

# South Dakota High School Graduation Requirements

*Updated January 2019*

## **Overview**

This handbook is designed to help school personnel understand the minimum high school graduation requirements approved by the South Dakota Board of Education Standards in 2018.

Prior to these requirements, the most recent version of graduation requirements was passed in 2009. A lot can change in 10 years, including the needs of students, schools, employers, and communities. The 2018 graduation requirements are aimed at better supporting districts to meet their students' diverse interests.

Recognizing that success looks different for each student, the 2018 graduation requirements give school districts more flexibility to assist students in meeting their individual academic and career goals. Along with that, the 2018 graduation requirements allow more occasions for students to explore postsecondary opportunities and work-based learning experiences *while they are still in high school*.

The 2009 graduation requirements were more prescriptive, mandating specific course requirements within subject areas. Under the new requirements, students must earn a required number of credits per subject area, with flexibility as to which courses they take, depending on their academic and career interests.

Within this framework, students may earn advanced endorsements: Advanced, Advanced Career, and Advanced Honors. The advanced endorsements are stackable and indicate that students have specific preparations, in addition to meeting the base high school diploma requirements.

## **Resources and Contacts for Graduation Requirements Questions**

Find supporting materials and a list of staff members at the South Dakota Department of Education who may assist with questions about graduation requirements online at <http://doe.sd.gov/gradrequirements>.

*Abbreviations used throughout this document:*

***SDCL:*** South Dakota Codified Law

***ARSD:*** Administrative Rule of South Dakota

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## Frequently Asked Questions

### Implementation of 2018 Graduation Requirements

Below are some of the most frequently asked questions about implementing the 2018 graduation requirements.

**Q1: In the 2018-19 and 2019-20 school years, are districts responsible for implementing the 2018 graduation requirements?**

A1: Not necessarily. A soft implementation is in place, in which schools may choose to do any of the following:

- A. Fully implement the 2018 graduation requirements
- B. Continue implementing the 2009 graduation requirements
- C. Implement both simultaneously

**Q2: What will happen in the 2020-2021 school year?**

A2: Full implementation of the 2018 graduation requirements will occur, in which advanced endorsements earned must be noted on student transcripts.

**Q3: Will the implementation of the 2018 graduation requirements be a staggered approach?**

A3: No. Since students who were on track to graduate using the 2009 graduation requirements are still on track to graduate using the 2018 graduation requirements, the 2018 graduation requirements will be available to all students in grades 9-12.

**Q4: With the increased flexibility of the 2018 graduation requirements for school districts, which courses are schools required to offer?**

A4: No changes were made to the course offerings required by [ARSD 24:43:11:07](#). All public and state-accredited schools must offer all courses and opportunities to meet the base high school diploma requirements and all three advanced endorsements at least every two years. Courses may be offered by the school or online via the South Dakota Virtual School ([www.sdvs.k12.sd.us](http://www.sdvs.k12.sd.us)).

**Q5: How do the 2018 graduation requirements impact private, tribal, and Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) schools?**

A5: All state-accredited schools, including private, tribal and BIE schools must offer coursework outlined in the base high school diploma requirements and course offerings outlined in [ARSD 24:43:11:07](#).

**Q6: My district is not implementing the 2018 graduation requirements this year. However, students have been waived out of advanced math (Algebra II or Geometry) and/or science (Chemistry or Physics) per the 2009 graduation requirements waiver ability. Are those waivers still valid?**

A6: Students who have been waived out of certain math or science courses per the 2009 graduation requirements written into rule ([ARSD 24:43:11:01](#)) may still graduate. Although the ability to waive out

of Algebra II or Geometry, and Chemistry or Physics was repealed effective immediately, those courses are no longer required to graduate. In effect, a district that is still requiring its students to attain the 2009 graduation requirements, but has allowed the math and science waivers, is allowing for local flexibility in its implementation of graduation requirements. Students are still required to complete three credits of mathematics and three credits of science.

**Q7: If my district is not implementing the 2018 graduation requirements until fall 2020, next year may we still waive a student out of advanced math (Algebra II or Geometry) and/or science (Chemistry or Physics) per the 2009 graduation requirements waiver ability?**

A7: The ability to waive students out of advanced math and advanced science per the 2009 graduation requirements was repealed effective immediately. However, those courses are no longer required by the state to graduate. A district may still waive students out of advanced math and/or science, even if the district remains aligned to the 2009 graduation requirements. In effect, the district would be using local flexibility in its implementation of graduation requirements. Students are still required to complete three credits of mathematics and three credits of science.

IEP teams retain the ability to set graduation requirements for students on an IEP ([ARSD 24:05:27:12](#)).

## Base High School Diploma

**Q1: Is every student required to complete the base high school diploma requirements?**

A1: Yes. The only exceptions are when an IEP team decides to waive graduation requirements or when a senior student transfers from out-of-state. See sections titled, "[Transfer Students](#)" and "[Students on IEP](#)" for details.

**Q2: Is a district allowed to add its own course requirements for the base high school diploma requirements beyond the state's minimum requirements?**

A2: See Q2 under section titled "[Is This a Local Decision?](#)"

**Q3: May a state-approved advanced computer science course count as a science elective?**

A3: Yes, but only for the base high school diploma and the Advanced Career Endorsement. State-approved advanced computer science courses may not replace Biology. Approved computer science courses may *not* be used to meet a science elective for the Advanced and Advanced Honors endorsements. A list of state-approved computer science courses is posted online at <http://doe.sd.gov/gradrequirements>.

**Q4: May students meet math graduation requirements by earning courses below Algebra I?**

A4: Yes. For example, a student could count Pre-Algebra, Algebra I, and Consumer Math as a sequence of math courses to meet the base high school diploma requirements.

**Q5: What courses may count as electives to meet credit requirements for each subject?**

A5: See Q3 under section titled, "[Is This a Local Decision?](#)"

**Q6: May students be waived out of course requirements that are part of the base high school diploma?**

A6: No. Students must meet the minimum requirements spelled out as part of the base high school diploma to graduate. The only exceptions are for students on IEPs at the discretion of IEP teams and for senior students who transfer in from out-of-state. See sections titled, "[Transfer Students](#)" and "[Students on IEP](#)" for details.

## Advanced Endorsements

### **Q1: What are advanced endorsements?**

A1: Advanced endorsements denote a particular area of emphasis that a student has pursued in meeting the high school graduation requirements. While all students must meet the base high school diploma requirements, students may earn advanced endorsements. The advanced endorsements are Advanced, Advanced Career, and Advanced Honors.

### **Q2: What do the advanced endorsements prepare students for?**

A2: In short, the advanced endorsements prepare students for the following:

*Advanced Endorsement:* indicates a student has pursued coursework consistent with entrance requirements for postsecondary education at a university

*Advanced Career Endorsement:* indicates a student has career experience in a concentrated area, based on academic and workplace experience and a related credential

*Advanced Honors Endorsement:* indicates a student has pursued advanced rigorous, academic coursework consistent with [SDCL 13-55-31.1](#) (high school course requirements for Opportunity Scholarship eligibility)

### **Q3: Are students required to earn advanced endorsements?**

A3: No. Students are not required to earn advanced endorsements to receive a high school diploma, but an advanced endorsement shows the additional emphasis a student has put forth in a particular area.

### **Q4: May a student earn more than one advanced endorsement?**

A4: Yes. Advanced endorsements are stackable, meaning students may earn more than one.

### **Q5: Are school districts allowed to create and offer new advanced endorsements?**

A5: See Q4 under section titled, "[Is This a Local Decision?](#)"

### **Q6: May districts add their own additional course requirements to specific advanced endorsements?**

A6: See Q5 under section titled, "[Is This a Local Decision?](#)"

### **Q7: Where does an advanced endorsement need to be documented?**

A7: Advanced endorsements earned must be reflected on student transcripts beginning in fall 2020. It is a local decision whether the advanced endorsement(s) appears on the students' high school diplomas.

### **Q8: Are districts required to note students' advanced endorsements on transcripts?**

A8: Transcripts must note which advanced endorsements students complete and show evidence of meeting advanced endorsement requirements. Districts are not required to note students met the base high school diploma requirements separate from noting that students graduated. Transcripts reflecting

graduation, but without advanced endorsements, will be assumed to have met the base diploma requirements only.

Public and state-accredited school districts will be required to denote advanced endorsements on student transcripts starting in the fall 2020. The South Dakota Department of Education is working to make appropriate changes within the student information management system.

**Q9: How should school districts record advanced endorsements on transcripts?**

A9: The South Dakota Department of Education is working to determine the best way to reflect the advanced endorsements earned in the Infinite Campus system and on transcripts. This will be in place before the graduation requirements are fully implemented in fall 2020. When systems have been updated, districts will receive information and training on how to enter the information.

**Q10: When do students need to declare an advanced endorsement(s) of interest?**

A10: While this is a local decision, the South Dakota Department of Education encourages districts to work with students to declare an advanced endorsement(s) before the student enters 11th grade.

**Q11: May a state-approved advanced computer science course count as a science elective?**

A11: See Q3 under section titled, "[Base High School Diploma.](#)"

**Advanced Endorsement**

**Q12: What courses meet the definition of Lab Science?**

A12: See Q13 under section titled, "[Is This a Local Decision?](#)"

**Advanced Career Endorsement**

**Q13: What courses count toward "approved Career and Technical Education units from the same career cluster" with this advanced endorsement?**

A13: Career and Technical Education (CTE) courses that are part of a *state-approved CTE program* count toward this requirement. Courses that are not part of a state-approved CTE program do not count toward CTE credit. To earn this advanced endorsement, a student may earn CTE credit from any approved program; he or she is not restricted to only approved programs at his or her home high school. Only high school level CTE courses may count toward the Advanced Career Endorsement.

**Q14: What qualifies as "CTE units from the same career cluster?"**

A14: When looking at a career cluster's sequence of courses that make up a CTE program, those categorized as foundational, cluster, and pathway courses count as "CTE courses from the same career cluster."

View sequence of course documents for each career cluster at <http://doe.sd.gov/cte/careerclusters.aspx>.

	Design/Pre-Construction Pathway	Construction Pathway	Maintenance/Operations Pathway
<b>Foundational CTE Courses</b>	Career Exploration (22151) Foundations of Technology (10004 <sup>^</sup> ) Employability (22152 <sup>^</sup> ) Entrepreneurship (12053 <sup>^</sup> ) Leadership and Service (22101 <sup>^</sup> ) <i>*.5 credits of Foundational CTE courses can be counted toward students' 2-credit concentrator status</i>		
<b>Cluster Courses</b>	Intro to Architecture and Construction (17006) Introduction to Technology Education (21051) Introduction to Drafting & Design (21102)		
<b>Pathway Courses</b>	Architectural Drafting (21103)  Cabinetry (17007)  Advanced Cabinetry (17005)	Architectural Drafting (21103)  Cabinetry (17007)  Building Trades (17002)  Residential Construction (17003)  Advanced Cabinetry (17005)	
<b>Dual Credit Courses</b>	Visit <a href="http://www.sdmylife.com">www.sdmylife.com</a> for a full list of dual credit courses in the Architecture & Construction Career Cluster.		
<b>Academic Courses</b>	Geometry (02072 <sup>^</sup> ) Trigonometry (02103) <i>*.5 credits of relevant academic coursework can be counted toward students' 2-credit concentrator status</i>		
<b>Capstone Courses</b>	Entrepreneurship Experience (80026) Senior Experience (80019 <sup>^</sup> ) Service Learning (22104) Youth Internships (80018 <sup>^</sup> ) Youth Apprenticeship (80020) <i>*Up to 1 credit of capstone coursework can be counted toward students' 2-credit concentrator status</i>		

**Q15: What is the difference between “two CTE units from the same career cluster” for this advanced endorsement and a student being classified as a CTE concentrator for Perkins and federal reporting?**

A15: Only foundational, cluster and pathway courses may count for CTE courses from the same career cluster required for the Advanced Career Endorsement; whereas, a CTE concentrator may use academic and/or Capstone Experience courses to meet the two-credit concentrator status threshold. For information on CTE concentrators and Perkins, find your regional CTE specialist’s contact information at <http://doe.sd.gov/cte/cteregions.aspx>.

**Q16: Do middle school CTE courses count toward the Advanced Career Endorsement?**

A16: No. Only high school level CTE courses may count toward the Advanced Career Endorsement, as the endorsement is aimed at showing that students have undergone rigor with their career preparation.

**Q17: How should districts work with students who have transferred into the district having already earned two units of CTE courses?**

A17: As long as the courses are part of the previous school’s state-approved CTE program (marked on the transcript with ‘CTE’ in front of the course title), the courses count toward the Advanced Career Endorsement requirement.

**Q18: How do students meet the requirement for “two units or more in any combination of the following: approved CTE from the same career cluster and/or Capstone Experience courses?”**

A18: To meet this requirement, students may pursue only CTE courses, only Capstone Experience courses, or some combination of the two.

Examples:

- A student could earn two CTE units from the same career cluster (approved programs only).



- A student could earn two units of Capstone Experience courses.
- A student could earn one CTE unit (approved programs only) and one unit of Capstone Experience courses.

With any of these examples, students also must earn an industry-recognized credential or earn a Silver or higher on the National Career Readiness Certificate. Information on the National Career Readiness Certificate can be found at [https://dlr.sd.gov/workforce\\_services/ncrc/default.aspx](https://dlr.sd.gov/workforce_services/ncrc/default.aspx).

**Q19: What are industry-recognized credentials?**

A19: Industry-recognized credentials show mastery in a specific topic tied to industry. A list of industry-recognized credentials is posted online at <http://doe.sd.gov/gradrequirements>. If a district would like to offer an industry-recognized credential not on the list, they may request it via the Industry-Recognized Credential web page at <https://doe.sd.gov/cte/industry.aspx>.

Information on the National Career Readiness Certificate can be found at [https://dlr.sd.gov/workforce\\_services/ncrc/default.aspx](https://dlr.sd.gov/workforce_services/ncrc/default.aspx).

**Q20: May schools use Perkins funds to cover the cost of students earning industry-recognized credentials?**

A20: For approved CTE programs, the following table outlines the conditions in which Perkins funds may or may not be used to cover the cost of students earning industry-recognized credentials.

Attainment of the industry-recognized credential must be recorded in Infinite Campus.

Perkins funds <i>may</i> be used	Perkins funds <i>may not</i> be used
If the certification is required for all students enrolled in a CTE course that is part of an approved CTE program	If the certification is optional in a CTE course
If the certification is used as a CTE course assessment for all students enrolled in the course and the course is part of an approved CTE program	If the district paid for the certification in the prior year using state or local funds

**Q21: How should districts record industry-recognized credentials on transcripts?**

A21: Districts must note students’ industry-recognized credentials on transcripts if students earn the Advanced Career Endorsement. Industry-recognized credentials should be recorded only after students have earned credentials. Instructions for recording industry-recognized credentials on transcripts are located in the Student Data Collections Desk Guide (<https://doe.sd.gov/octe/documents/IRC-Directions.docx>). Industry-recognized credentials must be state-approved; see <https://doe.sd.gov/cte/industry.aspx> for more information, including the state-approved list.

**Advanced Honors Endorsement**

**Q22: Are students eligible to earn the Advanced Honors Endorsement if they don't earn a "C" or higher in a course not listed as required for this advanced endorsement?**

A22: No. All high school coursework must be completed with a "C" or higher. ([ARSD 24:43:11:02.03](#))

**Q23: Are students eligible to earn the Advanced Honors Endorsement if they retake a course in which they earned a "C-" or lower to replace it with a "C" or higher?**

A23: Yes. Students may retake courses to earn higher grades. Districts may record the higher grades on transcripts.

## Requirements Across all Graduation Requirements

### Miscellaneous

#### **Q1: Is a district allowed to set credit requirements of credit beyond the 22-credit minimum?**

A1: See Q1 under section titled, "[Is This a Local Decision?](#)"

#### **Q2: Is "double dipping" allowed to meet graduation requirements?**

A2: No. "Double dipping" is when a course is counted for more than one content area. For example, Economics cannot meet both the Social Studies elective credit requirement and the Personal Finance or Economics credit requirement. It can only be counted for one of the content areas.

*Note:* It is not considered "double dipping" if a course is counted toward both the base high school diploma and advanced endorsements. For example, Algebra I can count toward both the base high school diploma and any or all advanced endorsements.

#### **Q3: What if districts want to offer courses that don't align to any of the state course codes and descriptions?**

A3: Annually, by Oct. 1, districts may submit requests for new course codes to the South Dakota Department of Education if courses do not align to any of the state course descriptions. Requests must include course title, course description, subject/content category, and standards addressed in the course. The department will review the district's request and communicate its final decision to the district. If approved, a new course code will be identified and added to Infinite Campus and the Personnel Record Form. The course code will be available for use for the following school year.

A list of the state common course codes and descriptions is posted online at <http://doe.sd.gov/octe/commoncourse.aspx>. Common course codes will be reviewed and updated annually.

#### **Q4: Is CPR required for high school graduation?**

A4: While CPR is not a graduation requirement; however, as of July 1, 2017, all districts need to incorporate into district curriculum the skills necessary to perform hands-only CPR and awareness in the use of an AED (automated external defibrillator). Where districts implement the CPR/AED requirements and the duration of time are both local district decisions. For additional guidance, districts may access the CPR Guidelines for School Districts (<https://doe.sd.gov/octe/documents/CPRGuidelines.pdf>) or see the CPR Resources for Schools (<https://doe.sd.gov/octe/cpr.aspx>). ([SDCL 13-3-91](#), [13-3-92](#), [13-3-93](#), [13-3-94](#), [13-3-95](#), and [13-3-96](#))

### Personal Learning Plan

#### **Q1: Are students required to have a personal learning plan?**

A1: Yes. Per [ARSD 24:43:11:01](#), all students in grades 9-12 must have a personal learning plan (PLP) documenting a minimum of 22 units of credit.

**Q2: What is a personal learning plan?**

A2: A personal learning plan is a plan based on a student's skills and interests that identifies the things a student can do and the courses he or she should take to reach his or her academic and career goals.

When developing a personal learning plan, students may include the following:

- Description of their personal life aspirations, specifically their education and career goals
- Self-assessment of their learning strengths and weaknesses
- Specific knowledge, skills and character traits the student would like to acquire
- Personal interests, passions, and hobbies and how they integrate them into their education
- Personal education program that allows them to reach their goals while also fulfilling school and graduation requirements
- Major accomplishments and milestones

Students may complete a personal learning plan on SDMyLife, a free online career development program for South Dakota students in grades 6-12. Infinite Campus also offers the Multi-Year Academic Planner in which a student can plan courses.

As students progress through high school, their interests and goals may change, so it is important that they revisit their personal learning plans regularly to make any necessary adjustments.

For more information about personal learning plans and SDMyLife, contact Megan Tatum (605-773-4726).

**High School Credit Before Grade Nine****Q1: May high school credit be offered before grade nine?**

A1: Yes. School districts may apply for a waiver from an Administrative Rule to offer courses for high school credit before grade nine. Districts must show that teachers of such courses are state certified to teach at the high school level. Such courses must also use the same standards used for high school content. Visit <https://doe.sd.gov/oatq/documents/HS9-waiver.pdf> to access the Application for Waiver from an Administrative Rule.

**Q2: Are students who take a course for high school credit before grade nine required to pass a state-approved end-of-course exam?**

A2: No. In November 2015, the state Board of Education Standards approved changes to [ARSD 24:43](#) eliminating the requirement that a student taking a high school course from a certified teacher before grade nine pass a state-approved assessment before credit can be awarded. This allows the local school district to determine whether the student has met the criteria for passage of the course and awarding of credit. The changes also remove the South Dakota Department of Education requirements for state approval of High School Credit Before Grade Nine exams.

**Q3: How do districts record courses for high school credit before grade nine on transcripts?**

A3: Because a student should only have one enrollment record, the primary enrollment of eighth grade students taking courses for high school credit should be in the middle school in Infinite Campus. When the student is in high school, the course for high school credit will show up on the student’s transcript to count toward high school graduation requirements. Instructions for recording high school credit before grade nine are found in the Student Data Collections Desk Guide (<http://doe.sd.gov/ofm/documents/DataGd-18.pdf>). Please note that any school offering credit before grade nine must have a valid waiver in place to do so (see <https://doe.sd.gov/oatq/currentwaivers.aspx>).

**Transfer Students**

**Q1: Are schools required to accept transfer credits for courses taken from other accredited schools *outside of the regular school term*?**

A1: Yes, if the student notifies a school administrator of the credits sought prior to taking the course. If the student fails to provide the advance notice, the school may refuse to accept the credits.

Each district shall establish a policy for accepting transfer credits from other accredited schools *outside of the regular school term*. If upon review of the coursework for which transfer credit is sought, a school determines that the course rigor is not sufficient to meet graduation requirements, the transfer credits earned by the student for the course will count as elective credits but will not count as a course required for graduation. If the school accepting the transfer credits determines that the credits do not meet graduation requirements, the school must notify the student in writing to explain the reason for that determination and to cite the provisions of formally adopted school policy that apply. ([SDCL 13-33-30](#))

**Q2: Is a school district required to accept credits from a student who transferred from another school district?**

A2: See Q8 under section titled, “[Is This a Local Decision?](#)”

**Q3: What if a transfer student is unable to meet local graduation requirements that are beyond the 22-credit minimum?**

A3: See Q6 under section titled, “[Is This a Local Decision?](#)”

**Q4: A senior transferred into our district from another state and will be unable to meet South Dakota graduation requirements on time. What can we do?**

A4: See Q7 under section titled, “[Is This a Local Decision?](#)”

**English Learner Students**

**Q1: May students identified as English Learners (EL) be excused from taking required units of credit?**

A1: No. Students who have been identified as English Learners (EL) and who have an active Language Acquisition Plan are held to the same expectations as all students in meeting the base high school diploma requirements. In addition, EL students who choose to pursue advanced endorsements must be

held to the same expectations as all students in meeting the requirements of those advanced endorsements.

Students who transfer into a district, in particular First Year in Country students, at an age that would allow them to graduate, may utilize [ARSD 24:43:11:01](#) to determine the best course of action. The South Dakota Department of Education recommends that the local school district assist the EL student in determining which classes will provide him or her with the greatest accessibility to skills that he or she would need in the workforce.

**Q2: May students identified as English Learners (EL) who comes to districts from out-of-country as juniors be excused from taking required units of credit?**

A2: No, a local school board or governing body may waive requirements only for *certain senior students* who meet other specifications. ([ARSD 24:43:11:01](#)) Students who have been identified as English Learners (ELs) and who have an active Language Acquisition Plan are held to the same expectations as all students in meeting the base high school diploma requirements. In addition, EL students who choose to pursue advanced endorsements must be held to the same expectations as all students in meeting the requirements of those advanced endorsements.

Students have until age 21 to graduate ([SDCL 13-13-10.4](#)).

**Q3: May English as a Second Language (01008) and English Proficiency Development (01992) courses be used to count towards English Language Arts (ELA) graduation requirements?**

A3: These courses may count as ELA electives, depending on local policy, but may not count towards meeting the specific ELA course requirements.

**Students On IEP**

**Q1: How do graduation requirements impact students on an IEP (Individual Education Plan)?**

A1: Students with disabilities should strive to meet the same course requirements as all students. The IEP team has the authority to modify the specific credits required for graduation. The IEP team must take into consideration the student's postsecondary goals along with the nature of the student's disability, which prevents the student from accessing the same curriculum with accommodations and supports. See Guidance Policy: Applying Graduation Requirements to Students with Disabilities at <https://doe.sd.gov/gradrequirements/documents/1118-GraduationQA.pdf>.

If the IEP team modifies the course requirements for the student to receive a high school diploma, it needs to ensure the course code the student is assigned aligns to the content requirements for the student. Parents and students should be fully informed of any implications that may result from modifying graduation requirements and that the issuing of a diploma based on modified course requirements and/or content does not end the district obligation to provide FAPE (Free and Appropriate Public Education) unless a regular signed diploma is earned and awarded.

**Q2: How should districts address course codes for students on IEPs if modifications are made to courses?**

A2: The course code that should be used for special education students should be the code that best aligns to the expectations/standards/course description that the student will be expected to meet.

For example, if a student is enrolled in Algebra I (02052) and the student receives accommodations or other supports, but is still expected to meet the Algebra I standards, then the Algebra I course code (02052) should be used. However, if the Algebra I course (02052) has been modified based on the student's IEP to the extent that the expectations are not aligned to the Algebra I standards, but rather basic math concepts, then the district needs to find a code that best aligns to the expectations. In this example, a possible code could be the General Mathematics code (02002).

**Online and Dual Credit Courses**

**Q1: If students take courses via the South Dakota Virtual School (SDVS), should the courses be included on transcripts?**

A1: Yes. Local districts have the authority regarding transcribing credit. However, if a student does not pass a course, it is best practice to still record the course on the transcript anyway.

**Q2: Do courses taken through the South Dakota Virtual School (SDVS) count towards graduation requirements?**

A2: Yes. SDVS offers a variety of courses taught by qualified professionals and aligned to state content standards. Because the South Dakota Department of Education approves all courses, students can be assured that course offerings meet state academic standards.

**Q3: May dual credit courses be counted toward the 22-credit graduation requirement?**

A3: See Q9 under section titled, "[Is This a Local Decision?](#)"

**Q4: How many high school units of credit may be given for a dual credit course?**

A4: See Q10 under section titled, "[Is This a Local Decision?](#)"

**Q5: Is a school district required to accept online course credits other than those offered through the South Dakota Virtual School (SDVS) ([www.sdvs.k12.sd.us](http://www.sdvs.k12.sd.us))?**

A5: See Q11 under section titled, "[Is This a Local Decision?](#)"

**Q6: Who pays for online (including SDVS) and dual credit courses for students?**

A6: See Q12 under section titled, "[Is This a Local Decision?](#)"

**Q7: How should districts record dual credit courses on transcripts?**

A7: Districts must use the state codes for dual credit courses, found on the South Dakota Department of Education's Common Course Codes web page at <http://doe.sd.gov/octe/commoncourse.aspx>. Instructions for recording dual credit courses are found in the Student Data Collections Desk Guide (<http://doe.sd.gov/ofm/documents/DataGd-18.pdf>).

## **Math and Science Courses**

### **Q1: What courses meet the definition of Lab Science?**

A1: See Q13 under section titled, "[Is This a Local Decision?](#)"

### **Q2: What constitutes a Physical Science course?**

A2: Physical Science classes include courses such as those listed below.

<u>Course Code</u>	<u>Course Title</u>
03101	Chemistry
03102	Chemistry – Advanced Studies
03103	Organic Chemistry
03104	Physical Chemistry
03105	Conceptual Chemistry
03106	AP Chemistry
03151	Physics
03152	Physics – Advanced Studies
03156	AP Physics C
03159	Physical Science
03161	Conceptual Physics
03165	AP Physics 1

### **Q3: Which courses will be eligible for the state-approved computer science course to count as a science elective (not replacing Biology) in the base high school diploma requirements and Advanced Career Endorsement?**

A3: A document titled, "Guidelines for Replacing Science Electives and Advanced Computer Science Courses" is posted online at <http://doe.sd.gov/gradrequirements>. The document includes a list of state-approved advanced computer science courses.

### **Q4: In which grades should students take math courses?**

A4: When students take math courses throughout high school depends on students' personal and professional goals and schools' course offerings. The South Dakota Department of Education recommends students take math throughout high school, including their senior year.

### **Q5: Which math courses count as electives to meet graduation requirements?**

A5: See Q3 under section titled, "[Is This a Local Decision?](#)"

### **Q6: What if students do not have Algebra I on their transcripts, but have taken three units of Math?**

A6: Students do not need to take Algebra I if they have taken and passed Math courses that are more advanced than Algebra I. For example, if students have completed Algebra II, Geometry and Pre-Calculus, they would not need to take Algebra I.



Students need to take Algebra I if they have not taken advanced Math courses beyond Algebra. For example, if students took Pre-Algebra, Consumer Math and Geometry, they would still need to complete Algebra I. The only exception is if students are on an Individual Education Plans (IEP), and IEP teams have decided to substitute different Math courses.

### **Language Arts**

#### **Q1: May students take Debate instead of Speech?**

A1: Yes. [ARSD 24:43:11:02](#) states students must take .5 unit of Speech or Debate.

#### **Q2: Are districts required to offer both Speech and Debate?**

A2: No. Local districts must offer one of the two courses, but may choose to offer both.

#### **Q3: May English as a Second Language (01008) and English Proficiency Development (01992) courses taken by English Learner students count towards English Language Arts (ELA) graduation requirements?**

A3: See Q3 under section titled, "[English Learner Students.](#)"

### **Credit for Extracurricular Activities**

#### **Q1: Do athletic activities count toward Physical Education credit?**

A1: No. The state Board of Education Standards did not approve extracurricular athletic activities to count towards Physical Education credit. For example, students playing for schools' basketball teams may not count their athletic team participation towards Physical Education credit.

#### **Q2: May districts offer credit for extracurricular Fine Arts activities? If so, what are the parameters?**

A2: See Q14 under section titled, "[Is This a Local Decision?](#)"

#### **Q3: How should districts transcript Fine Arts activities?**

A3: Credit granted for extracurricular Fine Arts activities must be graded, transcribed and included in the GPA calculation. If districts choose to offer Fine Arts activities on a pass/fail basis, it must be noted on transcripts; however, it is up to districts to determine whether it is calculated in the GPA.

### **Health and Health Integration**

#### **Q1: What are the requirements regarding Health?**

A1: Beginning with students who entered ninth grade in 2013, students are required to earn .5 unit of Health to graduate. This is in addition to the .5 unit of Physical Education required.

Districts may choose to offer a stand-alone Health course or to integrate Health at any time during grades 6-12 to meet this requirement.

The South Dakota Department of Education recommends that districts which currently have stand-alone courses keep them in place. A stand-alone Health course is most effective for teaching students the skills

they need to become healthy adults. Best practice is to provide Health instruction in elementary, middle, and high school – creating a sequential base of knowledge and skills.

**Q2: What is a stand-alone Health course?**

A2: A stand-alone Health course is one that specifically focuses on Health Education standards. (See standards at <http://doe.sd.gov/ContentStandards>). Typically, at the high school level, this is a .5 credit course delivered in a traditional classroom setting or offered via the South Dakota Virtual School.

**Q3: What if my district offers a year-long Wellness course that incorporates both Physical Education and Health Education standards?**

A3: Student transcripts should reflect both .5 unit of Physical Education and .5 unit of Health Education, as long as the standards for each area are met. The course code 08052 may be used for courses that intertwine the content. Otherwise, school districts need to use two separate course codes.

**Q4: What is Health Integration?**

A4: Health Integration is the process of incorporating key Health Education standards relative to maintaining and improving health, preventing disease, and avoiding or reducing health-related risk behaviors into existing courses that all students are required to take.

**Q5: If my district chooses to integrate Health into required courses, what might this look like?**

A5: Teachers of required courses would be expected to incorporate the key Health Education standards, identified by the South Dakota Department of Education, into their various content areas. The district would be required to assign a staff person to lead this effort. This person would be responsible for bringing together the team of teachers to determine where and how the key standards will be incorporated. Integration of key standards must occur in classes that all students are required to take.

Below are some examples of how to integrate Health concepts:

**Science** – When students learn about microorganisms, they could also learn about how to prevent the spread of microorganisms that cause disease.

**Math** – Have students measure, record, graph, interpret and predict data about physical activity, heart and respiration rates and blood pressure.

**Social Studies** – When studying the differences in eating habits among different cultures, have students discuss the factors that determine food choice.

Teachers can be encouraged to integrate Health Education material into their subject areas through national health education days, weeks and months; for example, Breast Cancer Awareness Month in October. The benefit of using the national health observances is that free materials are often available from corresponding agencies and organizations.

**Q6: If stand-alone Health or Health Integration is offered in middle school, what are the parameters?**

A6: There are two scenarios – both of which meet the graduation requirements.

**Scenario #1: Meeting graduation requirement and offering high school credit**

If a district offers stand-alone Health or Health Integration in sixth, seventh, or eighth grade to meet the graduation requirement and chooses to give students high school credit for that work, the district will need to apply for a waiver from the South Dakota Department of Education. This waiver process would be the same as any high school credit given to students before grade nine (eg., eighth grade Algebra). Visit <https://doe.sd.gov/oatq/documents/HS9-waiver.pdf> to access the Application for Waiver from an Administrative Rule.

Credit for the course shall appear on the students' high school transcripts with the unit of credit and a letter grade. A waiver is good for five years. A district must re-apply after five years.

The course code 08051 shall be used for a stand-alone Health Education course for high school credit.

**Scenario #2: Meeting graduation requirement but not offering high school credit**

If a district offers stand-alone Health or Health Integration in sixth, seventh, or eighth grade to meet the high school graduation requirement but will not offer high school credit for that work, the district must do the following:

- 1) For Health Integration only, document how the district plans to meet the key Health Education standards. Keep this document on file at the district level.
- 2) Provide recognition of completion on the student transcript. No grade is earned; no credit is assigned; and therefore, it does not count toward the students' GPA.

The course code 08079 shall be used when stand-alone Health Education is offered in middle school but not for high school credit.

**Q7: What if districts offer a stand-alone Health course in high school?**

A7: Districts that offer a stand-alone Health course in high school would transcript the course and the associated credit the way they do any other high school course taken for credit.

**Q8: If Health Integration is offered at the high school level, what are the parameters?**

A8: There are two scenarios for Health Integration at the high school level. Both would meet the graduation requirement for .5 unit of Health. No waiver from the state is required for either scenario.

**Scenario #1: Meeting graduation requirement and offering credit**

If Health Integration is offered for credit, that credit would be earned in one of three ways: authentic assessment, end-of-course exam or 73 hours of seat time. (This is in accordance with [ARSD 24:43:01:01](#), which defines a unit of credit.)

The district must:

- 1) Document how the district plans to meet the key Health Education standards. Keep this documentation on file at the district level.
- 2) Issue a grade that is transcribed and included in the GPA calculation. If a district chooses to offer Health Integration on a pass/fail basis, it must be noted on the transcript. If a district chooses to offer Health Integration on a pass/fail basis, it is up to the district to determine whether it is calculated in the GPA.

#### **Scenario #2: Meeting graduation requirement but not offering credit**

If Health Integration is offered with no credit attached, the district must do the following:

- 1) Document how the district plans to meet the key Health Education standards. Keep this documentation on file at the district level.
- 2) Provide recognition of completion on the student's transcript. No grade is earned; no credit is assigned; and therefore, it does not count toward students' GPA.

#### **Q9: If my district is integrating Health, must teachers have a Health endorsement?**

A9: No.

#### **Q10: If Health is offered for sixth, seventh, or eighth graders and used to meet the high school graduation requirement, does the teacher have to be a high school teacher?**

A10: If the Health Education course is offered in the middle school to meet the Health high school graduation requirement and the students are not earning high school credit for the course, the course code 08079 shall be used. Elementary or Secondary Health Education endorsements are applicable for teacher certification.

If the Health Education course is offered in the middle school to meet the Health high school graduation requirement and students are earning high school credit for the courses, the course code 80051 shall be used. Please note that any school offering credit before grade nine must have a valid waiver in place to do so (see <https://doe.sd.gov/oatq/currentwaivers.aspx>). A Secondary Health Education endorsement is applicable for teacher certification.

#### **Menu of Courses: CTE, Capstone Experience, World Languages**

Beginning with students who entered ninth grade in fall 2013, academic core content credit may be earned by completing an approved Career and Technical Education course. Approval to offer credit must be obtained through an application process with the South Dakota Department of Education, called CTE for Core Content. For more information, visit <http://doe.sd.gov/cte/corecontentcredit.aspx>.

**As a base high school diploma requirement, students are required to earn at least one credit from the Menu of Courses, in any combination:**

- Approved Career and Technical Education courses
- Capstone Experience
- World Language

**Q1: Are districts required to offer all options from the Menu of Courses?**

A1: Yes. Districts may utilize the South Dakota Virtual School (SDVS).

**Q2: What constitutes approved Career and Technical Education (CTE) courses?**

A2: The South Dakota Department of Education approves CTE programs. An approved program must offer two units within the same career cluster. See the list of approved courses online at <http://doe.sd.gov/cte/careerclusters.aspx>. To learn more, please contact the Division of Career and Technical Education at 605-773-3423.

**Q3: What is a Capstone Experience?**

A3: A Capstone Experience is a culminating high school experience designed to integrate knowledge, skills and concepts gained from a student's previous years of learning. A Capstone Experience may be any of the following: entrepreneurship experience, senior experience, service learning, youth apprenticeship, or youth internship.

*Entrepreneurship experience:* Requires students to research a new business opportunity, develop a business plan, assemble a portfolio and complete an oral presentation before a panel.

*Senior experience:* Requires students to complete a research project, design and develop a product, assemble a portfolio and complete an oral presentation before a panel.

*Service learning:* Allows students to identify a community need or issue, apply academic and career skills to youth-led service experiences and develop community partnerships.

*Youth apprenticeship:* A contractual partnership between an employer and a student, that allows students to gain initial training in a particular industry and formal classroom-related instruction

*Youth internship:* Allows students to gain hands-on experience at a business, develop employability skills, learn technical skills and complete a portfolio.

**Q4: Is a school district required to offer all of the Capstone Experience courses?**

A4: No. The local district must offer at least one, whether it be through a course facilitated by the school or offered through the South Dakota Virtual School (SDVS).

**Q5: What constitutes a credit for a Capstone Experience?**

A5: The South Dakota Department of Education has established content standards for each of the Capstone Experience courses. To issue credit for a Capstone Experience, the district must follow the course content standards. See <http://doe.sd.gov/cte/capstone.aspx>.

**Q6: How does a district transcript a Capstone Experience?**

A6: Credit granted for a Capstone Experience must be transcribed. If a district chooses to offer a Capstone Experience on a pass/fail basis, it must be noted on the transcript. However, it is up to the district to determine whether it is calculated into the GPA.

**Q7: When did the Capstone Experience requirement go into effect?**

A7: Districts have been required to offer a Capstone Experience since Sept. 1, 2013. The course(s) may be offered by the district or online through the South Dakota Virtual School.

**Q8: Who is certified to teach or facilitate a Capstone Experience?**

A8: Teachers certified to teach grades 7-12, certified school counselors, and certified administrators are certified to serve as the teacher of record for a Capstone Experience.

**Transcripts**

**Q1: How should districts record courses on transcripts?**

A1: The South Dakota Department of Education requires that districts use the state common course codes on a students' high school transcripts. Districts have the flexibility to keep local course titles and descriptions, if the course content aligns with the intent of the course and course descriptions. Within Infinite Campus, districts may keep their unique identifier to distinguish different semesters, trimesters, or sections. Within Infinite Campus District Edition, there are two validation reports that can be run to verify that all of a district's courses have an appropriate state course code. This will help identify courses within a district's system that have expired state course codes or no state course codes. The state common course numbers are available online at: <http://doe.sd.gov/octe/commoncourse.aspx>.

**Q2: How should districts record courses for high school credit before grade nine on transcripts?**

A2: See Q3 under section titled, "[High School Credit Before Grade Nine.](#)"

**Q3: If students take courses via the South Dakota Virtual School (SDVS), should the courses be included on transcripts?**

A3: See Q1 under section titled, "[Online and Dual Credit Courses.](#)"

**Q4: How should districts record dual credit courses on transcripts?**

A4: See Q7 under section titled, "[Online and Dual Credit Courses.](#)"

**Q5: How should districts record industry-recognized credentials on transcripts?**

A5: See Q21 under section titled, "[Advanced Career Endorsement.](#)"

**Q6: Are districts required to note students' advanced endorsements on transcripts?**

A6: See Q8 under section titled, "[Advanced Endorsements](#)."

**Q7: How should districts record advanced endorsements on transcripts?**

A7: See Q9 under section titled, "[Advanced Endorsements](#)."

**Q8: How will outside entities validate students' transcripts?**

A8: The South Dakota Department of Education requires that public school districts use the state-adopted common course number on students' transcripts. The common course numbers are used to validate completed coursework for the South Dakota Opportunity Scholarship. The state common course numbers are also used for accountability purposes including, but not limited to, Career and Technical Education federal reporting, migrant course history, accelerated coursework reporting on the state report card, and course data for the College and Career Readiness indicator within the School Performance Index. The state common course numbers on the department's website (<http://doe.sd.gov/octe/commoncourse.aspx>) are categorized by subject areas and can be used to determine which courses would meet subject area requirements.

## Is This a Local Decision?

Below are some of the most frequently asked questions about graduation requirements that must be answered at the local level. This is not an exhaustive list.

### **Q1: Is a district allowed to set credit requirements of credit beyond the 22-credit minimum?**

A1: Yes. Local school boards or governing bodies may set credit requirements of credit beyond the minimum. ([ARSD 24:43:11:01](#))

### **Q2: Is a district allowed to add its own course requirements for the base high school diploma requirements beyond the state's minimum requirements?**

A2: Yes. For example, 3 units of credit are required for Social Studies, including 1 unit of World History and .5 unit of U.S. Government. A district may choose to require all students to earn .5 unit of World History and .5 unit of Geography, in addition to the requirements outlined for the base high school diploma.

### **Q3: What courses may count as electives to meet credit requirements for each subject?**

A3: The courses eligible to count as elective credit will depend on local policy. They must be offered for high school credit and for the specific course subject.

### **Q4: Are school districts allowed to create and offer new advanced endorsements?**

A4: Yes. Districts may create their own additional advanced endorsements as long as they are above the base high school diploma requirements. On the student information system, only the three advanced endorsement options (Advanced, Advanced Career, and Advanced Honors endorsements) will be available to post on student transcripts.

### **Q5: May districts add their own additional course requirements to specific advanced endorsements?**

A5: Yes. School districts may set additional requirements to earn an advanced endorsement as long as they are above the state minimum requirements. All students will be held to the level of expectation to pass the additional required course(s) in order to earn the advanced endorsement, with the exception of transfer students and students on an IEP who are waived from high school graduation requirements.

### **Q6: What if a transfer student is unable to meet local graduation requirements that are beyond the 22-credit minimum?**

A6: Transfer students unable to meet graduation requirements set by a local school board or governing body because of time and scheduling constraints, but not due to course failure, may graduate on the basis of meeting state minimum requirements for graduation. ([ARSD 24:43:11:01](#))

### **Q7: A senior transferred into our district from another state and will be unable to meet South Dakota graduation requirements on time. What can we do?**

A7: The local school board or governing body may waive one or more graduation requirements for senior students who transfer from another state, who have met the standards in that state, and who are



unable to meet the graduation requirements set by the state board because of time scheduling constraints but not due to course failure. ([ARSD 24:43:11:01](#))

**Q8: Is a school district required to accept credits from a student who transferred from another school district?**

A8: If the school district is accredited or state-approved, the school district shall accept credits for any course completed. ([SDCL 13-28-46](#) and [ARSD 24:43:05:02](#)) It is a local district decision whether to accept credits from a student who transferred from a South Dakota school district that is not accredited, an out-of-state school district, or an out-of-country school.

**Q9: May dual credit courses be counted toward graduation requirements?**

A9: A local school district has the authority to decide whether dual credit courses may count as elective credit or credit toward graduation requirements. For example, if a student takes POLS 100 (American Government) for dual credit, it is a local decision whether that counts towards the U.S. Government graduation requirement or counts as a Social Studies elective.

**Q10: How many high school units of credit may be given for a dual credit course?**

A10: A local school district has the authority to determine how dual credit courses will equate to high school units of credit. It is common for local school districts to equate a 3-credit college course with .5 credit up to 1 credit at the local high school.

**Q11: Is a school district required to accept online course credits other than those offered through the South Dakota Virtual School (SDVS) ([www.sdvs.k12.sd.us](http://www.sdvs.k12.sd.us))?**

A11: No. A school district may determine at the local level whether to accept online course credits other than those offered through the South Dakota Virtual School. *Note:* Refer to [SDCL 13-33-29](#).

**Q12: Who pays for online (including SDVS) and dual credit courses for students?**

A12: This is a local decision. A school district may require students, parents, or legal guardians to pay course fees for online (including SDVS) and dual credit courses.

**Q13: What courses meet the definition of Lab Science?**

A13: A school district may determine at the local level whether a course meets the definition of a Lab Science course. A laboratory class is defined as a course providing opportunities for students to interact directly with the material world, or with data drawn from the material world, using tools that are not found in a library, media center, study hall, or classroom, and in which students use safe and appropriate laboratory techniques, as well as implement data collection techniques, models, and theories of science. ([ARSD 24:43:01:01](#))

**Q14: May districts offer credit for extracurricular Fine Arts activities? If so, what are the parameters?**

A14: Yes, districts may choose to offer credit for extracurricular Fine Arts activities.

Students may be granted up to 1 credit in Fine Arts for participation in extracurricular activities. A maximum of .25 credit may be granted for each extracurricular Fine Arts activity each school year.

The local school district decides which extracurricular Fine Arts activities may be used for credit. This decision must be a formal action by the local school board. To grant credit for an activity, the district must document the alignment of the activity with South Dakota's Fine Arts content standards. The documentation should be kept on file at the local school district.