

**OFFICE OF CHIEF ACADEMIC OFFICER**  
**Summary of State Board of Education Agenda Items**  
**Consent Agenda**  
**June 19, 2025**

**OFFICE OF SECONDARY EDUCATION**

I. Approval to create State Board Policy Chapter 36, Rule 36.7 – Early Graduation Policy

(Has cleared the Administrative Procedures Act process with public comments)

Background Information: State Board Policy Rule 36.7 is being created to provide guidance to Local Education Agencies (LEAs) with early graduation opportunities. The policy provides a definition of early graduation and identifies the following six (6) areas that an LEA's policy must address.

1. The districts motivation for allowing early graduation from high school
2. Preparedness for the workforce or college
3. Endorsement requirements unless certain factors exist
4. Approval requirements
5. Other considerations for early graduation eligibility
6. Factors leading to termination of a student's eligibility for early graduation

The State Board Policy Chapter 36, Rule 36.7 – Early Graduation Policy went before the Commission on School Accreditation on April 15, 2025 and was approved. The public comment period was open from April 18, 2025 through 5:00 p.m. on May 19, 2025. The MDE received five (5) public comments that resulted in clarification, but no substantive changes were required.

Recommendation: Approval

Back-up material attached

# PUBLIC COMMENT

## Office of Secondary Education

## Revisions to MS Public School Accountability Standards

Summary of District Comments	MDE Response
<p><b>Jessica Hodges, Rankin County School District</b></p> <p>Please consider the following to amend part of the Title 7: Part 24 of the MS Accountability Standards: (System number 27985) Specifically, on page 201 of the Career and Technical Endorsement, consider adding next to "one (1) academic or CTE dual credit". <u>with a C or higher.</u></p>	<p>Off-topic. Comment has been referred to the committee overseeing these revisions.</p>
<p><b>Stephanie Keller, Starkville Oktibbeha School District</b></p> <p>We would like to request a review of the Academic Endorsement additional requirements. The college course (MAT 1314 College Algebra w/ Int. Alg.) should be considered as another method of obtaining the Academic Endorsement. Currently, the Accountability Standards lists enrollment of Essentials for College Math &amp; Essentials for College Literacy as a means by which students can earn the Academic Endorsement. This course is available through EMCC. In our opinion, it exceeds the pre-requisites (ACT Math score of 16 - 18 compared to ACT Math score of 15 - 18 for Essentials) and also requires an additional lab component (4 hours credit compared to 3 hours).</p>	<p>Off-topic. Comment has been referred to the committee overseeing these revisions.</p>
<p><b>Chereda Daughtry, DeSoto Couty Schools</b></p> <p><b>Proposed revisions to</b> Miss. Admin. Code: 7-24, <i>Mississippi Public School Accountability Standards, 2024</i>, Appendices A-5 – A-9, F and the Glossary.</p> <p>Under the Academic Endorsement, students must earn a 17 in English and a 19 in Math on the ACT or take an Essential to Math or Essential to Literacy course. However, we have an agreement through Northwest Community College and MS Valley State University. NWCC allows students to take English Comp I with an ACT English subscore of 15 and MSVSU allows students to take College Algebra with an ACT Math subscore of 17. Therefore, if you change the policy (as we did for early</p>	<p>Off-topic. Comment has been referred to the committee overseeing these revisions.</p>

Summary of District Comments	MDE Response
<p>release) to reflect Essential course or college-level course for math and English this would make it easier to decipher who qualifies for the endorsement.</p>	
<p><b>LaVonda White, Rankin County School District</b></p> <p>Can districts extend the application deadline due to unforeseen hardship situations?</p>	<p>Respondent agrees with the suggestion for a more flexible application deadline. The policy has been updated to reflect this consideration.</p>
<p><b>Wesley Quick, Lamar County Schools</b></p> <p>While I recognize and appreciate the intent to establish clear and consistent criteria for early graduation, the accelerated timeline for adopting this policy poses significant challenges. To address this, I urge you to consider a more flexible application timeline—perhaps establishing a priority deadline by the end of the first semester of junior year, while still allowing applications to be submitted later on a case-by-case basis.</p> <p>Additionally, I have significant concerns about limiting early graduation eligibility to students pursuing a traditional diploma with specific endorsements. Excluding students who meet all state eligibility requirements—aside from a particular endorsement—not only raises important equity and legal questions, but also significantly narrows the use of early graduation as a proactive dropout prevention strategy.</p> <p>To support fairness and stability in our educational planning, I respectfully urge you to consider delaying the implementation of this policy to the 2026-2027 school year or later.</p>	<p>The respondent agrees with the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Suggestion for a more flexible application deadline. The policy has been updated to reflect this suggestion.</li> <li>• Potential legal ramifications of requiring unfunded mandates to earn endorsements. The policy has been updated to reflect this suggestion.</li> </ul> <p>Respondent does not agree with delaying implementation of the Early Graduation Policy; thus, implementation will begin with the 2025-2026 school year.</p>

---

## APA Notice

---

**From** Hodges, Jessica <jhodges@rcsd.ms>  
**Date** Wed 4/23/2025 1:59 PM  
**To** SecondaryEducation <secondaryeducation@mdek12.org>

### External Email

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the MDE organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Please consider the following to amend part of the Title 7: Part 24 of the MS Accountability Standards: (System number 27985)  
Specifically, on page 201 of the Career and Technical Endorsement, consider adding next to "one (1) academic or CTE dual credit". with a C or higher.

Thank you!

Jessica Hodges  
Secondary Curriculum Director

Rankin County School District  
1220 Apple Park Place  
Brandon, MS. 39042  
601-825-5590, ext. 1038  
[www.rcsd.ms](http://www.rcsd.ms)

### Rankin County School District

**Mission:** Bring Everyone's Strengths Together! We will all intentionally focus on empowering our students to reach their maximum potential by embracing opportunities and challenges while cultivating a tradition of distinction in education.

**Vision:** Continue a tradition of excellence by providing a world-class education that empowers all to grow through curiosity, discovery, and learning.

This email and any attachments to it may be confidential and are intended solely for the use of the individual to whom it is addressed. If you are not the intended recipient of this email, you must neither take any action based upon its contents, nor copy or show it to anyone. Please contact the sender if you believe you have received this email in error.

---

## Requested Review of the Academic Endorsement Requirement

---

From Stephanie Keller <skeller@starkvillesd.com>

Date Wed 4/23/2025 3:59 PM

To SecondaryEducation <secondaryeducation@mdek12.org>

Cc Adam Dillinger <adillinger@StarkvilleSD.com>

### External Email

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the MDE organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Good afternoon,

We would like to request a review of the Academic Endorsement additional requirements.

The college course (MAT 1314 College Algebra w/ Int. Alg.) should be considered as another method of obtaining the Academic Endorsement. Currently, the Accountability Standards (see screenshot below) lists enrollment of Essentials for College Math & Essentials for College Literacy as a means by which students can earn the Academic Endorsement. This course is available through EMCC. In our opinion, it exceeds the pre-requisites (ACT Math score of 16 - 18 compared to ACT Math score of 15 - 18 for Essentials) and also requires an additional lab component (4 hours credit compared to 3 hours).

---

## APPENDIX A-8

---

- Must successfully complete one (1) of the following:
  - ACT sub scores of 17 in English and 19 in Math
  - Essentials for College Math or Essentials for College Literacy (in senior year)
  - SAT equivalency subscore
- Must successfully complete one (1) of the following:
  - One (1) AP course with a C or higher and take the appropriate AP exam
  - One (1) Diploma Program-IB or Cambridge (AICE) course with a C or higher and take the appropriate exam
  - One (1) dual credit course and earn a C or higher in the course

Please consider adding this course to the Accountability Standards Manual for the 2025 - 2026 Year.

Thanks!!





---

**Proposed revisions to Miss. Admin. Code: 7-24, Mississippi Public School Accountability Standards, 2024, Appendices A-5 – A-9, F and the Glossary**

---

**From** Chereda Daugherty <chereda.daugherty@dcsms.org>  
**Date** Tue 5/13/2025 3:25 PM  
**To** SecondaryEducation <secondaryeducation@mdek12.org>

**External Email**

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the MDE organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

**Proposed revisions to Miss. Admin. Code: 7-24, Mississippi Public School Accountability Standards, 2024, Appendices A-5 – A-9, F and the Glossary.**

To Mrs. Clemons,

Under the Academic Endorsement, students must earn a 17 in English and a 19 in Math on the ACT or take an Essential to Math or Essential to Literacy course. However, we have an agreement through Northwest Community College and MS Valley State University.

NWCC allows students to take English Comp I with an ACT English subscore of 15 and MSVSU allows students to take College Algebra with an ACT Math subscore of 17.

Therefore, if you change the policy (as we did for early release) to reflect Essential course **or college-level course for math and English this would make it easier to decipher who** qualifies for the endorsement.



#TeamDCS  
#RaiseTheBar  
#D1

**Chereda Daugherty**

HIGH SCHOOL INSTRUCTIONAL SPECIALIST:  
MATH GRADES 9-12

☎ 662-449-7157

✉ [chereda.daugherty@dcsms.org](mailto:chereda.daugherty@dcsms.org)

🌐 [twitter.com/CheredaD\\_Math](https://twitter.com/CheredaD_Math)



The foregoing electronic message and any files transmitted with it are confidential and are intended only for the use of the intended recipient named above. This communication may contain material protected by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). If you are not the intended recipient, copying, distribution or use of the contents of this message is strictly prohibited. If you received this electronic message in error, please notify us immediately at 662-429-5271.



Post Office Box 1359 | Brandon, MS 39043 | p 601.825.5590 | f 601.825.2618 | www.rcsd.ms

April 23, 2025

Wendy Clemons  
Associate State Superintendent for Secondary Education  
359 North West Street; PO Box 771  
Jackson, Mississippi 39205-0771

Re: Creation of State Board Policy Chapter 36, Rule 36.7 – Early Graduation Policy

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the proposed creation of the State Board Policy Chapter 36, Rule 36.7 – Early Graduation Policy. After careful consideration, we submit the following comments:

**Section 1. v.**

- *A student's application to graduate more than one semester early shall be submitted prior to the end of the first semester of the student's junior year.*
  - **Question:** Can districts extend the application deadline due to unforeseen hardship situations?

We appreciate the opportunity to comment on the proposal. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact us for more information.

Yours in education,

Scott Rimes, Ph.D.  
Superintendent of Education  
Rankin County School District

---

Dr. Scott Rimes  
*Superintendent of Education*





**District Office**  
P.O. Box 609  
424 Martin Luther King Drive  
Purvis, MS 39475

**To: Wendy Clemons, Associate State Superintendent for Secondary Education  
Mississippi Department of Education**

**From: Wesley Quick, Deputy Superintendent  
Lamar County Schools**

**Subject: Public Comment Regarding Proposed Early Graduation Policy**

I hope this message finds you well. I am writing to express concern regarding the proposed implementation of the new early graduation policy for the 2025–2026 school year.

While I recognize and appreciate the intent to establish clear and consistent criteria for early graduation, the accelerated timeline for adopting this policy poses significant challenges. Students, families, and school staff have already engaged in extensive planning for the 2025–2026 academic year. Many students have made decisions about their course loads, postsecondary plans, and graduation goals based on the existing guidelines, and the proposed changes may unexpectedly render them ineligible for early graduation.

Introducing changes to an early graduation policy with limited lead time undermines the thoughtful planning that has already taken place. Implementing the policy with limited notice risks penalizing students who have acted in good faith, following the current procedures and requirements, only to discover they no longer qualify under the new criteria.

I would also like to raise important questions about the proposed requirement that students must apply for early graduation prior to the end of the first semester of their junior year. This timeline may not account for the unforeseeable nature of students' academic, personal, or financial circumstances that could arise later in their high school career. Additionally, it creates particular barriers for transfer students who may not arrive until after the deadline has passed, effectively excluding them from consideration despite potentially meeting all other requirements.

To address this, I urge you to consider a more flexible application timeline—perhaps establishing a priority deadline by the end of the first semester of junior year, while still allowing applications to be submitted later on a case-by-case basis. This approach would preserve structure and planning while allowing responsiveness to individual student needs and life circumstances.

Additionally, I have significant concerns about limiting early graduation eligibility to students pursuing a traditional diploma with specific endorsements. Excluding students who meet all state graduation requirements—aside from a particular endorsement—not only raises important equity and legal questions, but also significantly narrows the use of early graduation as a proactive dropout prevention strategy. For some students, early graduation offers a meaningful and motivating pathway to high school completion, and restricting access could unintentionally remove that critical option for those who need it most.

To support fairness and stability in our educational planning, I respectfully urge you to consider delaying the implementation of this policy to the 2026–2027 school year or later. This delay would allow time not only for students, families, and schools to adjust their plans accordingly, but also to thoughtfully review and revise certain criteria as needed to ensure a smooth transition and maintain trust in our educational systems.

Thank you for your consideration of this important matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Wesley Quick", with a stylized, flowing script.

Wesley Quick

## Chapter 36: Curriculum

*Rule 36.7 Early Graduation Policy.* The purpose of the early graduation policy is to provide guidance to Local Education Agencies (LEAs) with early graduation opportunities. Early graduation is defined for this policy as successful completion of all existing standards required by both state and respective district prior to completing eight (8) semesters of high school work from the start of grade 9.

1. Beginning with the 2025-2026 school year, any LEA that provides an early graduation opportunity shall implement a policy that has been adopted by the local school board and includes rules, regulations, and processes. The policy shall be available to faculty, students, and parents/guardians. At a minimum, LEAs shall address the following areas in the policy:
  - i. The desire to better tailor the educational system to students' needs is the motivation behind allowing early graduation from high school.
  - ii. There are students who are prepared to enter the workforce or begin college when they are 17 years old; however, this may not apply to all students.
    - a. Preparedness for post-secondary endeavors shall be taken into account when discussing the option of early graduation with students. The drawbacks to accelerating high school may not reveal themselves until a student enters college or the workforce.
    - b. LEAs shall establish an application process that articulates the student's post-secondary plan and is placed in the student's cumulative folder.
    - c. The completed application shall require parental or guardian consent for students under the age of 18.
  - iii. A student shall acquire, at a minimum, the required number of Carnegie units and other existing standards for a traditional diploma. Additionally, the student must have documented evidence in their Individual Success Plan (ISP) of actively working toward one of the state-recognized diploma endorsements (Career and Technical Education (CTE), JROTC, Academic or Distinguished Academic) unless one of the following exceptions applies: ~~exists: . (~~
    - a. A non-Senior who will turn 18 on or before December 1st of the current academic school year.
    - b. A student who has been retained in one or more grades.
    - c. A student with a hardship situation (child, family, health, etc.).
  - iv. A student's application to graduate early shall be approved by the school counselor and the local high school principal.
  - v. A student's application to graduate more than one semester early shall be submitted prior to the end of the first semester of the student's junior year. Applications submitted after this priority deadline may be reviewed and approved at the discretion of the local school district, in accordance with district policies and procedures. The students applying for this option shall have completed at least one of the following ~~student's application to graduate more than one semester early shall be submitted no later than the end of the first semester of the student's junior year. Applications submitted after this priority deadline may be reviewed and approved at the discretion of the local school district, in accordance with district pes and procedure~~

- a. Met National Benchmarks for ACT College and Career Readiness Standards for English/Reading and Math ~~and completed the FAFSA~~
    - b. Scored Silver or Higher on ACT WorkKeys
    - c. Earned a CTE national certification
    - d. Earned at least nine (9) hours of academic or CTE dual credit
    - e. Passed all End of Course Assessments needed to meet graduation requirements
    - f. Completed a one Carnegie unit credit-bearing work-based learning class or a similar 140-hour work-based learning experience in industry that could provide sustainable employment leading to a family-sustaining wage.
  - vi. A student's application may be terminated by the local school and/or district at any time due to academic, behavioral, or attendance issues.
2. Early graduates should be reported to MSIS upon exit using the appropriate withdrawal code of 01921 (Graduated with a regular, advanced, International Baccalaureate, or other type of diploma) and the associated date. Final grades should be reported at the time of exit.

## Chapter 36: Curriculum

*Rule 36.7 Early Graduation Policy.* The purpose of the early graduation policy is to provide guidance to Local Education Agencies (LEAs) with early graduation opportunities. Early graduation is defined for this policy as successful completion of all existing standards required by both state and respective districts prior to completing eight (8) semesters of high school work from the start of grade 9.

1. Beginning with the 2025-2026 school year, any LEA that provides an early graduation opportunity shall implement a policy that has been adopted by the local school board and includes rules, regulations, and processes. The policy shall be available to faculty, students, and parents/guardians. At a minimum, LEAs shall address the following areas in the policy:
  - i. The desire to better tailor the educational system to students' needs is the motivation behind allowing early graduation from high school.
  - ii. There are students who are prepared to enter the workforce or begin college when they are 17 years old; however, this may not apply to all students.
    - a. Preparedness for post-secondary endeavors shall be taken into account when discussing the option of early graduation with students. The drawbacks to accelerating high school may not reveal themselves until a student enters college or the workforce.
    - b. LEAs shall establish an application process that articulates the student's post-secondary plan and is placed in the student's cumulative folder.
    - c. The completed application shall require parental or guardian consent for students under the age of 18.
  - iii. A student shall acquire, at a minimum, the required number of Carnegie units and other existing standards for a traditional diploma. Additionally, the student must have documented evidence in their Individual Success Plan (ISP) of actively working toward one of the state-recognized diploma endorsements (Career and Technical Education (CTE), JROTC, Academic or Distinguished Academic) unless one of the following exceptions applies:
    - a. A non-Senior who will turn 18 on or before December 1st of the current academic school year.
    - b. A student who has been retained in one or more grades.
    - c. A student with a hardship situation (child, family, health, etc.).
  - iv. A student's application to graduate early shall be approved by the school counselor and the local high school principal.
  - v. A student's application to graduate more than one semester early shall be submitted prior to the end of the first semester of the student's junior year. Applications submitted after this priority deadline may be reviewed and approved at the discretion of the local school district, in accordance with district policies and procedures. The students applying for this option shall have completed at least one of the following:
    - a. Met National Benchmarks for ACT College and Career Readiness Standards for English/Reading and Math

- b. Scored Silver or Higher on ACT WorkKeys
    - c. Earned a CTE national certification
    - d. Earned at least nine (9) hours of academic or CTE dual credit
    - e. Passed all End-of-Course Assessments needed to meet graduation requirements
    - f. Completed a one Carnegie unit credit-bearing work-based learning class or a similar 140-hour work-based learning experience in industry that could provide sustainable employment leading to a family-sustaining wage.
  - v. A student's application may be terminated by the local school and/or district at any time due to academic, behavioral, or attendance issues.
2. Early graduates should be reported to MSIS upon exit using the appropriate withdrawal code of 01921 (Graduated with a regular, advanced, International Baccalaureate, or other type of diploma) and the associated date. Final grades should be reported at the time of exit.