



# A New Tool to Help Students Graduate: Montana's SB 18



# OUR AGENDA

- Before SB 18
- SB 18
- Partial credits
- Other ways to increase graduation

# GRADUATION REQUIREMENT FOR MONTANA HIGH SCHOOLS

[Montana High Schools Graduation Requirements](#)

# SB 18: THE LAW





Full text of SB 18 is available at :  
<https://legiscan.com/MT/text/SB18/2021>

# APPLIES TO STUDENTS WITH “EDUCATIONAL DISRUPTIONS”

Educational disruptions include disruptions caused by:

- Homelessness
- Child welfare system involvement
- Juvenile justice system involvement
- Medical or mental health crisis
- Another event approved by the district trustees

Must have occurred some time during grades nine through twelve.

# APPLIES STATE GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

- For students who meet the state minimum high school credit requirement for graduation, as set forth in Chapter 55 by the Montana Board of Public Education, but will not meet the local requirement.
- The district must award the student a diploma.

<http://www.mtrules.org/gateway/ruleno.asp?RN=10.55.905>

# STATE MINIMUM REQUIREMENT

## 10.55.905 GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

(1) As a minimum, a school district's requirements for graduation shall include a total of 20 units of study that enable all students to meet the content standards and content-specific grade-level learning progressions.

(2) In order to meet the content and performance standards, the following 13 units shall be part of the 20 units required for all students to graduate:

- (a) 4 units of English language arts;
- (b) 2 units of mathematics;
- (c) 2 units of social studies;
- (d) 2 units of science;
- (e) 1 unit of health enhancement, with 1/2 unit each year for two years;
- (f) 1 unit of arts; and
- (g) 1 unit of career and technical education.

<b>State Requirement</b>	20
<b>District Requirements</b>	20-27



# VOICES FROM THE FIELD

[Hank Richards](#) – Shelter Care & Ted Lechner Youth Services

[Kevin Ritchlin](#) – Principal at Willard Alternative High School

# MONTANA UNIVERSITY SYSTEM ADMISSIONS

- Successful completion of a College Preparatory Curriculum. Non-resident applicants who have not completed the college preparatory requirements stated below may satisfy the requirements by providing evidence that they have completed a similar college preparatory program required by their home state.
  - **4 years of English:** courses should emphasize the development of written and oral communication skills and literature.
  - **3 years of Mathematics:** courses should include algebra I, geometry, and algebra II (or the sequential content equivalent of these courses). Students are encouraged to take a math course in their senior year.
  - **3 years of Social Studies:** courses should include one year of global studies (such as world history or world geography), American history, government, economics, Indian history, psychology, sociology, or other third-year courses.
  - **2 years of Laboratory Science:** one year should be earth science, biology, chemistry, or physics, and the other year can be one of the above sciences or another approved college preparatory science.
  - **2 years of elective courses:** foreign language (preferably two years), computer science, visual and performing arts, or approved vocational education units.
- Math: ACT Math of 22+, Writing: ACT English/Writing or ELA of 19+

# POST-SECONDARY READINESS

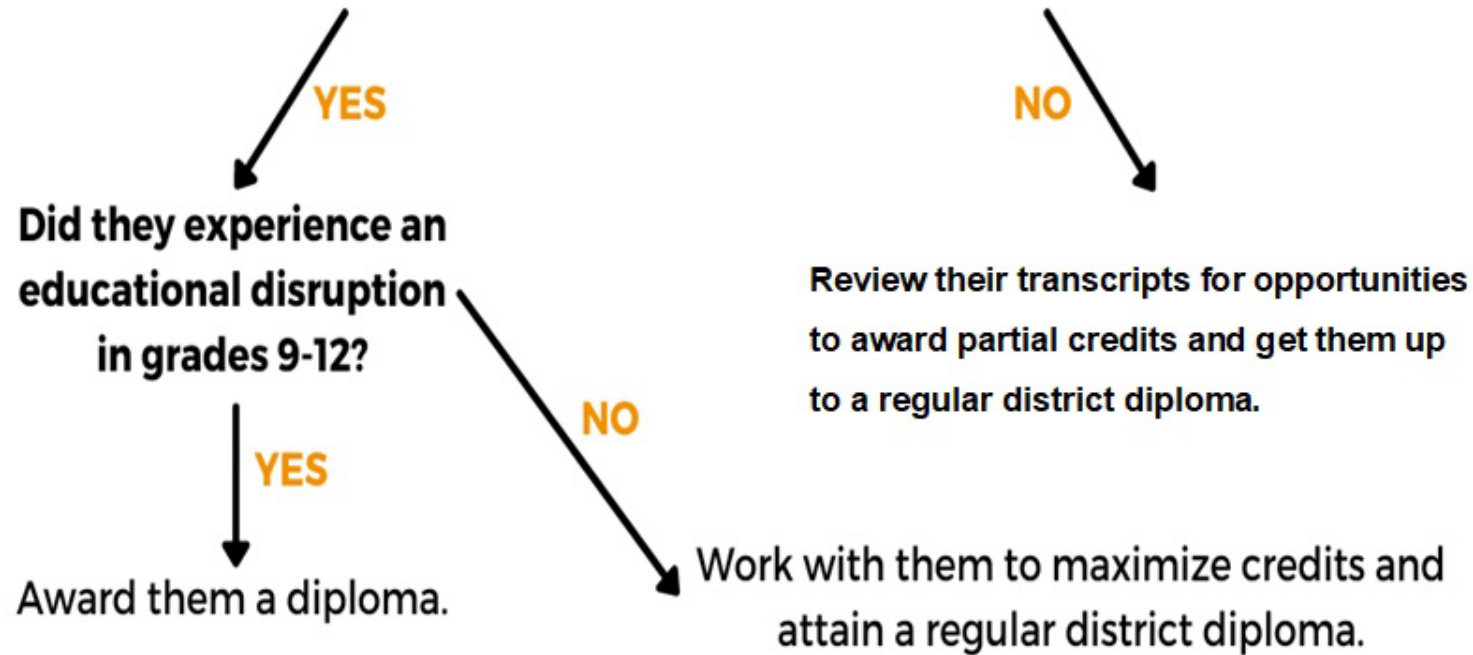
A student who receives the state minimum diploma and is under age 19 may continue to attend school for "any reasonable curriculum designed to advance postsecondary success, including courses for postsecondary credit and career training."

# HOW TO APPLY SB 18



# REVIEW ALL CURRENT SENIORS TO DETERMINE THOSE WHO DO NOT HAVE ENOUGH CREDITS TO GRADUATE FROM YOUR DISTRICT.

**Do they meet the state minimum high school credit graduation requirement?**



# AT THE START OF THE NEXT SCHOOL YEAR, REVIEW ALL SENIORS TO DETERMINE THOSE WHO ARE AT RISK OF NOT HAVING ENOUGH CREDITS TO GRADUATE FROM YOUR DISTRICT.

Review their transcripts for opportunities to award partial credits and to get them back on track.

**Did they experience an educational disruption in grades 9-12?**

**YES**



Work with them to maximize credits and attain a regular district diploma, but also let them know they can graduate on-time if they meet the state minimum high school credit graduation requirement.

**NO**



Work with them to maximize credits and attain a regular district diploma.

# PARTIAL CREDITS: AN ESSENTIAL STEP



# THE MCKINNEY-VENTO ACT

- States must have procedures to “**identify and remove barriers** that prevent [students experiencing homelessness] from receiving appropriate credit for full or partial coursework satisfactorily completed while attending a prior school, in accordance with State, local, and school policies.”

*42 USC 11432(g)(1)(F)(i)*

- Liaisons must implement those procedures.

*42 USC 11432(g)(6)(A)(x)(II)*



# VOICES FROM THE FIELD

Teagan Stanley – Principal at Pine Hills School

Marisa Britton-Bostwick – Director of Education at Montana State Prison

# WHY AWARD PARTIAL CREDIT TO STUDENTS WITH EDUCATIONAL DISRUPTIONS?

Students face numerous barriers, often beyond their control, to successfully completing school in a timely manner.

- Frequent school transfers
- Moves during semester - credit has not yet been awarded
- Loss of attendance
- Changes in curriculum/grad requirements from school to school
- Lack of support/advocacy
- Loss of educational records
- Anxiety associated with uncertainty/instability
- Potential health (physical and mental) concerns
- Increased risk of failure/dropping out
- Etc.

# BENEFITS OF AWARDING PARTIAL CREDITS TO STUDENTS WHO EXPERIENCE EDUCATIONAL DISRUPTIONS:

1. Prevents “penalizing” for disruptions
2. Prevents the repeating of coursework already completed
3. Allows room in student’s schedule to take classes needed to meet graduation requirements.

# PLEASE REMEMBER ALONG THE WAY:



- STRIVE FOR EQUITY (EQUITY VS. EQUALITY)
- FAIR IS NOT ALWAYS EQUAL/SAME
- SOMETIMES IT IS EASIER TO ASK FOR FORGIVENESS THAN PERMISSION – DO WHAT IS RIGHT BY STUDENTS AND FOR STUDENTS
- WE ARE HERE TO SERVE ALL STUDENTS – THE ONES WITH BARRIERS NEED OUR SERVICE THE MOST

# Equality



# Equity



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# PARTIAL CREDIT: SENDING SCHOOL

- Sending school should award partial credit
- Ensure teachers issue check out grades
- Gather attendance information
- Determine credits earned for each course
- Create report to transfer to receiving school
- Attendance and grades should be used to determine amount of credit – not “blindly” or randomly awarded
  - Calculation formula
  - Formula should not be a “hard” rule but rather a guide
  - Use professional judgement
  - Focus should be the best interest of the student
  - Extenuating circumstances should be taken into account as needed

# PARTIAL CREDIT: RECEIVING SCHOOL

- *Request all records from previous school, including check out grades and partial credit.*
- If partial credit or grades are missing **send request letter and copy Liaison.**
- If partial credits were issued using a different credit scale (e.g., 1 credit per grading period, rather than 5 credits), use a credit conversion calculator.
- Apply to same or equivalent courses.

# PARTIAL CREDIT: RECEIVING SCHOOL (2)

- Receiving school must honor and accept partial credits awarded – receiving school does NOT have to offer the course to give credit for it
- Receiving school should not have any additional requirements to honor earned credits (i.e. evaluations, assessments, proof of work, etc.)
- Credits must be applied toward the requirement they were intended to meet – especially when graduation requirements vary from prior school(s)
- Use name of course, website course description, contact with prior school, consultation with receiving school counselor and/or registrar, etc. to determine credit type
- At the end of the grading period, once final grades are posted, calculate the remaining partial credits based on the number of periods attended after the youth's enrolled. Add all grades and credits to the youth's official transcript.



# WHAT IF YOUR DATA SYSTEM DOESN'T HAVE A WAY TO INPUT PARTIAL CREDIT?

- The law does not provide an exception for schools that do not have an SIS that allows for the input of partial credits.
- Registrars/counselors should contact the school district's **Foster youth or Homeless Liaison and Pupil Services Department** and inform them of the need to update the SIS to allow for the input of partial credits onto official transcripts.
  - Aeries = Yes
  - Synergy = Yes
  - Infinite Campus = Yes
  - Power School = Yes

# CORE CREDITS

01

Science

- 2 credits
- think of in categories (i.e. life or physical, lab or no lab, etc.)
- medical courses, agricultural courses, etc.

02

Math

- 2 credits
- often the most difficult for students who are transient
- focus on completing required # of credits more than specific course names (i.e. algebra/geometry I, algebra/geometry II, etc.)
- award credit in best interest of student and in line with primary content of courses taken

03

Social Studies

- 2 credits
- state/government courses can transfer – not required for every state attended (assessments exempt)
- award psychology, sociology, current/world events, etc.

04

English

- 4 credits
- focus on 4 years completed versus course names
- award journalism, speech, debate, any communication arts, etc.

# ELECTIVE CREDITS

01	<u>Health/PE</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 1 credit, at least <u>.5 each year for two years</u></li><li>• <u>weight lifting, wellness, nutrition, and other "activity" classes in this area as needed</u></li><li>• <u>dance classes (can be fine art or PE – award where needed)</u></li></ul>
02	Fine Arts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 1 credit</li><li>• any art, any music, theatre/acting, drama, dance, etc.</li><li>• history of _____, foundations of _____, etc. – does NOT have to be a performance-based course</li></ul>
03	Career and Technical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 1 credit</li><li>• anything relevant to career or technology education</li><li>• culinary, welding, agriculture, technology, business, etc.</li></ul>
04	General Electives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 7 credits</li><li>• ALL others</li><li>• EVERY class CAN and SHOULD count toward credit</li></ul>

# CREATIVE BUT EQUITABLE WAYS TO AWARD CREDIT:

- Online course work
- Written packets
- Credit by exam (EOC, SAT, ACT, PSAT, WorkKeys, etc. – develop a policy for at-risk students) – benefits MANY, not just those who experience homelessness
- Work experience and/or community service – CTE
- Mastery of skill credit – if student passes algebra II but you have no record of algebra I being completed – provide assessment to award credit by exam
- Be open to alternative options – common sense approach

# OTHER THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND:

- End of Year Assessments
  - If course was completed in prior district exempt status – if absolutely necessary, students CAN take assessment if they completed “equivalent” course at a prior school/district
- Repeated Course
  - If a student took and passed a course twice, they should receive proper credit for both courses – students should NOT be penalized for scheduling errors or historical record errors on the part of adults.
- Give a “P”
  - Students can be given P for credit earned to avoid awarding “unearned” letter grade/GPA points.

# ELIMINATING BARRIERS

As a liaison, get to know your district and individual high schools' current practices for aiding students with on-time grade level progression and graduation.

Administrators, counselors, and classroom teachers can help you when no formal policy has been adopted.

- What is your district's current credit and local requirement waiver policy?
- What is your district doing that eliminates barriers?
- Seek guidance from OPI.

## Implementation



- Identify building level staff who are going to track and enter partial credit.
- Communicate with staff best practices or expectations multiple times a year.
- Review procedures annually as part of your needs assessment.

# RESOURCES

## Montana Office of Public Instruction

- [Understanding SB 18 Brochure](#)

## SchoolHouse Connection

- [Awarding and Accepting Partial Credits](#)
- [Quick Guide for Counseling Staff](#)
- [Participation in Extra-Curricular Activities](#)



# CONTACT INFORMATION

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