

Policy

OPTION TWO

Vision

The New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards establish a core body of knowledge and skills that all students need in order to become healthy, productive, well-informed employable citizens of an ever expanding and changing world. The Department of Education acknowledges, however, that all students will not achieve the standards in the same way, at the same pace, or with the same level of success. In order to maximize student achievement, the department encourages local school districts to permit alternative learning experiences that are stimulating and intellectually challenging, and that enable students to fulfill or exceed the expectations set forth in the Core Curriculum Content Standards. Option Two (N.J.A.C. 6A:8-5.1(a)1ii) of the high school graduation requirements allows local school districts to design and/or approve educational experiences that serve as an alternative to traditional instruction and provide meaningful learning experiences that support student achievement of the Core Curriculum Content Standards. Option Two allows schools to provide a superior education for all students through the use of multiple and diverse paths.

Purpose

The purpose of Option Two is to provide educational experiences that are meaningful and relevant, and that provide students with opportunities to explore and achieve at high levels. Option Two allows local school districts to design and implement curricular programs that meet the needs of all students. The regulations support student participation in deep and meaningful learning experiences that advance student learning and focus on student interest and abilities. Option Two allows students to obtain credit for learning experiences outside of the traditional classroom environment. Some of these experiences may provide real-world connections not available in the school setting. Other learning experiences may go beyond what the traditional high school can provide, allowing students to participate in research, international study, or college-level work.

Background

N.J.A.C. 6A:8-5.1 directs district boards of education to develop, adopt, and implement requirements for a State-endorsed diploma. Traditionally, this has consisted of a series of "credits" in required content areas, with the State dictating a minimal number of credits needed for graduation from high school. Credits are based on traditional seat time. Local school districts are permitted to establish additional course or credit requirements or different schedules. Block scheduling and our district's 3+1 and 2+2 programs are examples of this. Our district's requirements are outlined elsewhere in this policy.

As part of the department's commitment to standards-based reform, the State Board of Education adopted regulations in 2001 that more clearly connected the high school graduation requirements to the Core Curriculum Content Standards. The new regulations clarified an existing alternative practice, then in N.J.A.C. 6:3-4A.1(c)ii. Subsequently, the department received numerous inquiries about the use of Option Two and its impact on student graduation, promotion, and achievement. Informal feedback indicated that many local school districts did not understand how Option Two might be used and, as a result, did not use it. In January 2004, the State Board adopted revised high school graduation regulations that provided clarification about how Option Two might be used in local school districts. All students involved in Option Two programs must also pass all sections of the High School Proficiency Assessment (HSPA).

Bordentown Regional has developed such programs through its Freshman Experience class and affiliation with Burlington County College and the 3+1 and 2+2 programs. The Bordentown Regional School District Board of Education supports alternative methods for students to achieve graduation requirements. In relation to Option Two, the board directs the superintendent to develop procedures that address how participating students will be able to achieve the Core Curriculum Content Standards and how students apply for

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participation in Option Two programs.

The board of education directs the superintendent of schools to develop procedures for Option Two that:

- A. Ensure that programs and related assessments are based on specific instructional objectives aimed at meeting or exceeding the Core Curriculum Content Standards;
- B. Require that group programs such as Freshman Experience, shall be approved by the board in the same manner as with other courses while individual requests shall be filed in the local district and are subject to review by the Commissioner or his staff (N.J.A.C. 6A:8-5.1(a)1ii(1-3));
- C. Ensure equitable access to such programs while weighing the overall benefits and costs to the student(s) and the district as a whole.
- D. Clearly address issues such as student safety, transportation, tuition, and fees. The safety of students involved in Option Two programs is of critical importance. The procedures must ensure that approved programs comply with applicable laws and regulations (e.g., child labor laws, occupational safety);
- E. Develop a thorough application process for Option Two credit that includes specific information concerning cost, criminal background checks, assessment reporting to the district, qualifications of personnel teaching an Option Two program, course of study, length of course, student requirements for the course, consequences of students not completing their approved programs and other relevant information indicating that the Option Two program(s) meet or exceed Core Curriculum Standards.

The Superintendent

The superintendent will ensure that the district board of education has full understanding of the proposed use of Option Two. It is important for the success of the program that the superintendent delegate responsibility for the program to the high school principal. The superintendent shall also allow district curriculum specialists to support the principal in the review of Option Two requests as well as with the selection and implementation of proficiency or competency assessments.

The Principal

The principal has primary responsibility for the implementation of the Option Two program and will oversee all aspects of the program. This will be accomplished through the implementation of a building-level Option Two Review Committee, comprised of the principal, other administrators, teachers, and other staff members. This committee assists the principal in collecting and reviewing pertinent information about the proposed Option Two program and recommends to the principal the approval or disapproval of the alternative activity. The committee may also suggest possible Option Two opportunities and should be involved in the identification and/or development of appropriate assessments. In order to certify completion of the curricular programs and activities based upon develop mechanisms to document student progress and program completion on student records. The principal is ultimately responsible for certifying that the student has successfully completed the program.

Content Area Supervisors

Content area supervisors shall assist with communication, documentation, and assessment and provide regular feedback to the principal to ensure that students in alternative programs will be able to meet or exceed the core standards. Supervisors will also assist with the selection of teachers and mentors for Option Two activities.

School Counselors

School counselors shall be involved in developing and maintaining a documentation process. Impact on grade point average, and honors status will be included in the application packet and explained to students.

OPTION TWO (continued)District Teaching Staff Members

District teaching staff members are an important part of the Option Two program. It is imperative that teachers employed by the district board of education follow accepted policies and procedures for course proposals, approvals, and documentation. Teacher commitment, participation, and engagement in the process will contribute to successful learning experiences for the students.

Instructors not Employed by the District

Instructors not employed by the district must be consulted regarding how the program design aligns with the Core Curriculum Content Standards and if it is of sufficient rigor to ensure student achievement. Principals must ensure that the qualifications and experience of the instructor match the outcome of the Option Two program. Instructors in Option Two programs must also provide evidence that the program is safe and in compliance with child safety and/or labor laws. Instructors must participate in ongoing communication and reporting, generally with the building principal or designee, to ascertain student progress and course completion.

Parents/Guardians

Parents/guardians may initiate a request for Option Two status for an existing school-sponsored course or activity. They may also request that an external program, taught by an individual who is not employed by the district board of education, be used to fulfill state and local requirements. The high school principal, based on local district procedures and application, determines whether this request results in an approved Option Two program. The parent/guardian must comply with any requests for information about external programs, in order to ensure that the student participates in activities that are safe, rigorous, and aligned with the standards and local curriculum. The principal is responsible for verifying that the activities are appropriate. In addition, when a student participates in an external program, his/her parents/guardians will be responsible for paying for the course or activity and providing transportation, specialized equipment, or materials. Regular communication between the instructor, the school, and the parent/guardian is essential to program success.

Students

Students who participate in Option Two programs have some additional responsibilities regarding what they are learning in the program. They must keep accurate records of attendance and assignments and provide them, upon request, to school staff. In addition, students must participate in the High School Proficiency Assessment (HSPA) and may be required to participate in local assessment programs. Students will be called upon to provide school officials with an evaluation of their Option Two experiences.

Adopted: Adopted September 15, 2004
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 Readopt:

Key Words

High School Graduation, Option II, College Courses

Legal References: <u>N.J.S.A.</u> 18A:4-25	Prescribing minimum courses of study for public schools; approval of courses of study
<u>N.J.S.A.</u> 18A:7C-1	Commissioner of education to develop a program of standards and guidelines
<u>N.J.S.A.</u> 18A:7C-2	Boards of education; establishment of standards
<u>N.J.S.A.</u> 18A:7C-4.1	Operation Recognition; purpose; eligibility; application procedure
<u>N.J.S.A.</u> 18A:7C-5.1	Boards of education prohibited from excluding students from graduation ceremony or from obtaining yearbook for inability to pay fees

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<u>N.J.S.A.</u> 18A:7F-46	Review and update of curriculum content standards, Educational Adequacy Report
<u>N.J.S.A.</u> 18A:33-1	District to furnish suitable facilities; adoption of courses of study
<u>N.J.S.A.</u> 18A:35-1 <u>et seq.</u>	Curriculum and courses
<u>N.J.S.A.</u> 18A:36-17	Credit of seniors in active military and naval service, etc.
<u>N.J.A.C.</u> 6:30-3.7	Graduation
<u>N.J.A.C.</u> 6A:8-1.1 <u>et seq.</u>	Standards and Assessment
<u>See particularly:</u>	
<u>N.J.A.C.</u> 6A:8-1.2,-2.1,-3.1,-3.3,-4.1,-4.2,-4.3,-5.1,-5.2	
<u>N.J.A.C.</u> 6A:14-3.7	Individualized education program
<u>N.J.A.C.</u> 6A:14-4.11	Graduation
<u>N.J.A.C.</u> 6A:15-1.11	Graduation requirements for limited English proficient Students
<u>N.J.A.C.</u> 6A:23A-9.5	Commissioner to ensure achievement of the Core Curriculum Content Standards
<u>N.J.A.C.</u> 6A:32-2.1	Definitions
<u>N.J.A.C.</u> 6A:32-12.1 <u>et seq.</u>	Annual Reporting and Planning Requirement
<u>N.J.A.C.</u> 6A:32-13.1 <u>et seq.</u>	Student Behavior
<u>N.J.A.C.</u> 6A:32-14.1 <u>et seq.</u>	State and Federally Mandated Programs and Services

The Department of Education Website, <http://www.nj.gov/njded/assessment/>
(Lists the state assessment components)

No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, Pub. L. 107-110, 20 U.S.C.A. 6301 et seq.

Possible

<u>Cross References:</u>	*1120	Board of trustee meetings
	*5113	Absences and excuses
	*5120	Assessment of individual needs
	*5127	Commencement activities
	6000	Concepts and roles in instruction
	*6010	Goals and objectives
	*6122	Articulation
	*6140	Curriculum adoption
	6141.4	Independent study
	*6142	Subject fields
	*6142.2	English as a second language; bilingual/bicultural
	*6142.6	Basic skills
	*6145	Extracurricular activities
	*6146	Graduation requirements
	*6147	Standards of proficiency
	*6154	Homework/makeup work
	*6171.4	Special education
	*6200	Adult/community education

*Indicates policy is included in the Critical Policy Reference Manual.