

**PATAULA CHARTER ACADEMY, INC.
HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS**

Pataula Charter Academy and Spring Creek Charter Academy comply with minimum Georgia State Board of Education rules and policies regarding high school graduation requirements, credit transfers, and awarding of credit to students as found in State Board Rule 160-4-2-.48.

- I. PURPOSE.** This Rule specifies programs of study that shall be offered by local boards of education for students enrolling in the ninth grade for the first time in the 2008-2009 school year and for subsequent years.

II. DEFINITIONS.

(a) **Academic, Career and Essential Skills (“ACES”) Diploma** – the document awarded to students with the most significant cognitive disabilities who were assessed using the alternate assessment aligned to alternate academic achievement standards. While this diploma is standards-based and aligned with the state requirements for the regular high school diploma, it is not a regular high school diploma. Therefore, the provision of an ACES diploma in itself does not terminate Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) for students with an Individualized Education Program (IEP).

(b) **Career, Technical and Agricultural Education (CTAE) Pathways** – Three elective units in a coherent sequence that includes rigorous content aligned with industry-related standards leading to college and work readiness in a focused area of student interest.

(c) **Core Courses** - courses identified as “c” or “r” in Rule 160-4-2-.20 List of State-Funded K-8 Subjects and 9-12 Courses.

(d) **Elective Courses** – any courses identified as “e” in Rule 160-4-2-.20 List of State-Funded K-8 Subjects and 9-12 Courses that a student may select beyond the core requirements to fulfill the unit requirements for graduation.

(e) **Georgia Alternate Assessment (GAA)** – an alternate assessment based on alternate academic achievement standards. The GAA is a standardized, task-based assessment with multiple access points designed for students with significant cognitive disabilities under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) whose Individualized Education Program (IEP) team has determined they are unable to meaningfully access the regular assessment program, even with maximum appropriate accommodations. The purpose of the GAA is to ensure that students with significant cognitive disabilities are provided access to the state academic content standards and given the opportunity to demonstrate achievement of the knowledge, concepts, and skills inherent in the standards.

(f) **Required courses** - specific courses identified as “r” in Rule 160-4-2-.20 List of State-Funded K-8 Subjects and 9-12 Courses that each student in a program of study shall pass to graduate from high school.

(g) **Secondary School Credential** - a document awarded to students at the completion of the high school experience. See Types of Credentials at Section III below.

(h) **Significant Cognitive Disabilities** - to students with significant intellectual disabilities or intellectual disabilities concurrent with motor, sensory or emotional/behavioral disabilities who require substantial adaptations and support to access the general curriculum and require additional instruction focused on relevant life skills and participate in the Georgia Alternate Assessment (GAA).

(i) **Unit of Credit** – one unit of credit awarded for completing two consecutive semester courses or one year-long course with a passing grade AND completing the corresponding EOC (if applicable); ½ credits awarded by a single semester

(j) **Unit of Credit, Credit Recovery** – one unit of credit awarded for completing a Credit Recovery course with a passing grade; ½ unit of credit awarded for only completing an A or B section of a Credit Recovery course.

III. TYPES OF CREDENTIALS

(a) **High School Diploma (a/k/a Regular Education Diploma)**- the document awarded to students certifying that they have satisfied attendance requirements, unit requirements and the state assessment requirements as referenced in Rule 160-3-1-.07 Testing Programs - Student Assessment. Types of **High School Diplomas Seals** at PCA/SCCA:

i. **Dual Enrollment Seal** – *Completed all regular graduation requirements AND completed at least 4 Dual Enrollment credits.*

ii. **CTAE Pathway Seal** - *Completed all regular graduation requirements AND meets requirements for CTAE Pathway Completer*

**Students may earn both seals.*

(b) **High School Certificate (a/k/a Certificate of Attendance)**- the document awarded to pupils who do not complete all of the criteria for a high school diploma or who have not passed the state assessment requirements as referenced in Rule 160-3-1-.07 Testing Programs – Student Assessment, but who have earned 23 units.

(c) **ACES Diploma** – the document awarded to students with the most significant cognitive disabilities who were assessed using the alternate assessment aligned to alternate academic achievement standards.

IV. GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS.

- (a) **Units of Credit and Course Requirements for Graduation.** A student shall become eligible for graduation upon meeting the minimum units of credits required for their diploma type.
- i. **High School Diploma-** A student shall become eligible for graduation upon meeting the State Board of Education minimum of 23 completed units of credit as detailed in the following chart.

Areas of Study	Units of Credit
English Language Arts One English class in each year of high school, including American Literature/Composition and Ninth-Grade Literature and Composition, and 2 additional units of ELA	4
Mathematics Algebra Concepts and Connections, Geometry Concepts and Connections, Advanced Algebra Concepts and Connections, and a 4th Math Unit	4
Science Biology, Physical Science or Physics, Environmental Science or Chemistry, and a 4th Science Unit	4
Social Studies World History, United States History, United States Government, Civics (1 semester), and Economics (1 semester)	3
Career, Technical and Agricultural Education, Fine Arts, Modern Language Students must earn 3 credits, in any combination, from these three curriculum areas.	3
Health and Physical Education ½ credit for Health and ½ credit for PE. Each course is one semester in length	1
Electives Electives can be taken in any curriculum area.	4
Total Credits Required to Graduate	23

*Students planning to attend a 4-year college or university immediately after high school must earn a minimum of 2 credits in a modern language.

Students with Significant Cognitive Disabilities who entered the ninth grade for the first time **prior to the 2020-2021** school year may graduate and receive a **regular high school diploma** when the student's IEP team determines that the student has:

- i. completed an integrated curriculum based on the Georgia Performance Standards (GPS) that includes instruction in Mathematics, English/Language Arts, Science and Social Studies as well as career preparation, self-determination, independent living and personal care to equal a minimum of 23 units of instruction, **and**
- ii. participated in the GAA during middle school and high school, **and**
- iii. reached the 22nd birthday **OR** has transitioned to an employment/education/training setting in which the supports needed are provided by an entity other than the local school system.

- ii. **ACES Diploma** - Students with Significant Cognitive Disabilities who entered the

ninth grade for the first time **on or after the 2020-2021** school year may graduate and receive an **ACES Diploma** when the student's IEP team determines that the student has:

- i. completed an integrated curriculum based on the GPS that includes instruction in Mathematics, English/Language Arts, Science and Social Studies as well as career preparation, self-determination, independent living and personal care to equal a minimum of 23 units of instruction, **and**
- ii. participated in the GAA during middle school and high school, **and**
- iii. reached the 22nd birthday **OR** has transitioned to an employment/education/training setting in which the supports needed are provided by an entity other than the local school system.

(b) Course Credit.

- i. Courses that shall earn unit credit are listed in Rule 160-4-2-.20 List of State-Funded K-8 Subjects and 9-12 Courses for Students Entering Ninth Grade in 2008 and Subsequent Years.
- ii. Unit credit shall be awarded only for courses that include concepts and skills based on the GPS or Common Core Georgia Performance Standards (CCGPS) for grades 9-12 or those approved by the State Board of Education. Unit credit may be awarded for courses offered in the middle grades that meet 9-12 GPS or CCGPS requirements. The IEP, if applicable, shall specify whether core courses taken as part of an IEP shall receive core unit credit.
- iii. No course credit may be awarded for courses in which instruction is based on the GPS for grades K-8.
- iv. Credits earned at another accredited school will automatically transfer to our schools. For information on awarding credits from a home school or a non-accredited school, see the *Pataula Charter Academy Inc. Policy for Grade Placement and Acceptance of Transfer Credit/Grades from Home Study or Non-Accredited Programs of Study*.

V. AREAS OF STUDY

- (a) **English Language Arts:** Four units of credit in English language arts shall be required of all students. A full unit of credit in American Literature and Composition and a full unit of credit in Ninth-Grade Literature and Composition, and two additional units shall be required.
- (b) **Mathematics:** Four units of core credit in mathematics shall be required of all students, including Mathematics I or GPS Algebra, or its equivalent; AND Mathematics II or GPS Geometry, or its equivalent; AND Mathematics III or GPS Advanced Algebra or its equivalent; AND one additional math course.
 - i. The mathematics requirements above apply to each student with a disability, consistent with his or her IEP. Students with disabilities who earn credit in

Mathematics I or GPS Algebra and the associated mathematics support course, and Mathematics II or GPS Geometry and the associated mathematics support course, may upon determination through the IEP Team meet mathematics diploma requirements by completing Mathematics III or GPS Advanced Algebra for a total of 3 mathematics core credits. Successful completion of 3 core units of mathematics may not meet the mathematics admission requirements for entrance into a University System of Georgia institution or other post-secondary institution without additional coursework.

- (c) **Science:** Four units of credit in science shall be required of all students, including one full unit of Biology; one unit of either Physical Science or Physics; one unit of either Chemistry, Earth Systems, Environmental Science or an AP/IB course; and one additional science unit.
- (d) **Social Sciences:** Three units of credit shall be required in social studies. One unit of credit shall be required in United States History. One unit of credit shall be required in World History. One-half unit of American Government/Civics shall be required. One-half unit of Economics shall be required.
- (e) **CTAE/Modern Language/Latin/Fine Arts:** A total of three units of credit shall be required from the following areas: CTAE and/or Modern Language/Latin and/or Fine Arts. Students are encouraged to select courses in a focused area of interest.
 - i. **Career, Technical and Agricultural Education (CTAE) Pathways:** Students may earn three units of credit in a coherent sequence of CTAE courses through a self-selected pathway leading to college readiness and a career readiness certificate endorsed by related industries.
 - ii. **Modern Language/Latin:** All students are encouraged to earn two units of credit in the same modern language/Latin. Students planning to enter or transfer into a University System of Georgia institution or other post-secondary institution must take two units of the same modern language/Latin. Technical College System of Georgia institutions do not require modern language/Latin for admissions.
 - 1. Students whose native language is not English may be considered to have met the foreign language expectation by exercising the credit in lieu of enrollment option if they are proficient in their native language. A formal examination is not necessary if other evidence of proficiency is available.
 - 2. American Sign Language may be taken to fulfill the modern language requirements.
 - iii. **Fine Arts:** Electives may be selected from courses in fine arts, if offered.

- (f) **Health and Physical Education:** One unit of credit in health and physical education is required. Students shall combine one-half units of credit of Health (17.011), Health and Personal Fitness (36.051), or Advanced Personal Fitness (36.061) to satisfy this requirement.

VI. GRADUATION EXERCISES

- (a) Only students who have met all graduation requirements will be allowed to participate in the graduation ceremony and other graduation-related events. Summer graduates may participate in the following year's ceremony if they so choose.
- (b) Students who are assigned to Alternative School may not participate in graduation ceremonies or events.

VII. RESPONSIBILITY FOR ADMINISTERING GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

It is the responsibility of the School Counselor and/or the Principal to ensure that students have been given information on graduation requirements; making every attempt to ensure students are on track to graduate in 4 years, have the courses they need to be eligible for college admission and HOPE scholarship if the student expresses interest in college, AND making every attempt to ensure all students complete a Pathway.

It is also the responsibility of the School Counselor AND the Principal to ensure that students have met all graduation requirements prior to graduation ceremonies and graduation reports are sent to the state.