

TITLE: High School Pre-Commencement, Diploma, and Senior Activity Guidelines

NUMBER: BUL-1295.4

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ROUTING
Region Superintendents
Administrators of
Instruction
Directors
Principals
Secondary Assistant
Principals
School Counselors
College Counselors
School Administrative
Assistants
Registrar

POLICY: The purpose of this bulletin is to establish guidelines for the issuance of the high school diploma and for participation in the commencement and senior activities. The California Department of Education explicitly defines the criteria and procedures for a District to award a high school diploma. This policy also provides guidelines for schools opting to set additional criteria for participation in the commencement ceremony and senior activities.

MAJOR CHANGES: This revision replaces *REF-1303.3, Commencement Guidelines*, dated March 23, 2018 and *BUL-1295.3, Diploma and Graduation Guidelines*, dated March 23, 2018. Guidelines for additional school-site criteria to participate in the commencement ceremony have been included. Additionally, the deadlines for submission of the request to add additional school-site criteria and the verification of communication with parents have been updated.

GUIDELINES: The following guidelines apply:

I. BACKGROUND

Upon successful completion of all high school academic and behavior expectations, secondary school students are traditionally recognized at formal commencement exercises where diplomas or certificates of completion are conferred. These exercises are dignified, and formal occasions eagerly anticipated by students, parents, relatives, and friends. Although participation in the commencement exercise continues to be the most significant event marking successful completion of the District commencement requirements, participation

is entirely voluntary and carries with it definite responsibilities and expectations for behavior, safety and protocol.

II. CRITERIA FOR ISSUING THE HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA

- A. Grade 12 students who have satisfactorily completed the required course of study and non-course requirements are entitled to a high school diploma indicating satisfactory completion of all elements. Refer to BUL-079501.1, *Graduation Requirements for the Classes of 2020-2025*, dated March 14, 2022 for further information.
- B. Parents of grade 12 students should be notified regularly regarding their progress toward graduation, including non-grad letters. Please refer to BUL-2537.8, *Individualized Graduation Plan (IGP) for All Secondary Students*, dated May 22, 2023, for further information.
- C. The District shall permit students to use the name and gender with which they identify on their diploma. The request must be made in accordance with District policy outlined in BUL-5703.4, *Name and/or Gender of Pupils for Purposes of School Records*, dated August 30, 2021. A legal name change is not required.
- D. At the discretion of the comprehensive high school principal, a student who is currently enrolled in or was most recently enrolled in an Options school, and who has completed all the requirements for high school graduation, may be allowed to participate in the commencement ceremony of the comprehensive high school. Participation may only be allowed if the student has completed all coursework toward high school graduation prior to the commencement ceremony date. In such a case, the student and his or her parent/guardian/educational rights holder must be informed that the student's transcript and diploma will show the name of the Options school as the school from which the student has graduated.
- E. Only students who meet the high school diploma requirements and special education students who qualify for the Certificate of Completion per Education Code 56390 may participate in the commencement ceremony. For further information, please refer to REF-6056, *Issuance of Diplomas and Certificates of Completion for All Eligible Students with Disabilities*.

- F. Failure by a secondary student to meet school behavior expectations is not a valid reason to withhold a high school diploma or to prescribe additional conditions be met prior to the issuance of a diploma.

III. GUIDANCE FOR SCHOOLS OPTING TO SET ADDITIONAL SCHOOL-SITE CRITERIA FOR PARTICIPATION IN THE COMMENCEMENT OR SENIOR ACTIVITIES

- A. Upon the advisement of the commencement committee, schools may set additional school-site criteria, including behavior, work habits and attendance, for participation in the commencement ceremony. See section IV, B, for additional information.
- B. Schools opting to set additional criteria must do so in a timely manner that allows for appropriate interventions and collaboration with parents.
- C. Schools opting to implement additional criteria must adhere to a multi-tiered system of Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports and Restorative Practices (PBIS/RP) as outlined in BUL 133307, *Discipline Foundation Policy: Multi-Tiered Systems of Support for Behavior and Social-Emotional Well-Being using Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports/Restorative Practice (PBIS/RP)*, dated November 21, 2022. See Attachment A, *Considerations for Setting Additional School Site Criteria* for further considerations.
- D. Schools implementing additional criteria for participation should ensure that the additional criteria are not applied in a discriminatory manner and consider the unique needs of students, including students experiencing homelessness, students in foster care, and/or students with disabilities. If a student with an IEP or Section 504 Plan, history, known or perceived disability, fails to meet additional criteria that the school has added, the student's case carrier must be consulted prior to the student or their families being notified of possible non participation in commencement or culmination activities.
- E. Approval and Notification Timeline

1. High schools that opt to set additional criteria must complete and submit Attachment B, *Request to Implement Additional School-Site Criteria (Behavior and Attendance for Participation in the Commencement or Senior Activities)* yearly to their Region Director and Region Superintendent for approval by the fifth week of the fall semester of the year prior to graduation.
 2. High schools should inform students and families of these additional criteria students by the end of Fall of their 11th grade year but no later than the fifth week of their 12th grade year. Please see Attachment C, *Sample Contract*.
 3. For the class of 2024, schools opting to include additional criteria must receive the approval of the Region Director prior to the fifth week of the fall semester. This should be communicated to students and their families no later than the tenth week of the fall semester.
 4. Eligibility for participation in all senior activities, including the commencement ceremony, should be clearly established and communicated in writing to seniors and their parents or guardians as early and as frequently in the school year as possible, in alignment with the notification timelines above.
- F. Students' progress should be monitored regularly, with various opportunities and support to meet appropriate expectations as needed. Students and parents must also be informed about the school support staff who can support them throughout the school year to ensure they are meeting the expectations.
- G. Students should be offered the opportunity to earn back participation through an agreed upon plan.
- H. Failure by a secondary student to meet additional criteria may result in a principal's request for a conference with a student and the student's parents/guardians/educational rights holders. If it is determined that the student may not participate in the ceremony, but earned the diploma, the diploma will be issued to the student on a determined day post- commencement ceremony.
- I. Examples for Setting Additional Criteria

1. Behavior

All students must be taught and supported in learning the skills necessary to enhance a positive school climate, engage in learning, and demonstrate responsibility for themselves and respect for others. This is accomplished through the implementation of a multi-tiered system of Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports and Restorative Practices (PBIS/RP), which prioritizes wellness and nurtures the social-emotional development of the whole child, whole classroom, whole school, and whole community. Refer to BUL 133307, *Discipline Foundation Policy: MultiTiered Systems of Support for Behavior and Social-Emotional Well-Being Using Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports/Restorative Practices (PBIS/RP)* for further information. Also Refer to Attachment C, *Sample Contract*.

Sample Contract Language

- “I will be safe, respectful and responsible, following the established school behavior expectations.”
- “Aim for E’s and S’s in Work Habits and Cooperation”

2. Attendance Expectations

Contracts that include attendance expectations should only include unexcused absences as reasons for not participating in activities. All valid excuses should be confirmed by parent/guardian oral or written verification. Refer to Attachment C, *Sample Contract*.

Sample contract language

- "Attend all classes except when a valid excuse is provided."
- “Establish healthy attendance habits, only miss school when necessary, with an excused absence.”
- “Aim for 96% attendance, and only miss school when there is a valid excuse.”

IV. APPEAL PROCESS

Schools who opt to set additional school-site criteria for participation in the commencement or senior activities should establish an appeal process for students who do not meet the additional school site criteria. The student or parent/guardian/educational rights holder may appeal by following the procedures listed below. Considerations may include extenuating circumstances that affect attendance and/or behavior.

A. School-site Level

1. A Commencement and Senior Activities Appeals Committee shall be convened at the school to review appeals. At a minimum, the committee must include a counselor, a school-site administrator and a teacher.
2. A student or parent/guardian/educational rights holder must submit a written request to the Appeals Committee stating why the student did not meet the requirements for participating in the commencement ceremony and/or senior activities.
3. The committee response shall be provided in writing and by phone within two school days following the appeal.
4. If the parent/guardian/educational rights holder does not agree with the Committee's decision, they may appeal to the school site principal within 3 days by phone or in writing.
5. A decision by the principal will be made within three school days following the appeal.

B. Region Level

1. If the parent/guardian/educational rights holder does not agree with the school's decision, they may appeal to the Region within three school days of receiving the school sites appeal decision. If the student has a disability the Region Special Education Administrator will be included in the appeal process.
2. The Region decision is final and will be provided by phone and in writing within one school day following the appeal.

V. PRE-COMMENCEMENT PREPARATIONS

Procedures and guidelines for Graduation and Culmination (elementary and middle schools) are outlined in BUL 138307, *Graduation and Culmination Ceremony Policies and Procedures*, dated April 10, 2023. Below are additional guidelines:

A. Commencement Policy

Every secondary school should develop a commencement participation policy that includes and clearly defines the following:

dress standards, attendance at rehearsals, expected behavior and the consequences of failing to adhere to these policies. This commencement policy shall be communicated in writing to both students and parents on a yearly basis at the beginning of the fall semester.

B. Committee

Every secondary school should establish a broad-based commencement committee to advise the principal on matters relating to commencement activities, the commencement exercise, and other relevant matters. This committee should include, but not be limited to the following:

- Principal or designee
- Culmination Coordinator
- Plant Manager
- Student Council or Leadership Advisor
- Class Representative
- Parent(s) of Grade 8 Students
- School Counselor(s)

C. Caps, Tassels and Gowns

The granting of diplomas or diploma-like certificates and the use of commencement-like exercises and dress (caps, tassels, and gowns) is reserved specifically for 12th graders. For further information, refer to REF-6484, *Graduation Caps, Tassels and Gowns*, dated January 30, 2023.

D. Rehearsals

The number and length of rehearsals should be carefully reviewed. For the least disruption to the academic program, consideration should be given to reducing the number of rehearsals to the minimum required for an orderly process.

E. Day and Time of Commencement Exercise

Secondary commencement exercises are traditionally held during the last three days of the school year. The day and time should be coordinated with neighboring schools in order to allow parents to attend elementary, middle and senior high school ceremonies as necessary. Approval to hold the commencement ceremony prior to the last three days of the school year must be obtained from the Region Superintendent.

F. Attendance Policy

If commencement exercises are held prior to the last day of school, in accordance with the District's attendance policy, all students must be expected to attend school through the last instructional day of the school year. Administrators should communicate this expectation in writing to staff, students, parents and teachers. Teachers should be prepared to teach as on any other instructional day.

G. Individual Recognition

The primary purpose of the commencement exercise is to honor the graduating class as a whole. The recognition of individual awardees or honorees should be kept to an absolute minimum. It is recommended that such individual honors or awards be bestowed at a separate awards ceremony.

AUTHORITY: This is a policy of the Los Angeles Unified School District and the Division of Instruction.

RELATED RESOURCES: [BUL-079501.1, *Graduation Requirements for the Classes of 2020-2025*](#), dated March 14, 2022

[BUL-2537.8, *Individualized Graduation Plan \(IGP\) for All Secondary Students*](#), dated May 22, 2023

[BUL-5703.4, Name and/or Gender of Pupils for Purposes of School Records](#), dated August 30, 2021

[REF-6056.7, Issuance of Diplomas and Certificates of Completion for All Eligible Students with Disabilities](#), dated March 28, 2022

[BUL-133307, Discipline Foundation Policy: Multi-Tiered System of Support for Behavior and Social Emotional Well-Being using Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports/Restorative Practices \(PBIS/RP\)](#), dated November 21, 2022

[BUL-138307, Guidelines and Culmination Ceremony Policies and Procedures](#), dated April 10, 2023

[REF-6484.9, 2013 Graduation Caps, Tassels and Gowns](#), dated January 30, 2023

ATTACHMENTS: Attachment A - Considerations for Setting Additional School Site Criteria
Attachment B - Request to Implement Additional School-Site Criteria
(Behavior and Attendance for Participation in the Commencement or Senior Activities)
Attachment C - Sample Contract (English and Spanish)

ASSISTANCE: For assistance or further information please contact School Counseling Services at (213) 241-7510 or your Region Counseling Coordinator, <https://lausd.org/Page/7778>

Considerations for Setting Additional School Site Criteria

This section includes guidance for schools that set additional school-site criteria, including behavior, work habits, and attendance, for participation in the commencement ceremony, or senior activities.

1. Guidance should be written in affirming language that implements Positive Behavior Interventions and Support/Restorative Practices (PBIS/RP) as an alternative to traditional school discipline.
2. Expectations are positively stated and explicitly defined, taught, reinforced, monitored, and corrected utilizing a Multi- Tiered System of Support for Behavior and Social Emotional Well Being using Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports/Restorative Practices (PBIS/RP)
3. Students' progress should be monitored regularly, with various opportunities and support to meet appropriate expectations as needed.
4. School support staff must provide opportunities for students to correct behaviors and students' must be informed of the school support staff who can support them throughout the school year to ensure they are meeting the expectations
5. Students should be offered the opportunity to earn back participation through an agreed upon plan.

Behavior

All students must be taught and supported in learning the skills necessary to enhance a positive school climate, engage in learning, and demonstrate responsibility for themselves and respect for others. This is accomplished through the implementation of a multi-tiered system of Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports and Restorative Practices (PBIS/RP), which prioritizes wellness and nurtures the social-emotional development of the whole child, whole classroom, whole school, and whole community. Refer to BUL-133307, *Discipline Foundation Policy: Multi-Tiered System of Support for Behavior and Social Emotional Well-Being using Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports/Restorative Practices (PBIS/RP)* for further information.

Sample Contract Language:

"I will be safe, respectful and responsible, following the established school behavior expectations."

"Aim for E's and S's in Work Habits and Cooperation"

PBIS/RP Supports:

Tier 1 Universal Prevention Supports and Strategies include but are not limited to:

- Positive behavioral expectations explicitly defined, taught, reinforced, monitored, and corrected

- Community building circles
- Restorative language (i.e., affective statements and restorative questions)
- Check-ins
- 4:1 (4 positive interactions to 1 corrective interaction)
- Social-emotional learning incorporated into lessons • Fostering and promoting healthy affirming relationships

Tier 2 Selected Supports and Strategies include but are not limited to:

- Restorative conferences
- Repairing the harm circles
- Targeted small group or individual interventions and supports
- Targeted social-emotional learning
- Self-monitoring daily progress report

Tier 3 Intensive Supports and Strategies include but are not limited to:

- Individual supports
- Re-entry circles
- Interventions based on the function(s) (reason) of the behavior
- Interim Behavior Response Plan (IBRP)
- Multi-disciplinary team support
- Intensive social-emotional learning

Attendance Expectations:

Contracts that include attendance expectations should only include unexcused absences as reasons for not participating in activities.

Sample contract language:

"Attend all classes except when a valid excuse is provided." All valid excuses should be confirmed by parent/guardian oral or written verification.

"Establish healthy attendance habits, only miss school when necessary with an excused absence." All excused absences should be confirmed by parent/guardian oral or written verification.

"Aim for 96% attendance, and only miss school when there is a valid excuse." All valid excuses should be confirmed by parent/guardian oral or written verification.

Providing Support Services and Interventions

Support services and interventions are to be provided for students with excessive absences to help them get back on track. The support services and interventions may include, but are not limited to, any or all of the following:

- A conference between school personnel, the pupil's parents/guardians/educational rights holder, and the pupil.

- Recognizing pupils who achieve excellent attendance or demonstrate significant improvement in attendance.
- Referral to a school nurse, pupil services and attendance counselor, school counselor, school psychologist, school social worker, and other pupil support personnel for case management and counseling.
- Identifying barriers to attendance that may require schoolwide strategies instead of case management in schools with significantly higher rates of chronic absenteeism.

Tier 1 Universal Supports:

Clear, concise and consistent communication about attendance and expectations

Routines and celebrations related to attendance and engagement

- Personalized positive communication to families when students are absent
- Recognition of good and improved attendance
- Impact of attendance on whole child widely understood
- Connection to a caring adult in the school
- Every child and their family encouraged to develop a success plan that includes attention to attendance

Tier 2 Targeted Intervention:

- Common community and school barriers identified and addressed
- Individualized student success plan that includes attention to attendance
- Home visits
- Mentoring:
 - Adult Connections
 - Peer Connections
 - Intensive tutoring
- Check-In/Check-Out
- Expanded learning opportunities
- Small group interventions and supports for students
- Restorative alternatives to discipline and suspension
- School Attendance Review Team (SART) Meetings

Tier 3 Intensive Intervention:

- Tailored school/community based referrals
- Case management

- Housing stability supports
- School Attendance Review Board (SARB)
- Individualized learning and success plan leading to graduation

Request to Implement Additional School-Site Criteria (Behavior and Attendance for Participation in the Commencement or Senior Activities)

Name of School	Effective with graduating class of:
Description of Additional School-Site Criteria:	

Principal Name	Principal Signature	Date
Region Director	Approved by: Region Director	Date
Region Superintendent	Approved by: Region Superintendent	Date

Include attachments as needed

SAMPLE CONTRACT – English Version

[Schools will keep signed copy on file and provide a copy to the family]

Congratulations! Your child has now reached an important milestone in their education by becoming a 12th grade student at _____ HS. It is very important that you meet with the counselor to participate in the Individual Graduation Plan meeting to be successful in high school and to prepare for life beyond high school. In addition to the graduation requirements, all 12th grade students are expected to meet the expectations below to be eligible to participate in senior activities and the commencement ceremony. Meeting all requirements will support achievement and guide students in preparing for a successful transition to their post-secondary goals.

Academics

To meet all academic requirements, students will:

- Meet with the counselor to develop plans during their IGP.
- Complete LAUSD Graduations Requirements by passing all their courses.
- For more information or support in meeting graduation requirements, please contact _____, School Counselor.

Behavior Expectation

To meet _____ HS behavior expectations, students will:

- be safe, respectful, and responsible, and follow the established school behavior expectations.
- aim for Excellent and Satisfactory in Work Habits and Cooperation.
- For more information or support in meeting behavior expectations, contact _____

Attendance Expectation

Students will establish healthy attendance habits by:

- Attending all classes.
- Missing school only when necessary, with an excused absence.
- Submitting written verification for excused absences, signed by parents.
- For more information or support in meeting attendance requirements, contact _____

Parents of students not meeting the academic, behavior and/or attendance requirements will be notified in a timely manner of ineligibility to participate in senior activities and the commencement ceremony. Parents wishing to appeal must contact _____, of the appeal committee.

I understand that I may also be required to participate in one or more of the following intervention and support programs to assist me with being successful at _____ High School.

- | | |
|---|--|
| a. <input type="checkbox"/> Academic Probation | d. <input type="checkbox"/> Participate in Student Success Team SSPT |
| b. <input type="checkbox"/> Daily Attendance Check | e. <input type="checkbox"/> Attend After School Tutoring |
| c. <input type="checkbox"/> Weekly Progress Reports | f. <input type="checkbox"/> Coping Skills Session(s) |

Student Name	Signature	Date
Parent Name	Signature	Date
Administrator/Designee	Signature	Date

CONTRACTO EJEMPLAR – Spanish Version

[Las escuelas mantendrán una copia firmada en el archivo y proporcionarán una versión al estudiante]

¡Felicidades! Su hijo ahora ha alcanzado un hito importante en su educación al convertirse en un estudiante de 12o grado en _____. Es muy importante que se reúna con el consejero para participar en la reunión del Plan de Graduación Individual para tener éxito en la escuela preparatoria y prepararse para la vida más allá de la escuela secundaria. Además de los requisitos de graduación, se espera que todos los estudiantes de 12º grado cumplan con las siguientes expectativas para ser elegibles para participar en actividades de último año y en la ceremonia de graduación. Cumplir con todos los requisitos apoyará el logro y guiará a los estudiantes en la preparación para una transición exitosa a sus metas postsecundarias.

Académico

Para cumplir con todos los requisitos académicos, los estudiantes:

- Se reunirán con el consejero para desarrollar planes durante su IGP.
- Completarán los requisitos de graduación del LAUSD aprobando todos sus cursos.
- Para obtener más información o apoyo para cumplir con los requisitos de graduación, comuníquese con _____, Consejero Escolar

Expectativa de comportamiento

Para cumplir con las expectativas de comportamiento de ____ HS, los estudiantes sabrán lo siguiente:

- Seré cuidado, respetuoso y responsable, y seguiré las expectativas de comportamiento escolar establecidas.
- Obtendré calificaciones de Excelente y Satisfactorio en Hábitos de Trabajo y Cooperación.
- Para obtener más información o apoyo para cumplir con las expectativas de comportamiento, comuníquese con _____

Expectativa de asistencia

Los estudiantes establecerán hábitos saludables de asistencia mediante:

- Asistir a todas las clases.
- Faltar a la escuela sólo cuando sea necesario, con una ausencia justificada.
- Presentar una verificación por escrito de las ausencias válidas, firmada por los padres.
- Para obtener más información o apoyo para cumplir con los requisitos de asistencia, comuníquese con _____

Los padres de los estudiantes que no cumplan con los requisitos académicos, de comportamiento y / o asistencia serán notificados de manera oportuna de la inelegibilidad para participar en las actividades de último año y en la ceremonia de graduación. Los padres que deseen apelar deben comunicarse con _____, del comité de apelación.

Entiendo que también se me puede requerir que participe en uno o más de los siguientes programas de intervención y apoyo para ayudarme a tener éxito en _____ Preparatoria.

a. <input type="checkbox"/> Período de Prueba Académico	d. <input type="checkbox"/> Participar en el Comité de Éxito Estudiantil SSPT
b. <input type="checkbox"/> Control diario de asistencia	e. <input type="checkbox"/> Asistir a tutoría después de la escuela
c. <input type="checkbox"/> Informes de progreso semanales	f. <input type="checkbox"/> Sesión(es) de Habilidades para Enfrentar Situaciones con el PSW

Nombre del Estudiante	Firma	Fecha
Nombre del Padre/Madre	Firma	Fecha
Administrador/Designado	Firma	Fecha