

Florida's Guide to Public High School Graduation



2004

Florida Department of Education

HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION PROGRAMS OVERVIEW

If you are the parent of a Florida middle or high school student, this guide is for you. It is designed to explain Florida's three high school graduation programs, including two programs that let students graduate from high school in three years. The guide also provides information to help students and their families as they plan and prepare for postsecondary goals. *(For more information about a special diploma and other graduation options for students with disabilities, visit www.firn.edu/doe/bin00014/pdf/diploma.pdf or contact your child's guidance counselor or exceptional student education teacher.)*

Florida students may choose from three graduation programs

- the traditional 24-credit program
- a three-year, 18-credit college preparatory program
- a three-year, 18-credit career preparatory program.

All three graduation paths include opportunities to take rigorous academic courses designed to prepare students for their future academic and career choices. **And all students, regardless of graduation program, must still earn a specific grade point average on a 4.0 scale and achieve passing scores on the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) in order to graduate with a standard diploma (refer to graduation options charts).** However, the two three-year programs are significantly different from the traditional 24-credit program.

TRADITIONAL 24-CREDIT PROGRAM

This program requires students to take 24 credits in subject areas such as English, mathematics, science, social studies, practical/performing fine arts, life management skills, and personal fitness. This program offers students the chance to take 8.5 elective credits. Students have the flexibility to take rigorous academic courses to meet college/university entrance requirements, take fine arts and music courses, and take career and technical courses within this program. Foreign language credit is not required for this program, although it is recommended for community college preparation and is **required** for admission to Florida's state universities.

THREE-YEAR, 18-CREDIT COLLEGE PREPARATORY PROGRAM

This accelerated graduation program requires fewer credits than the traditional 24-credit program; however, it focuses more on academic courses, which means students take fewer elective courses. Unlike the traditional 24-credit program, the three-year college preparatory program requires students to earn two credits in a foreign language. Students must earn at least six of the 18 required credits in specified rigorous level courses and maintain a cumulative weighted grade point average of a 3.0 on a 4.0 scale with a weighted or unweighted grade that earns at least a 3.0 or its equivalent in each of the 18 required credits for the college preparatory program. It also requires higher-level mathematics courses than does the 24-credit program and the three-year career preparatory program. The credits required by this program must satisfy the minimum standards for admission into Florida's state universities.

THREE-YEAR, 18-CREDIT CAREER PREPARATORY PROGRAM

This accelerated graduation program requires fewer credits than the traditional 24-credit program; however, it focuses more on academic courses, which means students take fewer elective courses. Unlike the 24-credit program, the three-year career preparatory program requires students to earn specific credits in a single vocational or career education program. It requires students to maintain a cumulative weighted grade point average of a 3.0 on a 4.0 scale with a weighted or unweighted grade that earns at least a 2.0 or its equivalent in each of the 18 required credits for the career preparatory program. The requirements of the program are designed to prepare students for entrance into a technical center or community college for career preparation or for entrance into the workforce.

CHOOSING A PROGRAM

The three-year programs are designed for students who are clear about their future goals, who are mature enough to leave high school, and who are ready to pursue their goals beyond high school in an accelerated manner. To select a three-year graduation program, a student must have achieved at least an FCAT reading achievement level 3, an FCAT mathematics achievement level of 3, and an FCAT writing score of 3 on the most recent assessments taken by the student. A student must select a graduation program prior to the end of ninth grade. Students who selected an accelerated graduation program before July 1, 2004, may continue that program, and all statutory program requirements that were applicable when the student made the program choice shall remain applicable to the student as long as the student continues that program. Each student and his or her family should select the graduation program that will best prepare the student for his or her postsecondary education or career plan.

ACCELERATION PROGRAMS AND ADVANCED COURSEWORK

Studies show that students who complete a solid academic program in high school, including advanced courses, are more likely to be successful in college. Students in all three graduation programs are encouraged to take advantage of advanced course offerings and acceleration programs such as dual enrollment, early admission, the Advanced Placement Program, the International Baccalaureate Diploma Program, the Advanced International Certificate of Education Program, and the Florida Virtual School. These programs are available to all qualified students, no matter which graduation program they choose. For information, contact your child's school counselor.

Dual Enrollment and Early Admission

Dual enrollment allows eligible high school students to enroll in postsecondary courses. They earn credit toward high school graduation and at the same time earn credit toward a college degree or technical certificate. All 28 public community colleges and some of the state universities in Florida participate in dual enrollment. Students are permitted to take dual enrollment courses on a part-time basis during school hours, after school, or during the summer term. Dual-enrollment students do not have to pay registration, matriculation, or laboratory fees. **Early admission** is similar to dual enrollment, except that students enroll in college/university courses full-time. They earn credits simultaneously toward a college degree and a high school diploma.

Advanced Placement (AP) Program

The College Board's Advanced Placement (AP) Program is a nationwide program consisting of more than 30 college-level courses and exams offered at participating high schools. Subjects range from art to statistics. Students who earn a qualifying grade of 3 or above on an AP exam can earn college credit or advanced placement or both, depending on the college or university. Students in Florida's public secondary schools enrolled in AP courses do not have to pay to take the exams.

International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma Program

The International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma Program is a rigorous pre-university course of study leading to internationally standardized tests. The program's comprehensive two-year curriculum allows its graduates to fulfill requirements of many different nations' education systems. Students completing IB courses and exams are eligible for college credit. The award of credit is based on scores achieved on IB exams. Students can earn up to 30 postsecondary semester credits by participating in this program at the high school level. Approximately 40 Florida high schools participate in the IB program. Students in Florida's public secondary schools enrolled in IB courses do not have to pay to take the exams. For information, visit www.ibo.org.

Advanced International Certificate of Education (AICE) Program

The Advanced International Certificate of Education (AICE) Program is an international curriculum and examination program modeled on the British pre-college curriculum and "A-Level" exams. Florida's public community colleges and universities provide college credit for successfully passed exams. Students in Florida's public secondary schools enrolled in AICE courses do not have to pay to take the exams. For information, visit www.cie.org.uk and click on "Qualifications and Awards," then "AICE."

Florida Virtual School

The Florida Virtual School offers high-quality, online high school curricula, including advanced placement (AP) courses. Florida Virtual School can be a resource for students with limited access to AP offerings in their traditional schools. For information, visit www.flvs.net.

Adult Education

Many school districts let high school students take courses through their adult education program. Credits earned may be applied to requirements for high school graduation, subject to the local school board's policies.

College-Level Examination Program (CLEP)

Students with strong content background in a subject area can earn credit through an examination program administered by the college they attend. One such program is the College-Level Examination Program (CLEP). Candidates for the CLEP include students who have completed an AP course but did not take or earn a qualifying score on the AP exam. Other students who have taken several high school courses in one particular subject area may wish to take a CLEP exam. For more information on CLEP testing sites and dates, contact the admissions or registrar's office at the postsecondary institution in your area.

HIGH SCHOOL PROGRAMS FOR STUDENTS ENTERING NINTH GRADE IN 2004-2005

Subject Area	Graduation Requirements of Traditional 24-Credit Program	Graduation Requirements of Three-Year College Preparatory Program ^{1, 2}	Graduation Requirements of Three-Year Career Preparatory Program ²
English	4 credits, with major concentration in composition and literature	4 credits with major concentration in composition and literature	4 credits with major concentration in composition and literature
Mathematics	3 credits, one of which must be algebra I or its equivalent ³	3 credits at the algebra I level or above, from the list of courses that qualify for state university admission	3 credits, one of which must be algebra I or its equivalent ³
Science	3 credits in natural science, two of which must have a laboratory requirement	3 credits in natural science, two of which must have a laboratory requirement	3 credits in natural science, two of which must have a laboratory requirement
Social Studies	1 credit world history 1 credit American history .5 credit American government .5 credit economics	3 credits (American history, world history, economics, American government)	3 credits (American history, world history, economics, American government)
Foreign Language	Not required for high school graduation but required for state university system admission	2 credits in the same language or demonstrated proficiency in a second language	Not required
Practical Arts/ Performing Fine Arts	1 credit practical arts career/technical education or exploratory career education, or 1 credit performing fine arts, or .5 credit in practical arts and .5 credit in performing fine arts	Not required	3 credits in a single vocational/career education program, or 3 credits in a single career/technical dual enrollment program, or 5 credits in vocational/career education courses (including 3 credits in one sequential career and technical education program)
Life Management Skills	.5 credit	Not required	Not required
Physical Education	1 credit to include .5 credit personal fitness and .5 credit physical education elective ⁴	Not required	Not required
Electives	8.5 credits	3 credits	2 credits unless 5 credits in career/technical education
TOTAL	24 credits	18 credits	18 credits
State Assessment Requirements	Earn passing scores on the Grade 10 FCAT	Earn passing scores on the Grade 10 FCAT	Earn passing scores on the Grade 10 FCAT
Grade Point Average (GPA) Requirements	Earn a cumulative GPA of 2.0 on a 4.0 scale	Earn a cumulative weighted GPA of 3.0 on a 4.0 scale in the courses required for the college preparatory program and earn a weighted or unweighted grade that earns at least 3.0 points or its equivalent in each of the 18 required credits	Earn a cumulative weighted GPA of 3.0 on a 4.0 scale in the courses required for the career preparatory program and earn at least 2.0 points or its equivalent in each of the 18 required credits

¹All courses earned toward the college preparatory program must satisfy admission requirements for the state university system. Six of the 18 credits must be in classes that are honors, dual enrollment, advanced placement, International Baccalaureate, Advanced International Certificate of Education, or specifically listed as rigorous by the Department of Education.

²Students who chose a three-year program prior to July 1, 2004, must meet with their counselor for information regarding graduation requirements.

³See high school guidance counselor for algebra I equivalents.

⁴See high school guidance counselor for physical education electives.

STATE UNIVERSITY/COMMUNITY COLLEGE ADMISSION AND BRIGHT FUTURES REQUIREMENTS

State University System Admission Requirements	Florida Community College System Admission Requirements	Bright Futures Scholarship Requirements for 2005 High School Graduate
<p>To qualify to enter one of Florida's public universities, a student must</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> meet all traditional requirements <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ high school graduation with a standard diploma ✓ grade point average in high school academic core courses ✓ admissions test scores (ACT or SAT) <p>OR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> qualify for the Talented 20 program <p>OR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> be selected through a "student profile assessment" that considers other special factors (e.g., special talents) <p>OR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> obtain an associate of arts degree from a Florida community college. 	<p>To qualify to enter one of Florida's community colleges, a student must</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> graduate with a standard high school diploma <p>OR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> earn a high school equivalency diploma <p>OR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> have previously demonstrated competency in college-level communication and work <p>OR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> demonstrate achievement of college-level communication and computation skills (often determined by exam or standardized test scores). 	<p>Florida Academic Scholars/Florida Medallion Scholars must have</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> 15 credits in college preparatory courses in the following areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ 4 English (3 with substantial writing) ✓ 3 mathematics (algebra I and above) ✓ 3 natural science (2 with substantial lab) ✓ 3 social science ✓ 2 foreign language (in the same language) <input type="checkbox"/> up to three additional credits from courses in the academic areas listed above and/or AP, IB, or AICE fine arts courses to raise the GPA <input type="checkbox"/> a 3.5 weighted GPA in the above courses; 75 hours community service; and a minimum score of 1270 on the SAT or 28 on the ACT to be a Florida Academic Scholar (FAS) <input type="checkbox"/> a 3.0 weighted GPA in the above courses and a minimum score of 970 on the SAT or 20 on the ACT to be a Florida Medallion Scholar (FMS). <p>Gold Seal Vocational (GSV) Scholars⁵ must have</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> 15.5 credits in the following areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ 4 English ✓ 3 mathematics (including algebra I) ✓ 3 natural science ✓ 3 social science (American history, world history, American government, and economics) ✓ 1 practical arts OR performing arts OR 1/2 credit in each ✓ 1/2 life management skills ✓ 1/2 personal fitness ✓ 1/2 physical education <input type="checkbox"/> a 3.0 weighted GPA in above courses (for 4-year diploma) <input type="checkbox"/> 3 career/technical job-preparatory or technology education program credits in one career/technical program with an unweighted 3.5 GPA in those courses <input type="checkbox"/> a minimum score listed below on <i>each</i> subsection of <i>either</i> the CPT or SAT or ACT (<i>Subsections of different test types may not be combined.</i>) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> CPT: Reading 83/Sentence Skills 83/Algebra 72 SAT: Verbal 440/Math 440 ACT: English 17/Reading 18/Math 19.
<p>The 18 high school credits required for SUS admission are</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ 4 English (3 with substantial writing) ✓ 3 mathematics (algebra I and above) ✓ 3 natural science (2 with substantial lab) ✓ 3 social science ✓ 2 foreign language (in the same language) ✓ 3 approved electives (in certain combinations). <p>Students must meet with their counselor to ensure that courses satisfy SUS admission requirements.</p>	<p>The 18 high school credits recommended for community college admission are</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ 4 English (3 with substantial writing) ✓ 3 mathematics (algebra I and above) ✓ 3 natural science (2 with substantial lab) ✓ 3 social science ✓ 2 foreign language (in the same language) ✓ 3 approved electives (in certain combinations). 	

⁵College or career preparatory diplomas may be used to qualify for GSV, with appropriate career/technical education electives.

For other ways to qualify, visit www.myflorida.com/brfuture.

MAKING THE RIGHT CHOICE

The right graduation program for a particular student is the one that best fits the abilities, interests, and goals of that individual student. Families should consider the educational benefits of each program and choose the one that will best prepare the student for his or her postsecondary education or career plan. Here are some things that students and families should consider.

- ✓ What is the student's postsecondary education and/or career goal?
- ✓ Is the student prepared to make a choice about postsecondary education and possible career paths?
- ✓ Is the student mature enough to leave high school after three years?
- ✓ If the student is planning to attend a postsecondary institution away from home, does he or she have the mature decision-making skills needed to make the informed, safe choices required for independent living?
- ✓ Is the student's goal to enter a local community college or technical center?
- ✓ Is the student interested in taking more electives in high school, or are three electives enough?
- ✓ Does the student want to participate in sports or other extracurricular activities for four years, or are three years enough?
- ✓ Can the student meet admissions requirements for postsecondary education institutions of his or her choice by choosing a 18-credit graduation program?
- ✓ Has the family considered expenses and possible financial aid needs that may result from the student starting postsecondary education a year early?
- ✓ Is the student going to compete for scholarships that require certain academic core courses, community service experiences, demonstrated leadership skills, or participation in extracurricular activities?
- ✓ Has the family considered that the student has the option of taking an additional year of academic or technical courses through dual enrollment or to earn additional AP course credit/college credit by choosing the 24-credit program?
- ✓ Is the student planning to play college level sports and need to meet NCAA course eligibility requirements?
- ✓ If the student is enrolled in a prepaid college tuition plan, can the family pay off the balance of the plan a year early?

Families are encouraged to contact the school guidance counselor or career specialist at their child's school to get more information about graduation programs, financial aid opportunities, accelerated programs, and college or career plans to help them make this important decision. Students and parents are also encouraged to continue to discuss these plans with the school counselor on a regular basis during the middle school and high school years. It is necessary we promote a safe and healthy lifestyle through parent, teacher, and community involvement to the benefit of our students. Students need to be interested and involved in their academic progress and in planning for their futures in order to ensure that they will be prepared to achieve their postsecondary goals. For more information about graduation programs, contact your child's guidance counselor.

POINTS TO REMEMBER WHEN CHOOSING A GRADUATION PROGRAM

- ❑ Students who choose a three-year graduation program may still qualify for acceleration programs (e.g., Advanced Placement, dual enrollment, International Baccalaureate) and for a Florida Bright Futures Scholarship if they meet the eligibility and/or admissions requirements for those programs and scholarships.
- ❑ Students who choose a three-year graduation program can participate in the National Merit Scholarship Program if they take the PSAT/NMSQT in either the next-to-last year or the last year they are enrolled in high school. Those who take the PSAT/NMSQT in their last year of high school will be entering competition for awards to be offered as they are completing their first year of college.
- ❑ Students who choose the three-year program, complete the 18 credits, earn a cumulative weighted GPA (with individual course credit GPA requirements), and pass the FCAT must graduate at the end of the three years. They cannot remain in school for a fourth year. Students will lose a year of potential athletics eligibility by opting for a three-year program. Issues such as continued eligibility for high school athletics or other extracurricular activities should be taken into consideration when making the decision.
- ❑ Students who choose a three-year program will automatically move to the four-year, 24 credit program if they do not earn 5 credits by the end of grade 9 or 11 credits by the end of grade 10; do not achieve a score of 3 or higher on the grade 10 FCAT Writing assessment; do not pass the grade 10 FCAT; or do not meet credit or GPA requirements by the end of their third year. Passing the Grade 10 FCAT is critical.
- ❑ High school credits awarded before ninth grade can be counted toward the required credits for all graduation programs.
- ❑ Students must remain in high school at least three years regardless of how many credits they earn before that time.
- ❑ Students and parents are required to sign a graduation program option form prior to selecting a three-year program.
- ❑ The three-year graduation programs are only available to students who will receive a standard diploma.
- ❑ Out-of state and out-of-country students are eligible for all graduation programs as long as they fulfill the credit requirements, maintain the required GPA, and pass the FCAT.
- ❑ Students who complete the three-year college preparatory program must still satisfy minimum academic core credit requirements for state university system admissions.
- ❑ Students who choose the three-year career preparatory program must take their electives in career and technical education courses.
- ❑ Students who plan to apply to an out-of-state or private in-state college or university and who are interested in one of the three-year graduation programs should contact those institutions as early as possible for specific admissions requirements.
- ❑ Students who choose a three-year graduation program must be treated equally in all ways with students who choose the traditional 24-credit option, including eligibility for valedictorian or salutatorian ranking, Talented 20, and Bright Futures.

FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION RESOURCES

FACTS (www.facts.org) is Florida's student advising website that helps students plan for their higher education experience. The site includes the High School Academic Evaluations which provide personalized evaluations of Florida public students' high school transcripts including progress toward high school diplomas, progress toward meeting State University System admissions requirements, and status for meeting Bright Futures Scholarship initial eligibility requirements. The site also offers profiles of over 200 Florida postsecondary institutions, a college and degree search, the state's common college admissions application (one application to multiple colleges), links to online college financial aid applications, and direct access to two electronic career guidance programs (e-Choices & SIGI PLUS). An individualized high school planner is also being designed for release during the 2004-2005 academic year.

Florida Counseling for Future Education Handbook is a comprehensive guide designed for Florida's middle and high school guidance counselors. It is intended to help counsel students who will enroll in Florida's postsecondary institutions. The Handbook is updated annually with the most current version available on FACTS.org. Please select "Advising Manuals" from the home page main menu.

Office of Student Financial Assistance (OSFA) administers state-funded grants and scholarship programs and federal student loan financial aid programs to assist students with the costs of postsecondary education. For information, go to www.floridastudentfinancialaid.org or call toll-free (888) 827-2004.

Talented 20 Program provides eligible students guaranteed admission to one of the 11 state universities. These students are given priority funding from the Florida Student Assistance Grant Program. For more information on how to qualify, visit www.firn.edu/doe/fag/talented20.htm or call the Student Support Services Project office at (850) 922-3727.

CHOICES website is a comprehensive career information system that uses a flexible approach that combines graphics, multimedia, and search strategies to allow students to explore career and educational options. The site includes links to key websites related to career exploration to help students plan for a career. Visit www.Florida.echoices.com.

Career Voyages website provides information and guided support for students in determining the best career path. The site includes Florida-specific information about high-growth jobs with better wages, including new career fields. The site includes video tours for students and an online interest inventory. Visit www.careervoyages.gov.

Federal student aid website provides information for families about federal financial assistance for postsecondary education, including application forms and a calculator to help figure college costs and financial need. Visit www.studentaid.ed.gov.

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The New Department of
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