



## **GRADUATION POLICY**

This Graduation Policy was reviewed and approved by the Contra Costa School of Performing Arts (“Charter School” or “SPA”) Board of Directors as follows:

### **Course Requirements**

SPA students are expected to meet the requirements set forth in the Charter. The current Charter requires a minimum of 250 credits, with the option to complete additional courses. SPA’s course requirements align with the A-G requirements that set forth the minimum standards for admission to California State University and University of California Colleges. Students earn credits as they move through the curriculum and pass their coursework. Any courses for which a student does not receive credit must be made up through approved summer school or online coursework. Failure to make up these courses could prevent a student from graduating. The general standard for high school graduation from SPA is completion of A-G required courses and completion of the course requirements of one of our art pathways.

To determine whether students transferring into SPA have met course requirements, SPA’s Executive Director will establish procedures to evaluate the comparability of course and/or students’ understanding of course content. Such procedures shall include methods for determining the number of years of school attendance, the specific courses completed by the student and the value of credits earned. SPA shall accept for credit full or partial coursework satisfactorily completed by students while attending a public district or charter school, juvenile court school, WASC accredited private school or nonpublic nonsectarian school or agency.

Because the prescribed course of study may not accommodate the needs of some students, SPA will provide alternative means for the completion of prescribed courses as needed in accordance with State and Federal law and this Policy.

### **Differentiated Diploma**

While SPA encourages completion of SPA requirements for all students, SPA recognizes that some students may need an alternative option to reach graduation and receive a high school diploma.

In consultation with the Student’s guidance counselor, Student Success Team (“SST”), Section 504 team, or Individualized Education Plan (“IEP”) team, SPA may offer a Student the option to graduate following completion of California Minimum Graduation Standards as follows:

- Three years of English
- Two years of mathematics (including Algebra I)
- Three years of social science (including U.S. history and geography; world history, culture, and geography; one semester of American government; and one semester of economics)
- Two years of science (including biology and physical science)
- Two years of physical education
- One year of foreign language or visual and performing arts or commencing with the 2012–13 school year, career technical education. For purpose of satisfying the minimum course requirement, a course in American Sign Language shall be deemed a course in foreign language

The guidance counselor or applicable team, Student, and Student’s Parent or Guardian will consider:

- The effect this option will have on college acceptance or other future plans;
- A comparison of graduation plans for completion of available options, including consideration of additional years in high school when applicable

A “California Minimum” diploma is a regular high school diploma. However, the coursework does not meet the minimum coursework required for admission to University of California and/or California State University schools.

### **Reduced Requirements for Foster and Highly Mobile Students**

SPA recognizes that certain students are at risk of not completing high school due to interruptions in education and high mobility. SPA shall provide eligible highly mobile youth with the option to complete reduced course requirements to earn a high school diploma.

Highly mobile youth includes a student in foster care, a student who is a homeless child or youth, a former juvenile court school student, a student who is a child of a military family, a student who is a migratory child, or a student participating in a newcomer program.

A highly mobile youth who transfers into SPA any time after the youth completed their second year of high school or is participating in a newcomer program, and is unable to complete SPA’s course requirements as defined above by the end of the Student’s fourth year of high school will have the option to be exempted from all requirements that exceed California’s minimum high school graduation requirements.

If a student is found eligible for an exemption to SPA’s graduation requirements, SPA will notify the student and the student’s parent/guardian/educational rights holder (“ERH”) if any of the requirements that are waived will affect the student’s ability to gain admission to a postsecondary

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educational institution and shall provide information about transfer opportunities available through the California Community Colleges.

An identified youth and/or their ERH have the ultimate right to decide if the youth will pursue a high school diploma pursuant to the California minimum requirements or continue for a fifth year of high school to complete SPA's course requirements. SPA will not require a student to graduate before the completion of their fourth year.

For additional information regarding graduation requirements for highly mobile youth, the Charter School's complete policy Education of Foster and Mobile Youth Policy is available upon request at the main office.

### **Differential Graduation and Competency for Students with Disabilities**

SPA recognizes that students with disabilities are entitled to a course of study that provides them with a free appropriate public education ("FAPE") and that modifications SPA's regular course of study may be needed on an individualized basis to provide FAPE. In accordance with law, each student's individualized education program ("IEP") team shall determine the appropriate goals, as well as any appropriate individual accommodations necessary for measuring the academic achievement and functional performance of the student on daily instruction and state and schoolwide assessments. The IEP team shall also consider the appropriate graduation track for each student with a disability based on the student's ability to complete the Charter School's prescribed course of study to earn a high school diploma or consider an option for a student to earn a certificate of completion.

SPA will also provide accommodations to meet course requirements as necessary based on individual need. Accommodations may include a change in test preparation, location, timing, scheduling, student response, or other attributes that provides access for a student to participate in a course, standard or test, that does not fundamentally alter or lower the standard or expectation of the course, standard or test. In these cases, the student will receive a grade based on their performance in the course, as would any other student.

In extraordinary cases, SPA may consider the need for a modification, which fundamentally alters or lowers the standard or expectation of a course, standard, test or grade. Where a modification prevents a student from demonstrating mastery of required state standards, the student will not receive credit for the course towards high school graduation.

No student shall be classified as eligible for differential standards of proficiency for the purpose of circumventing the legal requirement to maintain academic eligibility for extracurricular or co-curricular activities.

### **Certificate of Completion**

The Charter School Executive Director or designee shall award a certificate of completion instead of a high school diploma, if a student with exceptional needs has minimally met one (1) of the following requirements:

1. Satisfactorily completed a prescribed alternative course of study approved by the Charter School Governing Board which has jurisdiction over the student as identified in the IEP.
2. Satisfactorily met the student's IEP goals and objectives during high school as determined by the IEP team.
3. Satisfactorily attended high school, participated in the instruction as prescribed in the student's IEP, and met the objectives of the statement of transition services.

The Executive Director or designee shall ensure a student with disabilities who meets any of the criteria specified above shall be eligible to participate in any graduation ceremony and any Charter School activity related to graduation in which a graduating student of similar age without disabilities would be eligible to participate. In addition, the Executive Director or designee shall ensure that the student will continue to have access to special education related supports and services until the student meets the Charter School's criteria to receive a high school diploma or until age 22.

Whether a student receives a certificate of completion or a diploma is confidential. SPA does not inform other students whether their peers are receiving a certificate or a diploma, and all students will participate equally in graduation ceremonies and activities.

### **California High School Proficiency Exam**

The California High School Proficiency Examination ("CHSPE") is a test for students who need to verify their high school level skills. In some cases, students take the test and leave high school early to work or attend college. Those who pass the test receive a Certificate of Proficiency, which is equal by law to a California high school diploma, from the State Board of Education. However, the Certificate of Proficiency is not equivalent to completing all course work required for graduation from high school. If a student is planning to continue their studies in a college or university, they should contact the admissions office of the institution they plan to attend so that the student may understand that institution's admission requirements including whether or not the Certificate of Proficiency will be sufficient for admission.

People who are sixteen years of age or older; or who have completed one year of enrollment in grade ten; or who will have completed one year of enrollment in grade ten at the end of the semester during which the exam is administered may take the test. There is no upper age limit to take the test and current enrollment in high school is not required to take the exam. The CHSPE is given twice each year at many sites throughout the state. The test covers three subjects: language, reading, and mathematics. There is a fee to take the test, though the fee will be waived for homeless and foster youth who submit required paperwork.

SPA will distribute an announcement to each student in grades eleven and twelve explaining the CHSPE. This announcement will be distributed in time sufficient to enable interested students to meet all examination registration requirements for the fall test of that year.

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### **Honorary Diploma**

SPA may confer an honorary high school diploma upon a student who is terminally ill. The honorary high school diploma will be clearly distinguishable from the regular diploma of graduation awarded by SPA.

### **Withholding a Diploma**

In accordance with Education Code section 48904, if the student willfully cut, defaced, or otherwise injured the school property or willfully not returned upon demand of an employee any property loaned to the student and after affording the student their due process rights, a student's diploma may be withheld until such time as the student or the student's parent/guardian has paid for the damages. If the student or the student's parent/guardian are unable to pay for the damages or return the property, SPA shall provide a program of voluntary work for the student in lieu of the payment of monetary damages.

### **Graduation Ceremony**

SPA's graduation ceremony and related activities (e.g. grad night) are extracurricular educational activities, such that participation in these activities is not an absolute right.

To participate in the graduation ceremony, students must demonstrate one of the following:

1. Completion of the minimum credits as described above for either a SPA diploma or a California Minimum diploma.
2. Completion of sufficient credits to satisfy the minimum required credits by the end of summer session and have enrolled in the appropriate summer session classes.
3. Eligibility for a Certificate of Completion, consistent with this Policy.

Students who meet the above requirements may still not be eligible to participate in the graduation ceremony and related activities if the Student does not demonstrate a record of conduct and citizen consistent with SPA's Code of Conduct Character and Support. The Executive Director or designee will determine a student's ability to participate in graduation ceremonies and/or activities. Prior to denial of the privilege(s), the student, and where practicable their parent or guardian, shall be made aware of the grounds for such denial and shall be given an opportunity to respond to the proposed denial. If privilege(s) are to be denied, the student and parent/guardian shall receive written notice of the denied privilege and the means whereby the individual may appeal this decision. If a student has an IEP plan or 504 plan, any decisions regarding that student's participation in graduation ceremony/activities will be made by the IEP/504 team and will include the parent/guardian.

Any student participating in a graduation ceremony or activity shall comply with SPA policies pertaining to student conduct.

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The Executive Director or designee may require graduating students to wear ceremonial attire, such as cap and gown, at the ceremony. Any required attire will be provided to students free of charge for use during the ceremony. Students are permitted to wear tribal regalia or recognized objects of religious or cultural significance as an adornment at the graduation ceremony, in addition to but not instead of the required cap and gown. Any accessory, object or adornment that is likely to cause a substantial disruption of, or interference with, the graduation ceremony will not be permitted. Any graduating student who has completed basic training and is an active member of any branch of the United States Armed Forces may, at their option, wear their military dress uniform at the ceremony.