

GRADUATION CEREMONIES AND ACTIVITIES

High school graduation ceremonies shall be held to recognize those students who have earned a diploma by successfully completing the required course of study, satisfying district standards, and passing any required assessments. The Board of Education believes that these students deserve the privilege of a public celebration that recognizes the significance of their achievement and encourages them to continue the pursuit of learning throughout their lives.

(cf. 6011 - Academic Standards)

(cf. 6143 - Courses of Study)

(cf. 6146.1 - High School Graduation Requirements)

(cf. 6146.4 - Differential Graduation and Competency Standards for Students with Disabilities)

Invocations, prayers, or benedictions shall not be included in graduation ceremonies. The school or district shall not sponsor other ceremonies or programs for graduates that include prayer.

(cf. 1330 - Use of School Facilities)

(cf. 5145.2 - Freedom of Speech/Expression)

Honors and Awards

To honor superior academic achievement, graduation ceremonies shall include recognition of valedictorian(s) and salutatorian(s). Valedictorian(s) and salutatorian(s) shall be selected based on established criteria and procedures that use multiple measures of academic performance.

(cf. 5121 - Grades/Evaluation of Student Achievement)

Conduct at Graduation Ceremonies

Any student participating in a graduation ceremony shall comply with district policies and regulations pertaining to student conduct.

(cf. 5131 - Conduct)

The Superintendent or designee may require graduating students to wear ceremonial attire, such as cap and gown, at the ceremony.

Disciplinary Considerations

In order to encourage high standards of student conduct and behavior, the principal may deny a student the privilege of participating in graduation ceremonies and/or activities in accordance with school rules. Prior to denial of the privilege, the student, and where practicable his/her parent/guardian, shall be made aware of the grounds for such denial and shall be given an opportunity to respond. If a privilege is to be denied, the student and parent/guardian shall receive written notice of the denied privilege and the means whereby he/she may appeal the decision.

GRADUATION CEREMONIES AND ACTIVITIES (continued)*(cf. 5125.2 - Withholding Grades, Diploma or Transcripts)**(cf. 5144 - Discipline)**(cf. 6161.2 - Damaged or Lost Instructional Materials)***Clear and Consistent Expectations:****Student Participation in Commencement and other Senior Activities**

As a representative of the Board, the principal shall designate those individuals who may participate in commencement exercises, approve the contents of the program, and make all related decisions. Student participation is not required, but every eligible graduate who wishes to participate must adhere to the principal and school commencement exercises rules if participating is to be approved. Any student who agrees to be a participant and then fails to follow the principal's direction is subject to disciplinary action.

In the interest of ensuring system-wide equity for all SDUSD students, we believe that it is important for sites across the system to have clear and consistent expectations for student conduct and behavior as they relate to participation in commencement and other senior activities such as Prom and Senior Breakfast.

The following specific achievements are required for participation in commencement activities:

1. To earn a diploma the student shall:
 - a. Attain a cumulative grade point average (WGPA) of 2.0 or higher in grades 9-12
 - b. Earn a minimum of 44 semester credits
 - c. Meet District adopted UC "a-g" graduation requirements
2. To walk in the graduation ceremony the student shall:
 - a. Meet the expectations for a diploma or a Letter of Recognition
 - b. Clear semester I and II attendance (absences and tardies) three weeks before school is dismissed
 - c. Maintain an overall citizenship GPA of 2.0 or higher (right to be cleared to walk by site appeal Board)
 - d. Receive no suspensions in the second semester (right to be cleared to walk by site appeal Board)

GRADUATION CEREMONIES AND ACTIVITIES (continued)

- e. Receive no five-day suspensions during the school year
 - f. Have no involvement in senior pranks
3. To attend prom and other senior activities the student shall:
- a. Meet the expectations for a diploma or a Letter of Recognition
 - b. Clear semester I and II attendance (absences and tardies) three weeks before school is dismissed
 - c. Have no attendance issues the last three weeks of school
 - d. Maintain an overall citizenship GPA of 2.0 or higher (right to be cleared to walk by site appeal board)
 - e. Receive no suspensions in the second semester (right to be cleared to walk by site appeal board)
 - f. Receive no five-day suspensions during the school year
 - g. Have no involvement in senior pranks

In order to be fair to students and families, District graduation requirements, as well as site-specific requirements, must be clearly and consistently articulated to all students and parents, with sufficient opportunity for remediation, when possible. Unfortunately, meeting some of these requirements may not be known until shortly before the senior activities take place. It is the responsibility of the site administrators, therefore, to keep parents informed as soon as possible so that family disappointments are avoidable whenever possible. To ensure that expectations for students are clear and consistent, the following timeline of guidelines is encouraged:

1. Principals or vice principals should discuss expectations/requirements directly with all seniors in a general meeting in September.
2. Principals or vice principals should discuss expectations/requirements directly with all parents/guardians of seniors in a general meeting in September/Open House.
3. A letter should be sent home with seniors for parent/guardian's signature (with accompanying autodialer phone message and email to parents.)
4. Signed letters (by parents) should be collected and placed in a binder in site office. Site administrators should communicate with parents for letters not returned.

GRADUATION CEREMONIES AND ACTIVITIES (continued)

5. Periodic follow-up autodialer phone messages and emails should be sent to parents (with letter attached), including reminders for Saturday School dates. (The current autodialer system logs all calls and emails so that site administrators can see who has received the information and "follow up" with parents not contacted.) Site should document "follow-up" communication with log of dates and persons contacted.
6. Direct communication (evening or "work number" phone calls) should be initiated with parents of students who are at risk of "running out" of Saturday School dates to clear absences. Site should document "follow-up" communication with log of dates and persons contacted.

High expectations for appropriate student conduct are not only fair, but also reasonable, if we are to prepare students to be responsible good citizens who understand that there are consequences for thoughtless and inappropriate behavior. It is also only fair that students and their families be given every opportunity to meet these expectations by making the requirements clear and consistent from the beginning of the school year until the end.

*Legal Reference:*EDUCATION CODE

35183.3 Graduation ceremonies; military dress uniforms

38119 Lease of personal property; caps and gowns

48904 Liability of parent or guardian; withholding of grades, diplomas, transcripts

51225.5 Honorary diplomas; foreign exchange students

51410-51412 Diplomas

COURT DECISIONS*Cole v. Oroville Union High School District*, (2000, 9th Cir.) 228 F.3d 1092*Santa Fe Independent School District v. Doe*, (2000) 530 U.S. 290*Lee v. Weisman*, (1992) 505 U.S. 577*Sands v. Morongo Unified School District*, (1991) 53 Cal. 3d 863*Lemon v. Kurtzman*, (1971) 403 U.S. 602*Management Resources:*WEB SITESCalifornia Department of Education, High School: <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/g/hs/>

Policy
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SAN DIEGO UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT
San Diego, California