

Class of 2020 Vermont Seniors: Considerations due to COVID-19 Closure

Purpose

Secretary French will issue formal guidance on or before Friday, May 8, 2020 on end of school year gatherings and graduations as per Governor Scott's March 26, 2020, [Directive Number 5](#). As supervisory unions and districts (SUs/SDs) work to support the graduating class of 2020 during school closure, the Vermont Agency of Education (AOE) offers the following guiding considerations to support local decision-makers as they prepare for graduation. This initial guidance will be followed by additional communications and resources in the coming days and weeks. As always, your feedback and questions will help the AOE craft the guidance and support that will be most helpful to your school community.

Overview

High school graduation is an important milestone in the lives of our Vermont youth. In this period of school closure, SUs/SDs should focus on ensuring that their current seniors achieve this important milestone. Graduation requirements across Vermont are locally determined by LEAs, and school districts have the flexibility to determine critical proficiencies and adjust their local graduation requirements. To assist SUs/SDs in meeting Governor Scott's Directive Number 5, the AOE is launching statewide education supports through partnerships with [PBS](#) and [VTVLC](#) to provide additional avenues to reach all students, including our most vulnerable learners. These statewide resources may be ideal in meeting the needs of our students working to graduate this spring, career and college ready.

What should SUs/SDs consider when implementing local graduation requirements for the class of 2020?

- Consider the flexibility in your local policy for graduation regarding the meeting of the curriculum content outlined in EQS 2120.5.
 - Ask your local school board to consider adding flexibility to locally-determined graduation requirements in light of the unanticipated situation created by COVID-19
- Of the current local graduation requirements that students must meet to demonstrate readiness to graduate, identify the most critical proficiencies that demonstrate a student's ability to succeed in college or a career.
- Ensure that any and all graduation requirements are accessible for all students.

Contact Information:

If you have questions about this document or would like additional information please contact: John Nelson at john.nelson@vermont.gov for questions related to CTE or Ryan Parkman at ryan.parkman@vermont.gov for questions related to K-12.

- Consider alternative learning opportunities that your district can use to ensure students complete the needed coursework and experiences to graduate college and career ready.
- Consider alternative strategies for students to demonstrate meeting critical proficiencies in the current remote learning environment. For instance:
 - If a school currently has a Portrait of a Graduate, how could a student be compared against those criteria in determining eligibility for graduation?
 - Can alternative assessment opportunities, such as demonstration of knowledge through capstone type projects that are shared electronically or through other media, be leveraged as a means of students meeting proficiencies?
 - Can students demonstrate transferable skills through student adaptations in response to COVID-19, such as new abilities acquired/demonstrated in an online/blended learning environment?
 - Can the school pro-rate community service requirements or projected work-based learning hours, or count previous volunteering, work and job experiences for meeting course/content proficiencies?
 - Have you considered the possibility of offering “pass” or “fail” as a final grade?
 - Can you allow for additional time to complete requirements for students to be counted as an on-time graduate?
 - How will you support students on IEPs or with Transition Plans to meet graduating requirements?
 - Have you researched summer recovery options and considered summer programming development for those seniors not successful at meeting graduation requirements?

In addition to working through these considerations with school and school district leaders, the Vermont AOE will continue to work with higher education institutions and businesses to identify flexible options so that students are able to successfully pursue pathways into higher education and work. The Vermont Student Assistance Corporation has a number of [virtual events](#) to help ensure that students are prepared to attend college in the upcoming school year.

What should LEAs consider when planning now for graduation ceremonies for the class of 2020?

We recommend that schools complete a graduation policy checklist to position their students for success.

Graduation Policy Checklist

- Identify which seniors have already met graduation requirements, those that are on-track, and those that are at-risk.
- Determine what challenges students may have in meeting existing graduation requirements in your district or school as a result of the suspension of in-person instruction.

- ❑ Discuss with your leadership team what flexibilities exist in your current policies that may help in addressing these challenges.
- ❑ Determine if there is a need to adjust existing policies or add policies to provide flexibility.
- ❑ Work with your local school board to update policies for 2020 graduates based on needs identified.

Resources

[VT Education Quality Standards](#)

[Governor Scott's Directive 5](#)

[Continuation of Learning; School Calendars; Attendance](#)