

**THE REVISED SCHOOL CODE (EXCERPT)**  
**Act 451 of 1976**

**380.1278a Requirements for high school diploma.**

Sec. 1278a. (1) Except as otherwise provided in this section or section 1278b, the board of a school district or board of directors of a public school academy shall not award a high school diploma to a pupil unless the pupil meets all of the following:

(a) Has successfully completed all of the following credit requirements of the Michigan merit standard before graduating from high school:

(i) At least 4 credits in mathematics that are aligned with subject area content expectations developed by the department and approved by the state board under section 1278b, including completion of at least algebra I, geometry, and algebra II, or an integrated sequence of this course content that consists of 3 credits, and an additional mathematics credit, such as trigonometry, statistics, precalculus, calculus, applied math, accounting, business math, a retake of algebra II, or, for only pupils entering grade 8 before 2023, a course in financial literacy as described in section 1165. A pupil may complete algebra II over 2 years with 2 credits awarded or over 1.5 years with 1.5 credits awarded for the purposes of this section and section 1278b. A pupil also may partially or fully fulfill the algebra II requirement by completing a department-approved formal career and technical education program or curriculum, such as a program or curriculum in electronics, machining, construction, welding, engineering, computer science, or renewable energy, and in that program or curriculum successfully completing the same content as the algebra II benchmarks assessed on the department-prescribed state high school assessment, as determined by the department. The department shall post on its website guidelines for implementation of the immediately preceding sentence. Each pupil must successfully complete at least 1 mathematics course during his or her final year of high school enrollment. This subparagraph does not require completion of mathematics courses in any particular sequence.

(ii) At least 3 credits in social science that are aligned with subject area content expectations developed by the department and approved by the state board under section 1278b, including completion of at least 1 credit in United States history and geography, 1 credit in world history and geography, 1/2 credit in economics, and the civics course described in section 1166(2). For only pupils entering grade 8 before 2023, the 1/2-credit economics requirement may be satisfied by completion of at least a 1/2-credit course in personal economics that includes a financial literacy component as described in section 1165, if that course covers the subject area content expectations for economics developed by the department and approved by the state board under section 1278b. The 1/2 credit in economics required under this subparagraph cannot be fulfilled by completion of the 1/2 credit course in personal finance described in subsection (3).

(iii) At least 1 credit in subject matter that includes both health and physical education aligned with guidelines developed by the department and approved by the state board under section 1278b, or at least 1/2 credit in health aligned with guidelines developed by the department and approved by the state board under section 1278b and at least 1/2 credit awarded by the school district or public school academy for approved participation in extracurricular athletics or other extracurricular activities involving physical activity.

(iv) At least 1 credit in visual arts, performing arts, or applied arts, as defined by the department, that is aligned with guidelines developed by the department and approved by the state board under section 1278b. A school district or public school academy is strongly encouraged to offer visual arts and performing arts courses.

(v) The credit requirements specified in section 1278b(1).

(b) Meets the online course or learning experience requirement of this subsection. A school district or public school academy shall provide the basic level of technology and internet access required by the state board to complete the online course or learning experience. For a pupil to meet this requirement, the pupil must meet either of the following, as determined by the school district or public school academy:

(i) Has successfully completed at least 1 course or learning experience that is presented online, as defined by the department.

(ii) The pupil's school district or public school academy has integrated an online experience throughout the high school curriculum by ensuring that each teacher of each course that provides the required credits of the Michigan merit curriculum has integrated an online experience into the course.

(2) Except as otherwise provided in this section, and in addition to the requirements under subsection (1), the board of a school district or board of directors of a public school academy shall not award a high school diploma to a pupil unless the pupil has successfully completed during grades K to 12 at least 2 credits that are grade-appropriate in a language other than English or course work or other learning experiences that are substantially equivalent to 2 credits in a language other than English, based on guidelines developed by the department. A pupil may partially or fully fulfill 1 credit of this requirement by completing a

department-approved formal career and technical education program or curriculum or by completing visual or performing arts instruction that is in addition to the requirements under subsection (1)(a)(iv). The board of a school district or board of directors of a public school academy is strongly encouraged to ensure that all pupils complete at least 1 credit in a language other than English in grades K to 6. For the purposes of this subsection, both of the following apply:

(a) American Sign Language is considered to be a language other than English.

(b) The pupil may meet all or part of this requirement with online course work.

(3) Beginning with pupils entering grade 8 in 2023, the board of a school district or board of directors of a public school academy shall not award a high school diploma to a pupil unless the pupil completes a 1/2 credit course in personal finance that aligns with subject area content expectations developed by the department and approved by the state board under section 1278b. The 1/2 credit course in personal finance must fulfill 1/2 credit of mathematics required under subsection (1)(a)(i), 1/2 credit of visual arts, performing arts, or applied arts required under subsection (1)(a)(iv), or 1/2 credit of a language other than English required under subsection (2), as determined by the board of the school district or board of directors of the public school academy in which the pupil is enrolled. The 1/2 credit course in personal finance required under this subsection may be fulfilled through a department-approved formal career and technical education program or curriculum that aligns with the subject area content expectations developed by the department and approved by the state board for the credit under section 1278b.

(4) The requirements under this section and section 1278b for a high school diploma are in addition to any local requirements imposed by the board of a school district or board of directors of a public school academy. The board of a school district or board of directors of a public school academy, as a local requirement for a high school diploma, may require a pupil to complete the Michigan merit examination under section 1279g or may require a pupil to participate in the MIAccess assessments if appropriate for the pupil.

(5) For the purposes of this section and section 1278b, all of the following apply:

(a) A pupil is considered to have completed a credit if the pupil successfully completes the subject area content expectations or guidelines developed by the department that apply to the credit. For a career and technical education credit, a school district or public school academy may supplement those content expectations and guidelines with additional guidelines developed by the school district or public school academy.

(b) A school district or public school academy shall base its determination of whether a pupil has successfully completed the subject area content expectations or guidelines developed by the department that apply to a credit at least in part on the pupil's performance on assessments developed or selected by the department or on 1 or more assessments developed or selected by the school district or public school academy that measure a pupil's understanding of the subject area content expectations or guidelines that apply to the credit.

(c) A school district or public school academy shall also grant a pupil a credit if the pupil earns a qualifying score, as determined by the department, on assessments developed or selected for the subject area by the department or the pupil earns a qualifying score, as determined by the school district or public school academy, on 1 or more assessments developed or selected by the school district or public school academy that measure a pupil's understanding of the subject area content expectations or guidelines that apply to the credit.

(6) If a high school is designated by the superintendent of public instruction as a specialty school and the high school meets the requirements of subsection (7), the pupils of the high school are not required to successfully complete the 4 credits in English language arts required under section 1278b(1)(a) or the 3 credits in social science required under subsection (1)(a)(ii) and the school district or public school academy is not required to ensure that each pupil is offered the curriculum necessary for meeting those English language arts or social science credit requirements. The superintendent of public instruction may designate up to 15 high schools that meet the requirements of this subsection as specialty schools. Subject to this maximum number, the superintendent of public instruction shall designate a high school as a specialty school if the superintendent of public instruction finds that the high school meets all of the following criteria:

(a) The high school incorporates a significant reading and writing component throughout its curriculum.

(b) The high school uses a specialized, innovative, and rigorous curriculum in such areas as performing arts, foreign language, extensive use of internships, or other learning innovations that conform to pioneering innovations among other leading national or international high schools.

(7) A high school that is designated by the superintendent of public instruction as a specialty school under subsection (6) is only exempt from requirements as described under subsection (6) as long as the superintendent of public instruction finds that the high school continues to meet all of the following requirements:

(a) The high school clearly states to prospective pupils and their parents that it does not meet the

requirements of the Michigan merit standard under this section and section 1278b but is a designated specialty school that is exempt from some of those requirements and that a pupil who enrolls in the high school and subsequently transfers to a high school that is not a specialty school meeting the requirements of this subsection will be required to comply with the requirements of the Michigan merit standard under this section and section 1278b.

(b) For the most recent year for which the data are available, the mean scores on both the mathematics and science portions of the applicable state assessment for the pupils of the high school exceed by at least 10% the mean scores on the mathematics and science portions of the applicable state assessment for the pupils of the school district in which the greatest number of the pupils of the high school reside.

(c) For the most recent year for which the data are available, the high school had a graduation rate of at least 85%, as determined by the department.

(d) For the most recent year for which the data are available, at least 75% of the pupils who graduated from the high school the preceding year are enrolled in a postsecondary institution.

(e) All pupils of the high school are required to meet the mathematics credit requirements of subsection (1)(a)(i), with no modification of these requirements under section 1278b(5), and each pupil is offered the curriculum necessary to meet this requirement.

(f) All pupils of the high school are required to meet the science credit requirements of section 1278b(1)(b) and are also required to successfully complete at least 1 additional science credit, for a total of at least 4 science credits, with no modification of these requirements under section 1278b(5), and each pupil is offered the curriculum necessary to meet this requirement.

**History:** Add. 2006, Act 124, Imd. Eff. Apr. 20, 2006;—Am. 2008, Act 316, Imd. Eff. Dec. 18, 2008;—Am. 2009, Act 205, Imd. Eff. Jan. 4, 2010;—Am. 2014, Act 208, Eff. (sine die);—Am. 2014, Act 293, Imd. Eff. Sept. 30, 2014;—Am. 2015, Act 186, Eff. Feb. 14, 2016;—Am. 2018, Act 232, Imd. Eff. June 27, 2018;—Am. 2020, Act 158, Imd. Eff. Sept. 17, 2020;—Am. 2022, Act 105, Eff. Mar. 29, 2023.

**Compiler's note:** Former MCL 380.1278a, which pertained to pupil performance standards, was repealed by Act 289 of 1995, Eff. July 1, 1996.

**Popular name:** Act 451