth/Environmental Science  
  
World History Health/Physical Education  
One elective course

- **Grade 10 (second year of pathway):**

English III  
Math 3  
Chemistry  
American History  
Founding Principles of the USA and NC: Civic Literacy  
Two elective courses

- **Grade 11 (third year of pathway):**

English IV  
  
Math – 4<sup>th</sup> course  
Biology  
  
Economics and Personal Finance  
Three elective courses

Students must also meet the other requirements for high school graduation as set forth in SBE Policy GRAD-009 (High School Graduation Requirements), including the arts content requirement and CPR.

If a student wants to graduate early in three years, the student is not to apply or attend a Cooperative Innovative High School (CIHS) program. Students attending a CIHS will not have the option to be on an accelerated path for graduation in three years, as the goal of those schools is to obtain a college certificate/credential/degree in addition to a high school diploma in four or five years.

