



JOINT APS/ATF LETTER
New High School Graduation Requirements

To: High School Principals and High School Teachers
From: G. Antonio Gonzales, Ed.D., Chief Academic Officer
Ellen Bernstein, Ed.D., ATF President
Re: New High School Graduation Requirements
Date: March 14, 2024

As you may know, graduation requirements were adjusted as part of HB171/a which passed in the 2024 Legislative Session. We are incredibly excited about the opportunities provided by these changes. Districts and students will experience increased flexibility in how we prepare our students for their futures.

Although these changes will not take effect until August 2025 as part of the graduation requirements for the class of 2029, we have already begun discussing how to address them, and we want you to do the same.

The goal of HB 171/a and our work here in APS is to ensure that students have the flexibility in their course-taking choices that honor their interests and ultimately increase student engagement, attendance, and on-time graduation rates.

Here is a high-level summary of these changes:

- **Elective offerings:** Courses such as financial literacy, computer science, student service learning, career technical education, fine arts, and a sequence of languages other than English (including American Sign Language) shall be offered as electives. Media literacy and pre-apprenticeship programs may also be offered as electives.
 - Aligns to Goal 3 Post-Secondary Readiness.
- **Local discretionary units:** Local school districts/charters must set 2 additional units for graduation requirements. These must meet academic content and performance standards and can be elective units or core academic units. HB 171/a requires that local discretionary units are accepted by receiving schools if a student were to transfer schools or school districts.
- **Next Step Plan changes:** The bill requires that Next Step Plans be developed at the end of 8th grade to include options such as Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, honors, dual credit, distance learning, career technical education, work-based learning courses, or pre-apprenticeship programs.
 - Aligns to Goal 3 Post-Secondary Readiness
- **Creation of graduate profiles:** Graduate profiles must be specific to each community and articulate the core competencies and subjects that are key to a graduate's post-high school success. Graduate profiles are a national best practice in which school districts and charter schools specify the cognitive, personal,

and interpersonal competencies students should have when they graduate. They are locally driven and tailored to each community but allow for robust visioning about the purpose of a high school education.

- Aligns to Goal 3 Post-Secondary Readiness
 - Aligns to Goal 4 Skills, Habits, & Mindsets for Life Success
- **Additional graduation units:** The bill protects a school district or charter school's authority to require more units for graduation. The bill also protects a student's opportunity to take Advanced Placement, honors, International Baccalaureate, distance learning, and dual credit courses. APS currently requires 25 credits to graduate.
 - Aligns to Goal 3 Post-Secondary Readiness

As we incorporate these new requirements into the APS high school experience for our students, we are committed to working with our district departments to best align supports to schools and staff to ensure that we are offering a broad and robust portfolio of choices for our students to choose from. Over the next several weeks and months, high school principals, curriculum assistant principals, and teacher leaders will be working to implement this change.

We have asked that we all consider the following:

- Adding course choices over time.
- Building up and defining career and connected learning opportunities.
- Connecting with Capstones and Workplace Learning.
- Developing a time frame for new initial classes: now until October 2024 when scheduling starts.
- Supporting effective communication of these changes to students and families.
- Planning for team-teaching with alternative licensure teachers.
- Reimagining the role of advisory time so that it effectively aligns with Goal 4 and supports students with their new increased responsibility of course and path selection.
- Embedding mindsets for Life Success.
- Developing a framework to ensure that the Next Step Plan, developed in 8th grade, is implemented effectively in high school.

We recommend you all start a conversation in your department meetings to consider:

- What does the future of our department look like?
- What's the one class our students should have access to that we should develop?

The changes presented in HB171/a have provided us with an opportunity to dream and to reinvent the high school experience for our students. Together, we look forward to our collective work on this important transformation.

A Comparison Chart

Academic Subject	Current Graduation Requirement (expressed in units)	Proposed Changes (expressed in units)
English	4 Must include a major emphasis on grammar, nonfiction writing, and literature	4 Must include a 3-unit sequence; department-approved learning, CTE, or English language development courses that meet English or English language development standards may qualify.
Math	4 One unit must be the equivalent to, or higher than, algebra II	4 2 units must include a sequence of algebra 1 and geometry, or another integrated pathway of mathematics equivalent to algebra 1 and geometry; department-approved financial literacy courses, work-based learning, or CTE Courses that meet math academic content and performance standards may qualify. Algebra 2 <u>must</u> be offered in all school districts and charter schools.
Science	3 2 units must include a lab component	3 Must include 2 units of laboratory sciences; CTE and work-based learning may apply.
Social Studies	3.5 Must include US history and geography, world History and geography, government and economics, and 0.5 unit of New Mexico history	4 Must include US history and geography, including course content that contains New Mexico history; government and economics/personal financial literacy, including course content that contains civics; and world history and geography.
Physical Education	1	1 As determined by the school district or charter school and may include a physical education program that meets state academic content and performance standards, or participation in marching band, dance programs, junior reserve officers' training corps, interscholastic sports sanctioned by the New Mexico Activities Association, or any other co-curricular physical activity.
Health	"A course" Can be taken in middle or high school; Does not count toward total units earned.	0.5 The 0.5 unit of health may be earned in middle or high school.
Electives	7.5 Must meet PED content and performance standards	5.5 Elective units must meet department academic content and performance standards and must include a 2-unit pathway concentration of the student's choice in a language other than English (including American Sign Language), fine arts, health, military career preparation, a CTE program, community or

		<p>service learning, a capstone course, or work-based learning.</p> <p>Requires that financial literacy, computer science, student service learning, CTE courses and a sequence of languages other than English shall be offered as electives. Media literacy and pre-apprenticeship programs may be offered as electives.</p>
Career Cluster, Workplace Readiness, or a Language other than English	1	
Additional Requirements	At least 1 unit must be AP or honors, dual credit, or distance learning. Health is required, but can be offered in middle or high school.	<p>Additional state law requires that dual credit must continue to be offered to students; <i>Section 22-13-1.4 NMSA 1978</i> requires each school district to offer a program of courses for dual-credit, in cooperation with an institution of higher education, and a program of distance learning courses.</p> <p>Includes language protecting a student's ability to take Advanced Placement, honors, dual credit, distance learning, and International Baccalaureate courses. Requires information about these options to be incorporated into Next Step Plans.</p>
Local Discretion Units		<p>2</p> <p>Local school districts and charter schools must set 2 additional units for graduation requirements. These must meet academic content and performance standards and can be elective units or core competencies.</p>
Total Units	24	24