

GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

Before entering high school, students need to know the standards for attaining a high school diploma in order to plan an appropriate and 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 prior to the start of their ninth grade school year. A copy of this policy will be disseminated to all incoming ninth grade students at the time of course selection. This policy will also be included in every edition of the high school student handbook.

The RSU #34 Board of Directors has approved this schedule of minimum requirements for graduation, which includes minimum requirements specified by the State. 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 practicable of any additional State-imposed standards that must be met before students may be awarded a high school diploma.

I. ACADEMIC REQUIREMENTS FOR STUDENTS' GRADUATION FROM OLD TOWN HIGH SCHOOL

A. The student must successfully complete a total of 22 credits. Of these credits, 12 ½ (twelve and one-half) must be those specified by the State of Maine. They are:

1. English/language arts-4 credits;
2. Mathematics-2 credits;
3. Social studies and history, including one year of American history and government-2 credits;
4. Science, including at least one year of laboratory study-2 credits;
5. Fine arts, which may include art, music, forensics or drama-1 credit;
6. Health-1/2 credit; and
7. Physical education-1 credit.

B. The State also requires that students demonstrate computer skills according to the school unit's standards for computer literacy, proficiency, and performance.

C. In addition to the State requirements, the student must meet the following graduation requirements established by the Board:

1. Math-1 additional credit;
2. Science-1 additional credit;
3. Social Studies and History-1 additional credit;
4. Health-1/2 additional credit;

D. The remaining credits may be selected by the student based upon the student's interests, abilities, and the requirements of the field that the student plans to enter upon graduation.

II. ALTERNATIVE METHODS OF EARNING CREDITS

Students may, with permission, use alternative means to earn credits. This need may exist because of different academic needs than the typical student, previously failed courses, etc. A student who wishes to meet a credit requirement through an alternative method must have prior written approval as specified in this section. The student may participate in the next regular graduation ceremony following successful completion of the requirements.

A. A student may obtain credits for required classes previously failed through the RSU #34 Adult Education Program, summer school, approved virtual/distance learning courses, approved correspondence courses, or other approved alternative experiences. The student must have prior written approval from the Guidance Counselor and Principal. A maximum of two (2) credits for required classes previously failed may be made up through these alternative methods.

B. A student may earn credits for electives through summer school, approved virtual/distance learning, approved correspondence courses or other alternative experiences. The student must obtain prior written approval from the Guidance Counselor and Principal.

C. Students with significantly advanced academic needs that cannot be met through existing Old Town High School programs, including Advanced Placement (AP courses), may earn credits through postsecondary courses, approved virtual/distance learning courses, approved correspondence courses, and /or supervised independent study. The student must have prior written approval of Gifted and Talented Services staff, the Assistant Principal for Academics, and the Principal. Some examples of justification include:

1. A student who enters into a particular academic subject one or more years ahead of their grade peers, or
2. A student who has completed the Advanced Placement courses offered at OTHS in a particular academic subject prior to their senior year.

D. A student may earn credits at eligible postsecondary institutions within Maine in accordance with the Board's policy IHCD, Postsecondary Enrollment Options.

E. Proficiency-Based Credits

1. A student may obtain required or elective credit(s) for a carefully developed atypical learning experience, such as an internship, independent, or alternative education experience, provided that the experience yields proficiency of learning standards comparable to those in a typical OTHS course. This determination of comparability shall be made by the Assistant Principal for Academics, OTHS Principal, and a faculty member certified in the subject area. Prior written approval and post-experience approval must be obtained, and documentation of efforts shall be the responsibility of the student.

III. ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS APPLICABLE TO THE AWARDING OF A DIPLOMA FROM OLD TOWN HIGH SCHOOL

A. Transfer Students

1. For students who transfer to Old Town High School from another state or from an educational program that is not required to be aligned with the content standards of the system of Learning Results, the Old Town High School Principal shall determine the value of the student's prior educational experience towards meeting graduation requirements.

B. Home-Schooled Students

1. For home-schooled students wishing to receive a diploma from Old Town High School, the Old Town High School Principal shall determine the value of the student's prior educational experience toward meeting graduation credit requirements. A home-schooled student must have been enrolled at Old Town High School for their senior year and have earned a minimum of fourteen (14) Old Town High School credits

C. Students Receiving Special Education Services

1. Students who successfully meet the content standards of the Learning Results, as specified in the goals and objectives of their Individualized Education Plans (IEP), will be awarded diplomas.

D. Delayed Awarding of Diplomas

1. A student who leaves Old Town 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.

E. Early Awarding of Diplomas

1. A student who has met the State's and the Board's diploma requirements in fewer than four years of high school may be awarded a diploma.

F. Extended Study

1. 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 suitable to young learners. Extended study for students with disabilities shall be specified in the student's Individualized Education Plan.

G. Certificate of Completion

1. The Board may provide a certificate of completion to a student who leaves school having completed four years attendance as a full-time high school student and who has earned the required credits but has not met Learning Results proficiency standards that may be mandated by the State.

2. The Board may provide a certificate of completion to a student who leaves school having completed four years of attendance as a full time high school student and who has not earned the required credits but has met his/her Individual Educational Plan goals.

H. Participation in Graduation Ceremonies

1. All students will be assessed at the end of their seventh (7th) semester or the mid-point of their senior year to determine if it is numerically possible to complete the necessary requirements for graduation by the end of the eighth (8th) semester or end of the senior year. If it is determined that it is possible to complete the necessary requirements, the student shall be allowed to participate in graduation. Students allowed to participate but who fail to meet graduation requirements shall not be awarded a diploma until all requirements are met.

I. Honors and Awards at Graduation

1. Honor parts and awards at graduation will be determined after the students' seventh semester. The weighted GPA will be used to determine class rank and honors parts. Classes will be weighted such that AP classes will be weighted 10% while honors classes will be weighted 6%. Both the weighted and un-weighted GPA will appear on the transcript. All honors parts will be determined using the weighted GPA.

2. Only classes from the fall of 2012 forward will be weighted.

3. Credits earned outside of Old Town High School and/or its instructional program will not be calculated in a student's grade point average (GPA) or class rank for the purpose of determining honor parts, awards, or scholarships at graduation unless the student has transferred from another high school and grades can be converted to a numerical system. Also, in the case of approved credits (for the 16 required non-elective credits) earned in accordance with Section II, paragraph C or D, grades submitted in a numerical form based on a 0-100 scale will be calculated into the student's GPA

IV. OLD TOWN HIGH SCHOOL HONORS DIPLOMA

A. Students may earn an OTHS Honors Diploma by meeting all normal State and Board graduation requirements, and additional requirements.

B. General statement: In all cases, the requirements below may overlap with normal diploma requirements, requirements of other programs within OTHS, or efforts outside OTHS. Examples:

1. Completing a seminar focused on a STEM topic would satisfy a requirement for both the OTHS Honors Diploma and the OTHS STEM Leaders Diploma.

2. Completing a service project for an outside group (e.g. Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts) may meet the service project criteria for the OTHS Honors Diploma, and may additionally meet the service project criteria for the OTHS STEM Leaders Diploma if the project is STEM focused.

C. Honors Diploma Committee

1. The Honors Diploma Committee is charged with implementation of this diploma program, and interpretation of these requirements. The committee shall include the following staff as *ex officio* members:

- a) RSU #34 Director of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment
- b) OTHS Principal
- c) OTHS Assistant Principal for Academics

2. The Committee may, at its option, form an Advisory Council to bring other stakeholders (e.g., businesses, post-secondary institutions) into the development and implementation of the Honors Diploma.

D. Requirements in addition to normal graduation requirements:

1. Coursework

a) Succeed in a comprehensive course load, performing overall at the proficient-to-superior level in the standards of:

- (1) 4 credits each of ELA, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies
- (2) the third year of a foreign language

b) Succeed in an advanced course load, performing in each course and overall at the proficient-to-superior level in the standards of two college-level courses, and of an additional eight honors or college-level credits

- 2. Participate in 9 seminars
- 3. Complete one to three service projects, totaling at least 20 hours
- 4. Complete a capstone project of superior quality

V. OLD TOWN HIGH SCHOOL STEM LEADERS DIPLOMA

A. Students may earn an OTHS STEM Leaders Diploma by meeting all normal State and Board graduation requirements, and additional requirements.

B. General statement: In all cases, the requirements below may overlap with normal diploma requirements, requirements of other programs within OTHS, or efforts outside OTHS.

1. For example, completing a seminar focused on a STEM topic would satisfy a requirement for both the OTHS Honors Diploma and the OTHS STEM Leaders Diploma.

C. OTHS STEM Leaders Committee

1. The OTHS STEM Leaders Committee is charged with implementation of this diploma program, and interpretation of these requirements. The committee shall include the following staff as *ex officio* members:

- a) RSU #34 Director of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment
- b) OTHS Principal
- c) OTHS Assistant Principal for Academics

2. The Committee may, at its option, form an Advisory Council to bring other stakeholders (e.g., businesses, post-secondary institutions) into the development and implementation of the STEM Leaders Diploma.

D. Requirements in addition to normal graduation requirements:

1. Succeed in a challenging and diverse STEM courseload, completing at least 10 STEM credits, of which at least 3 are college-level. Performance in the standards of this coursework must be at the proficient-to-superior level.

2. Participate in 3 external competitions or research showcases (e.g., WindBlade competition, State Science Fair, invited poster presentations, math team, FIRST Robotics Team).

3. Successfully complete a 100-hour authentic STEM internship, including written and oral presentation to peers at the conclusion.

4. Complete a STEM-related capstone project of superior quality, with a focus on technical writing.

5. Complete at least 4 authentic STEM service efforts, through which the student transitions from short-term participatory efforts to longer-term leadership efforts.

6. Participate in 8 STEM seminars

7. Demonstrate moderate facility with at least one mode of computer programming/scripting (e.g., MATLAB, C++, JavaScript, robotics programming)

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

Cross References: IHEDA-Post-Secondary Enrollment Options
IK-Student Achievement
IKFA-Early Graduation

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