

6006

Commencement Ceremony and Early Graduation

Commencement Ceremony

The district shall conduct a commencement ceremony for students who have met all graduation requirements at the end of the school year, including students graduating as juniors or mid-term seniors. Participation in the ceremony is a privilege, not a right, and the superintendent or his/her designee may prohibit students who have violated conduct rules from participating in the ceremony as a consequence for the misconduct. Only those students who have completed all graduation requirements (i.e., completed the required coursework or achieved the goals set in the student's individual education plan) by 3:25 PM on the last school day for seniors will be allowed to participate in the commencement ceremony. Students are additionally required to adhere to the district attendance policy their final semester. Students who have exceeded 10 "unexcused" absences (i.e. ones counted toward excessive absenteeism) in any class enrolled their final semester or alter the graduation cap or gown worn at graduation, notwithstanding the provisions of policy 5031, will not participate in the commencement ceremony. Only school-issued accessories or those otherwise authorized by statute, board policy, and approved by the administration shall be allowed to be worn at the commencement ceremony. Black caps and gowns shall be worn by all graduates.

Early Graduation

Students are generally required to attend four years of high school (eight semesters of coursework) to be eligible to receive a diploma from the school district. The following sections address rare and extraordinary circumstances that may necessitate a student graduating early.

Early Graduation - Junior Year (after six semesters of coursework)

To be considered for "Early Graduation" from high school at the conclusion of the junior year, the student and his/her parents or guardian are required to complete and submit to the principal a "Request to Graduate Early" form by December 1 of the junior year. To be eligible for consideration, students must meet all district graduation course requirements. If course requirements have been met, reasons for graduating early are restricted to the following rare and extraordinary circumstances:

1. A serious illness or medical condition exists that makes attending school the senior year impossible or impracticable. Written verification of the illness or condition and a written recommendation from a physician are required.
2. The student will "age out" meaning he or she will turn age 22 before his/her senior year. Verification of the student's age via birth certificate or other valid identification is required.
3. Other extraordinary circumstances, as approved by the principal, that make attending the senior year impossible or impracticable. These situations are expected to be rare and extraordinary. The student and his/her

parent/guardian are required to submit a written explanation of the extraordinary circumstance to the principal.

The principal, in consultation with the superintendent, shall approve or deny all requests. The decision of the principal will be final, and no appeal will be allowed. Subsequent applications for early graduation submitted on behalf of the same student will only be considered if they present additional facts or circumstances and otherwise meet the criteria of this policy.

Early Graduation – Mid-Term Senior Year (after seven semesters of coursework)

To be considered for “Early Graduation” from high school after the first semester of the senior year (mid-term; minimum of 7 semesters completed), the student and his/her parents or guardian are required to complete and submit to the principal a “Request to Graduate Early” form by December 1 of the senior year. To be eligible for consideration, students must meet all district graduation course requirements. If course requirements have been met, reasons for graduating early are restricted to the following circumstances:

1. A serious illness or medical condition exists that makes attending school the second semester of the senior year impossible or impracticable. Written verification of the illness or condition and a written recommendation from a physician are required.
2. Other extraordinary circumstances, as approved by the principal, that make attending the second semester of the senior year impossible or impracticable. The student and his/her parent/guardian are required to submit a written explanation of the extraordinary circumstances to the principal.
3. If a mid-term senior has not met either of the prior two criteria but has satisfied all graduation course requirements, he or she may graduate early by showing evidence of reading and writing competency via the successful completion of a senior-level English course or other evidence of literary mastery (including, but not limited to college readiness standards through ACT, MAP, or other approved assessments). Mid-term seniors who do not meet this standard will be required to enroll in at least one English, Reading, Speech, or other literacy competency course in their final (8th) semester of coursework. Mid-term seniors who have completed the course requirements for graduation, but have not met the literacy competency standard may choose to complete an approved school-to-community work-study course in conjunction with their required literacy coursework until either the *Lexington High School Literacy Standard* has been met or the student’s 8th semester has been successfully completed.

The principal, in consultation with the superintendent, shall approve or deny all requests. The decision of the principal will be final, and no appeal will be allowed.

Subsequent applications for early graduation submitted on behalf of the same student will only be considered if they present additional facts or circumstances and otherwise meet the criteria of this policy.

"Early Graduation" Activity/Event Inclusions

All students who meet the aforementioned "Early Graduation" eligibility requirements will be allowed to participate in the current year's spring commencement exercises and apply for scholarships for which they are eligible.

"Early Graduation" Activity/Event Exclusions

"Early Graduates" are not eligible to compete in senior class rankings, be considered for academic distinction, graduate with honors, speak at commencement, take part in the Senior Walk, be eligible for the Destination: Graduation Academic Team senior laptop competition, or participate in any other activity or honor considered exclusive to seniors. Only seniors who are in their 4th year of coursework (have completed at least seven semesters of coursework) may attend the Senior Tribute and Senior Honors Night events.

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