

## Frequently Asked Questions SBE High School Policy 2.103

This document addresses frequently asked questions about the State Board of Education's High School Policy 2.103 ([here](#)), which was approved by the board in July 2016. On a related note, there is also a section that addresses how ACT/SAT will be factored into district accountability.

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# ACT/SAT Graduation Requirement

**1. What is the ACT or SAT graduation requirement in [High School Policy 2.103](#)?**

In order to earn a regular diploma, students enrolled in a Tennessee public school in their junior year of high school must complete the ACT or SAT in order to fulfill the graduation requirement.

*NOTE: ACT or SAT scores are only submitted to postsecondary institutions at the student's discretion. Students can choose to have scores submitted to postsecondary by their school or directly through the ACT or SAT. Schools and the state do not do any automatic reporting to postsecondary.*

**2. Does the graduation requirement apply to a student who has an IEP but will be earning a regular diploma?**

Yes. In order to earn a regular diploma, students with an IEP who are enrolled in a Tennessee public school in their junior year of high school must complete the ACT or SAT in order to fulfill the graduation requirement. ACT and SAT have accommodations available for students with IEPs that would result in a college-reportable score. A student may use state-allowed accommodations for completion of ACT or SAT; however, using state-allowed accommodations may result in a score that is not college-reportable score.

*NOTE: ACT or SAT scores are only submitted to postsecondary institutions at the student's discretion. Students can choose to have scores submitted to postsecondary by their school or directly through the ACT or SAT. Schools and the state do not do any automatic reporting to postsecondary.*

**3. Does the ACT or SAT graduation requirement apply to a student who will be receiving an occupational diploma or a special education diploma?**

No. While all students are encouraged to participate in the ACT or SAT, the graduation requirement only applies to students receiving a regular diploma. For more information about graduation requirements for students earning a special education diploma, please see [section 1c of the High School Policy 2.103](#). For more information about graduation requirements for students earning an occupational diploma, please see [section 1d of the High School Policy 2.103](#).

**4. When does the ACT graduation requirement go into effect?**

The ACT requirement will apply to the graduating class of 2018 and beyond.

**5. Does the ACT or SAT graduation requirement apply to a student who took the SAT or ACT in a different state and transferred to a Tennessee public school after taking the test?**

Yes. If a student took the ACT or SAT out of state, their test completion counts toward the graduation requirement to earn a regular diploma in a Tennessee public school. This is only applicable to students who transfer to a Tennessee school before the end of their junior year. For students who transfer to a Tennessee public school in their senior year, the graduation requirement does not apply. *Please note that this will be further clarified in the High School Policy via a proposed change at the October State Board of Education meeting.*

We recommend that districts develop a plan for verifying that a transfer student completed the ACT or SAT out of state. For example, a district could review the student's out-of-state transcript for ACT/SAT participation or could ask the student for a copy of his or her ACT/SAT score report.

**6. If I have a student who took the ACT on a national test date in Tennessee (not the state test date), does his or her ACT or SAT participation count toward the graduation requirement?**

Yes. If a student took the ACT or SAT on a national test date, their test completion counts toward the graduation requirement to earn a regular diploma in a Tennessee public school.

We recommend that districts develop a plan for verifying that a student completed the ACT or SAT on a national test date. For example, a district could identify students on track to graduate with a regular diploma who lack an ACT/SAT record. Then, the district could request confirmation from the student to confirm their participation (e.g., score report, verification of receipt of scores by a postsecondary institution, etc.). *Please note: Students who test on a national date receive paper score reports 3–8 weeks after taking the exam.*

**7. Does the ACT or SAT graduation requirement apply to a senior who was not enrolled in a Tennessee public school during his or her junior year, such as those who were previously enrolled out of state, enrolled at a private school, or were homeschooled?**

No. The student must have been enrolled in a Tennessee public school during his or her junior year. *Please note that this will be further clarified in the High School Policy via a proposed change at the October State Board of Education meeting.* Even if a senior transfers into a Tennessee public school during their senior year, we still encourage schools to support this student in taking the ACT since it is a valuable benchmark of postsecondary and career readiness.

In addition, with regard to district accountability, all students who earn a regular diploma and are part of that district's graduating cohort will be included in the calculation of the ACT participation rate, regardless of when that student enrolled in a Tennessee public school. So, districts should be mindful of ensuring that they meet the participation rate for ACT, as they consider students who transfer into their district from out of state or from a private or homeschool during their senior year.

**8. What opportunities to take the ACT or SAT can districts provide to seniors who have not previously taken the ACT or SAT?**

Seniors who were enrolled in a Tennessee public school as a junior must take the ACT/SAT in order to graduate.

Seniors with no prior ACT participation (i.e., they did not test at school as a junior, or they did not use a state voucher on a national day) are eligible to test as seniors in two ways via the state ACT testing program:

1. Seniors may take the ACT on the state testing date for juniors at their high school.
2. Seniors may be issued a state voucher by the district for use on one of the following national test days: December 10, 2016, or June 10, 2017

*NOTE: Any senior, regardless of previous ACT participation, who meets the ACT, Inc. qualifications to be*

*considered “economically disadvantaged” may receive up to two fee waivers from ACT, Inc. to take the ACT on any national test date.*

Seniors who wish to take the SAT to fulfill their graduation requirement may take the SAT on a national test date at their own expense or districts may pay for the student to take the SAT.

*NOTE: Any senior, regardless of previous SAT participation, who meets the College Board’s qualifications to be considered “economically disadvantaged” may receive up to two fee waivers from College Board to take the SAT on any national test date.*

**9. What if our graduation ceremony is in May, but a senior will be taking the ACT or SAT for the first time at the June administration?**

We recommend allowing the student to walk at graduation but holding the diploma until after the student takes the ACT or SAT during the June test administration. However, this is a district decision.

## ACT/SAT and District Accountability

The graduation requirements per High School Policy 2.103 and district accountability requirements are closely related but separate topics. The following questions address **district accountability**.

### 10. Which students must participate in the ACT/SAT for district accountability measures?

Participation rate for the ACT and SAT will be based on students who graduate with a regular diploma. This includes students with disabilities and English language learners. Students earning special education diplomas or occupational diplomas will **not** be counted in district accountability measures for ACT or SAT participation and proficiency rates.

### 11. How will ACT/SAT participation rates be calculated?

$$\frac{\text{Number of graduates with a valid ACT/SAT score in previous year cohort}}{\text{Number of graduates with a regular diploma in previous year cohort}} = \text{Participation rate}$$

- "Valid ACT/SAT score" means scores obtained with no accommodations or ACT/SAT-approved accommodations only.
- "Previous year cohort" refers to the graduating class of students whose ACT/SAT participation is counted. ACT/SAT data is lagging. For 2016-17 district accountability, the class of 2016's ACT/SAT participation will be measured. For 2017-18 district accountability, the class of 2017's ACT/SAT participation will be measured.

### 12. For district accountability for the 2016-17 school year, what is the participation requirement for the ACT/SAT?

For district accountability for 2016-17, it is required that 85% of the class of 2016 participated in the ACT/SAT.

### 13. For district accountability for the 2017-18 school year, what is the participation requirement for the ACT/SAT?

For district accountability for 2017-18, it is required that 95% of the class of 2017 participate in the ACT/SAT.

### 14. Is the ACT/SAT participation requirement based on a percentage of all students or a percentage of students earning a regular diploma?

The ACT/SAT participation requirement is based on the percentage of students earning a regular diploma.

### 15. What happens if a district does not meet the ACT/SAT participation rate requirement?

The district will automatically receive an "In Need of Improvement" determination.

### 16. Would the participation rate used for district accountability always be 100 percent if the requirements in the High School Policy 2.103 were always followed?

No, not necessarily. The participation rate used for accountability purposes includes all students earning a regular diploma and *thus may include some students who attended Tennessee public schools for the first time during their senior year*. As described in question 7, under the High School Policy 2.103, students who attend Tennessee public schools during their senior year after previously attending private schools, out of state schools, or homeschools are not required to complete the ACT or SAT. However, these students will count toward the participation rate for accountability.

### 17. Will the updated ACT/SAT requirements in the high school policy impact any other measures used in district accountability?

Yes. If some students do not complete the ACT/SAT requirement as outlined in the High School Policy 2.103 and therefore do not graduate on time, the graduation rates used for district accountability would be impacted.

## Credit Recovery

**18. My school/district currently uses credit recovery, but we do not have any specific local school board policies in place. As long as we are following the state board policy, is that ok?**

No. According to the new state board high school policy, school districts are required to adopt policies to govern credit recovery that cover rules, regulations, and processes. Local policies must include, but may not be limited to: how credit recovery grades are calculated, how students are assigned to credit recovery courses, and how teachers of record and facilitators (if both are used in the district) interact. These policies are required to be adopted by the local board of education, posted on a district's website, and available in writing to stakeholders who request them.

**19. Do students in credit recovery have to retake the EOC?**

No. State board policy requires that students take the EOC in order to be awarded credit for the course, but there is no requirement for a student to retake an EOC that the student had previously taken in conjunction with an unsuccessful attempt at a specific course. However, if a student is placed in credit recovery for the first semester of a two-semester course, the student is not allowed to earn credit for the course until the student has enrolled in and passed the second semester, as well as taken the EOC for that specific course.

**20. The state board high school policy states local districts shall track students enrolled in credit recovery courses. How should this be accomplished?**

The department is currently working on guidance for this requirement of the policy and is convening a working group of school and district leaders to gather input on appropriate data collection methods. The working group will begin in late September, and a guidance document will be released in early spring 2017. In advance of this guidance being released, we encourage districts to have strong record keeping in place at the student level.

**21. The state board high school policy requires a teacher of record, but my district uses a facilitator for credit recovery classes; is this okay?**

All students enrolled in credit recovery must be assigned to a teacher of record who must be endorsed and certified in any content area(s) for which they teach recovery courses. The policy does allow for the flexibility of using a facilitator to manage credit recovery programs but requires that this person is trained on the program and is in contact with the students' assigned teacher of record for a given subject area. The credit recovery students' teacher of record will support credit recovery facilitators in reviewing student work, signing off on placements and diagnostic results, consulting facilitators on content areas students may be struggling with, and signing off on students' final grades.

**22. How do I know what credit recovery programs are approved by the state?**

The state board policy requires districts—not the state—to ensure their credit recovery programs are aligned with the Tennessee Academic Standards and are able to differentiate instruction for students based on diagnostic assessment of student need. Because credit

recovery programs are supplemental in nature and do not constitute a full 180-day curriculum, the state is not required to review and/or adopt credit recovery materials as required with textbooks. In order to support districts, however, the state will be conducting a regional peer-review process to collect feedback from school and district personnel about the quality of available credit recovery materials and will publish the results of this peer review process in the spring of 2017. In advance of receiving these results, districts are encouraged to ensure their programs are aligned with the appropriate Tennessee Academic Standards.

**23. The new state board high school policy requires the credit recovery grade be factored into the student's final grade for the course. How should this be accomplished?**

Each district is responsible for establishing a grading formula that includes the original failing grade in the calculation of the final credit recovery grade. These two grades may be equally weighted (as shown in the basic example below), or districts can decide on a different formula based on their specific context; however, this formula should be consistent across all credit recovery programs in the district as credits are awarded and grades posted on students' transcripts.

- FOR EXAMPLE:
  - Equal Weighted Original Grade: 50
  - Equal Weighted Credit Recovery Grade: 90
  - Final Transcript Grade Calculation:  $50 + 90 = 140 / 2 = 70$
  - Final Transcript Grade Posted: 70

Grades awarded in credit recovery programs must still adhere to the State Board of Education uniform grading scale. Because of the requirement in the policy of a teacher of record, we also require that grades awarded in credit recovery programs shall be posted under the name of the teacher of record, rather than the facilitator. *Please note that this will be further clarified in the High School Policy via a proposed change at the October State Board of Education meeting.* The original failing grade may be retained on the transcript but is not required to be included.

## Other High School Questions

- 24. The state board high school policy requires students take four years of math and four years of English, one for each year in high school. Can a student take a summer math and/or English dual enrollment course that could count toward this requirement, or would the student be required to take a fifth course in the impacted subject?**

Credits received during the summer may count towards a required course during the subsequent school year.

- 25. Students are required to earn three credits in social studies, does it matter which classes?**

Yes. Students are required to complete one credit of United States History and Geography; one credit of World History and Geography, half (½) a credit of economics, and half (½) a credit of United States Government and Civics. Failure to do so would mean a student did not meet all graduation requirements.

- 26. Do the new Uniform Grading requirements for local grading policies begin with the 2016-17 freshman class?**

Yes. Districts are to begin implementing the updated Uniform Grading requirements (aligned to Public Chapter 723) with the 2016-17 freshman cohort. Districts will continue phasing in implementation of these requirements with each subsequent freshman class until full implementation is reached in 2019-20.

- 27. What kind of documentation is required to identify students who have taken and passed the U.S. civics test in order to be recognized by the department as a “U.S. Civics All Star School”?**

The department will share detailed guidance, as well as a compliance form, next month.

- 28. Does the U.S. civics test requirement apply to a student who has an IEP?**

Yes. A student with an IEP must participate in the U.S. civics test. However, that student may use state-allowed accommodations for completion of the test.