

GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS IN PENNSYLVANIA

August 2022

Beginning with the graduating class of 2023, new statewide graduation requirements will apply to all public school students in Pennsylvania.¹ As a result, every student must satisfy one of several pathways to demonstrate preparedness for college and career and receive a diploma. Schools must provide additional details about each of these graduation pathways and how they are being implemented at your school.

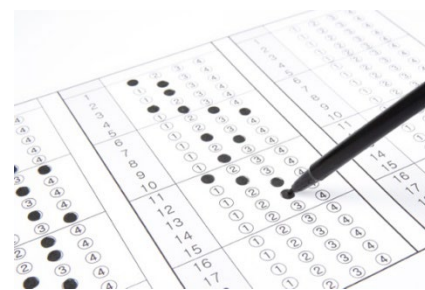
The pathways to meet graduation requirements include:

1. **Keystone Proficiency**

A student must score **Proficient or Advanced** on each Keystone Exam – Algebra I, Literature, and Biology.

2. **Keystone Satisfactory Composite**

A student must earn a **satisfactory composite score of 4452** on the Algebra I, Literature, and Biology Keystone Exams. Students must also obtain a Proficient or Advanced score (1500 or greater) on at least one of those three exams, and no less than a Basic score on the other two.



3. **Alternative Assessment**

A student must receive a passing grade on the courses associated with each Keystone Exam, and **satisfactorily complete one of the following**: 1) an alternative assessment (SAT, PSAT, ACT, ASVAB, Gold Level ACT WorkKeys); 2) advanced coursework (AP, IB, concurrent enrollment courses); 3) pre-apprenticeship; or 4) acceptance in a 4-year nonprofit institution of higher education for college-level coursework.

4. **Career and Technical Pathway**



A student must earn a passing grade on the courses associated with each Keystone Exam **and** pass the National Occupational Competency Testing Institute (NOCTI) or the National Institute for Metalworking Skills (NIMS) assessment in an approved career and technical education concentration.

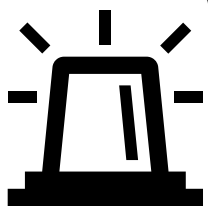
5. **Evidence-Based Pathway**

A student must earn a passing grade on the courses associated with each Keystone Exam **and** demonstrate readiness for postsecondary engagement through three pieces of evidence from the student's career portfolio aligned to student goals and career plan. Examples of evidence include ACT WorkKeys, SAT subject tests, AP, IB, and concurrent coursework, higher education acceptance, community learning project, industry-recognized credentials, successful completion of an internship, externship, or co-op, or a guarantee of full-time employment.

For more information on statewide graduation requirements, visit the Act 158 page of the Pennsylvania Department of Education website, <https://www.education.pa.gov/K-12/Assessment%20and%20Accountability/GraduationRequirements/Act158/Pages/default.aspx>.

WAIVERS AVAILABLE

At the discretion of a school superintendent or other chief school administrator, a school may waive the state's high school graduation requirements on a case-by-case basis for good cause.



Waivers may be granted for a student in grade 12 to accommodate a student who experiences extenuating circumstances (e.g., serious illness, death in the student's immediate family, family emergency, frequent school transfers, transfer from out-of-state in grade 12). This applies to high school graduation requirements set forth in 22 Pa. Code § 4.24 and includes waiver of the Keystone Exam Proficiency requirements or alternative pathway graduation requirements. Students granted

waivers are still required to successfully complete locally established, grade-based requirements for academic content areas associated with each Keystone Exam in order to meet statewide graduation requirements.²

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES CAN GRADUATE THROUGH THEIR IEP

Any student with a disability who satisfactorily completes a special education program developed by an Individualized Education Program (IEP) team and who does not otherwise meet the new statewide requirements (Act 158 or Act 6) shall be provided a regular high school diploma. A student with a disability also has the right to participate in commencement ceremonies with the student's graduating class and receive a certificate of attendance even if the student is not graduating until later.³

ENGLISH LEARNERS AND STATE ASSESSMENTS

All English learners (ELs) are required to participate in the Mathematics PSSA or Algebra I Keystone Exam and the Science PSSA or Biology Keystone Exam, with accommodations as appropriate, regardless of their enrollment date.



However, an EL student whose enrollment in any U.S. public school is for fewer than 12 cumulative (not consecutive) months by the end of the year in which the PSSA ELA/Keystone Literature testing window occurs has an **option** to take the associated exam. Enrollment in a school in any U.S. territory, such as Puerto Rico, is not to be considered enrollment in a U.S. public school. ***An EL may be exempted only once from participation in the PSSA ELA or Keystone Literature Exam.*** For example, if an EL student was exempt from participation during a previous test administration, the student must participate during the current testing window regardless of length of enrollment.

An EL student who does not participate in the Keystone Literature Exam as an 11th or 12th grade student must satisfy the requirements of Act 158 or Act 6 through a pathway that does not require Keystone proficiency. The CTE Concentrator, Alternative Assessment, and Evidence-Based Pathways require EL students to complete locally established grade-based requirements

for academic content associated with each Keystone Exam in which the student did not demonstrate proficiency.

ADDITIONAL PATHWAYS TO GRADUATION FOR STUDENTS WHO EXPERIENCE EDUCATIONAL INSTABILITY

A new law — Act 1 of 2022 (codified at 24 P.S. § 13-1331.1) — provides additional pathways to graduation and extra school supports for students experiencing homelessness or students who have been involved in the foster care or juvenile justice systems. This law requires schools to accept full and partial credits a student earned in a prior school and to consider waiving locally required courses or consider how a student may demonstrate proficiency to earn credit in a different manner. If a student cannot fulfill all the courses required for graduation at their current school, the student may graduate from a prior school or, as a last resort, apply for a statewide diploma. To learn more about this important law, refer to this [Act 1 fact sheet](#) and these [advocacy tools](#).

LEARN MORE

To learn more about these requirements, check your school district or charter school's policies regarding graduation. You can also learn more about statewide graduation requirements through the [Pennsylvania Department of Education's guidance documents and toolkit](#).

The Education Law Center-PA (ELC) is a nonprofit, legal advocacy organization with offices in Philadelphia and Pittsburgh, dedicated to ensuring that all children in Pennsylvania have access to a quality public education. Through legal representation, impact litigation, community engagement, and policy advocacy, ELC advances the rights of underserved children, including children living in poverty, children of color, children in the foster care and juvenile justice systems, children with disabilities, multilingual learners, LGBTQ students, and children experiencing homelessness.

ELC's publications provide a general statement of the law. However, each situation is different. If questions remain about how the law applies to a particular situation, contact ELC's Helpline for information and advice — visit www.elc-pa.org/contact or call 215-238-6970 (Eastern and Central PA) or 412-258-2120 (Western PA) — or contact another attorney of your choice.

¹ See Act 158 of 2018; Act 6 of 2017, 24 P.S. § 1-121; 22 Pa. Code § 4.51

² 22 Pa. Code § 4.51d (Waivers)

³ 24 P.S. 16-1614