

Diploma Pathways - Next Step Plan and Improving Graduation Rates for SWD

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GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS THROUGH COHORT 2028

24 units

COURSE WORK

ENGLISH 4 UNITS

ELA 1
ELA 2
ELA 3
ELA 4

*ELD courses satisfy
requirement*

MATH 4 UNITS

Algebra 1
Geometry
Algebra 2
4th Math

*One credit must be
at the level of
Algebra 2 or higher*

SCIENCE 3 UNITS

Lab Science
Lab Science
Science

SOCIAL STUDIES 3.5 UNITS

NM History
US History
World History
Government/Economics
0.5 credit in NM History

PHYSICAL EDUCATION 1 UNIT

HEALTH 0.5 UNIT

CAREER CLUSTER, WORKPLACE READINESS, OR LANGUAGE OTHER THAN ENGLISH 1 UNIT

ELECTIVES 7 UNITS

One unit must be honors, dual credit, distance learning, or AP.

Middle School Credit Through Cohort 2028

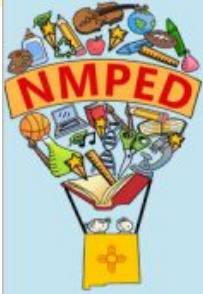
Students can earn credit in the following courses, prior to enrolling in high school:

- Health*
- Algebra 1*

*Teacher of record must hold a secondary endorsement in the subject area.

Legislation

- During the 2025 legislative session, Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham signed [House Bill 171, School Graduation Requirements](#), updating high school graduation requirements for the first time in over a decade, with changes becoming effective for students entering ninth grade in the 2025-2026 school year.
- The new requirements include the successful completion of a minimum of 24 units aligned to the state academic content and performance standards.



GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS BEGINNING WITH COHORT 2029

24 units

COURSE WORK

ENGLISH 4 UNITS

ELA 1
ELA 2
ELA 3
4th English
*ELD Courses satisfy
requirement. CTE or
WBL can meet this
requirement*

MATH 4 UNITS

Algebra 1
Geometry
3rd Math
4th Math
*CTE or WBL can
meet this
requirement*

SCIENCE 3 UNITS

Lab Science
Lab Science
Science
*CTE or WBL can meet
this requirement*

SOCIAL STUDIES 4 UNITS

US History w/ NM History
World History
Government/Economics
4th Social Studies
*NM History can be offered as a
stand alone course*

PHYSICAL EDUCATION 1 UNIT

HEALTH 0.5 UNIT

**ELECTIVES
5.5 UNITS**
*Must include a 2-unit
pathway concentration of
the student's choice*

**LOCAL
REQUIREMENT
2 UNITS**
*Two units set by each local
school board or governing
body that meet department
academic content and
performance standards*

Algebra 2, Financial Literacy, and Computer Science shall be offered.

A student shall still have the opportunity to take Dual Credit, Honors, AP, and IB courses.

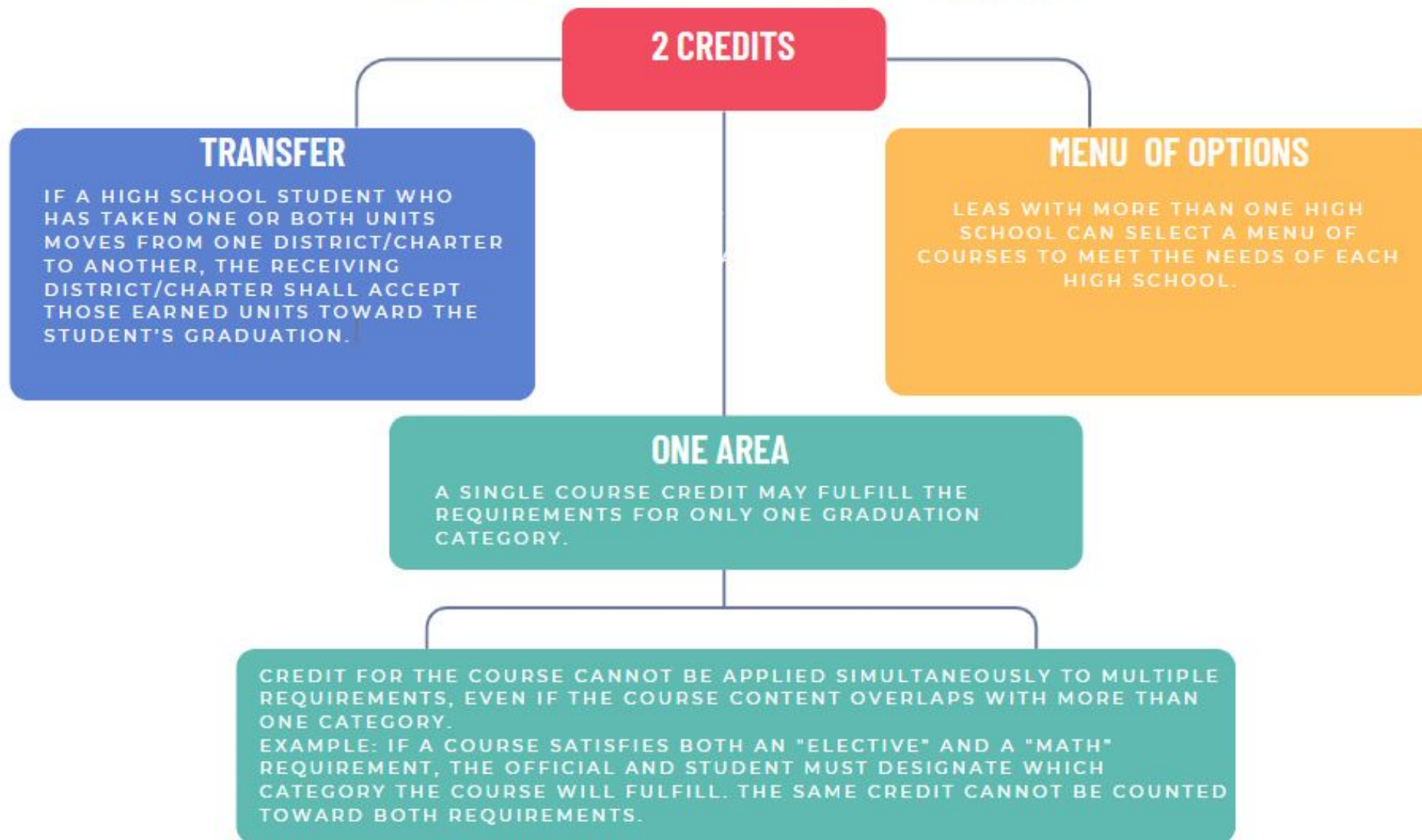
Elective Requirements

5.5 Electives -Including a two-unit pathway concentration of the student's choice.

- Language other than English (including American Sign Language)
- Fine arts
- Health
- Military career preparation
- Student service learning
- Career technical education (CTE)
- Community or service learning
- Capstone course
- Work-based learning (WBL)

LOCAL REQUIREMENT

2 CREDITS SET BY EACH LOCAL SCHOOL BOARD OR GOVERNING BODY THAT MEET DEPARTMENT
ACADEMIC CONTENT AND PERFORMANCE STANDARDS



Middle School Credit Cohort 2029 and Beyond

Students can earn credit in the following courses, prior to enrolling in high school:

- **Health***
- **Algebra 1***
- **Geometry***

***Teacher of record must hold a secondary endorsement in the subject area.**

Two Sets of Graduation Requirements

Through Cohort 2028

24 units

- English - 4 units
- Math - 4 units
- Science - 3 units (2 labs)
- Social Studies - 3.5 units
- Physical Ed - 1 unit
- Health - 0.5 unit
- Electives - 7 units
- Career Cluster, Workplace Readiness, Language other than English - 1 unit

One credit must be honors, dual credit, distance learning, or Advanced Placement.

Cohort 2029 and beyond

24 units

- English - 4 units
- Math - 4 units
- Science - 3 units(2 labs)
- Social Studies - 4 units
- Physical Ed - 1 unit
- Health - 0.5 unit
- Electives - 5.5 units
 - 2-unit pathway concentration
- Local Requirement - 2 units
 - Set by each local school board or governing body.

A student shall still have the opportunity to take: Algebra 2, Financial Literacy, Computer Science, Dual Credit, Honors, AP, IB Courses.

Course Waivers

Any deviation from the prescribed graduation requirements must be approved by the NMPED, via a coursework waiver.

Graduation coursework waivers can be obtained via the [Waivers for New Mexico Public Education | NMPED](#) page. Submit completed waivers to: waivers.PED@ped.nm.gov

Waivers

[Home](#) > [Waivers](#)

New Mexico school districts and state-chartered schools can request waivers from the Secretary of Education.

Please email Waivers.PED@ped.nm.gov for any questions regarding waivers.

Waiver Request Forms

- [Absences Preventing Competition Participation](#)
- [Alternate Assessment One Percent Proficiency Limit](#)
- [Alternate Credit](#)
- [Alternate ESL Course Credit](#)
- [Special Education\(Gifted\) Caseload](#)
- [Special Education Caseload](#)
- [Special Education Caseload \(Large\)](#)
- [Change of School Name, Address or Phone Number Notification](#)
- [Class Load](#)
- [Graduation Requirements](#)
- [Instructional Hours](#)
- [Instructional Materials](#)
- [Physical Education](#)
- [Application for Establishing, Reorganizing or Closing Schools](#)
- [Targeted Levels of Proficiency](#)
- [Licensure Waivers \(Endorsement, Substitute, etc.\)](#)
- [Charter Waivers \(Non-Discretionary Waivers\)](#)



Diploma Pathways

Graduation Pathways for Students with Disabilities

Amendments to NMAC 6.29.1 have been formally adopted and are final:

- Beginning in the 2025-2026 school year, through **House Bill 171 (HB171)** New Mexico introduced two primary graduation pathways: the Standard Diploma Pathway and the Ability Diploma Pathway.
- These changes are significant, particularly for students with disabilities, as they are designed to ensure that all students have a pathway to graduate based on their individual needs and abilities.
- These two pathways apply to students with disabilities who entered ninth grade in 2025 and graduate 2029 or later.

Graduation Pathways for Students with Disabilities

Amendments to NMAC 6.29.1 have been formally adopted and are final:

- In New Mexico, high school seniors must demonstrate competency in five core subject areas including **mathematics, reading, writing, science, and social studies to earn a New Mexico Diploma of Excellence**. Although current legislation does not explicitly require students to have their academic pathway adjusted within the first 20 days of the school year, best practice is to have high school seniors' pathways adjusted during this time. Students are still expected to complete all graduation requirements by the end of the academic year. The updated graduation requirements, which take effect for students entering the 2025 to 2026 school year, place a greater emphasis on flexibility and alignment with students' career interests.

Graduation Pathways for Students with Disabilities

Criteria for the Standard Diploma Pathway:

- This is the traditional option for students who complete the required classes and pass state tests. Students with disabilities can also earn a Standard Diploma, but they may receive extra help or adjustments, called accommodations or modifications, to support their learning.
- For students with disabilities, this pathway means they still have the opportunity to earn a regular high school diploma as long as they meet the academic requirements and take the state assessments. With the right supports, such as extra help in reading, math, or writing, or using an alternate form of assessment, students can work toward the same diploma as their peers.

Graduation Pathways for Students with Disabilities

Ability Diploma Pathway:

- The Ability Diploma Pathway is designed for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities. This option provides a curriculum and testing plan that are adjusted to meet each student's individual needs, especially when the traditional diploma requirements are not a good fit.
- To qualify for this pathway, students must have significant learning challenges. This means their learning and daily living skills are much lower than what is expected for their age, even when given extra support, and they are not able to take the regular state tests, even with accommodations.
- Students in the Ability Diploma Pathway take the **Dynamic Learning Maps (DLM)** assessments instead of the regular state tests. These assessments are designed for students with the most significant learning needs and cover English language arts, math, and science. The DLM allows students to show what they know and how they are progressing, and it is an important part of their path toward graduation.

Graduation Pathways for Students with Disabilities

Criteria for the Ability Diploma Pathway:

- The eligibility criteria for the ability program of study is that a student must be identified as a student with the most significant cognitive disabilities (MSCD). NMPED recently issued a definition for MSCD through a formal memorandum ([See enclosed](#)).
- This definition should be used by the IEP team to determine if a student meets the specific definition criteria. Not that the language regarding adaptive and cognitive functioning provides a typical baseline to make this determination. However, the definition does not explicitly require that a student be below this baseline for either adaptive or cognitive functioning.

Graduation Pathways for Students with Disabilities

Key Points for Students with Disabilities:

- **Ability Diploma Pathway:** Students who qualify for this pathway will take special DLM assessments. These tests are designed for students who are not able to take the regular state tests, even with accommodations.
- **Support for Standard Diploma Pathway:** Students on the standard diploma pathway will continue to receive individualized support and accommodations. This ensures that students with disabilities can succeed in ways that match their strengths and needs.
- **Graduation Options:** The Ability Diploma Pathway gives students with significant disabilities a graduation option that meets their unique learning needs. It provides a diploma that reflects their progress and accomplishments.

Graduation Pathways for Students with Disabilities

Modified Diploma Pathway:

- The **Modified Pathway** in New Mexico high schools was removed starting with the 2025 to 2026 school year due to changes in graduation requirements mandated by House Bill 171, which was signed into law by Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham. This law modernizes high school graduation requirements by eliminating the Algebra II requirement and focusing on flexibility in course offerings, including career and technical education. These changes aim to better align graduation expectations with the state's workforce and higher education needs, while providing more options for students, particularly those with disabilities, to pursue their interests and career goals.

Graduation Pathways for Students with Disabilities

Modified Diploma Pathway:

- In New Mexico, the **Modified Graduation Pathway** for students with disabilities will end with the Class of 2028. This means that starting with the Class of 2029, students will follow a new set of graduation rules. The new requirements include earning 24 total credits, completing a two-unit elective pathway of the student's choice, and meeting local school standards. The old Demonstration of Competency (DOC) tests in subjects like math, reading, writing, science, and social studies will no longer be part of graduation.
- If a student is currently on the Modified Graduation Pathway, it is important that the student's Individualized Education Program (IEP) team works closely together. Through collaboration, a course of study can be developed that aligns with the student's strengths, interests, and future goals. This planning helps ensure the student is prepared for life after high school while making the transition to the new graduation requirements as smooth as possible.

Graduation Pathways for Students with Disabilities

- Do you still have questions about the Ability, Modified, and Standard Pathways?
- Email: special.education@ped.nm.gov

Next Step Plan Introduction

- The requirement for high school students to create Next-Step Plans, in which they set personal post high-school goals, became effective on July 1, 2003, following the signing of HB 305: Next-Step Plans for High School Students.
- Since then, completing a final Next-Step Plan has been a mandatory prerequisite for graduation. The Next-Step Plan is not a new requirement but rather an established part of the graduation process aimed at guiding students toward future success.
- During the 2024 legislative session, Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham signed HB 171 updating high school graduation requirements which includes a Graduate Profile.



Graduate Profile

V. “**Graduate profile**” means a document that a school district or charter school creates and uses to specify the cognitive, personal, and interpersonal competencies that students should have when they graduate. The core academic competencies and subjects identified in a school district’s or charter school’s **graduate profile** shall align with required graduation units.

... and how it’s part of graduation requirements:

(2) The next step plan. Each student shall complete a next step plan for each high school year. The plan shall be aligned to the **graduate profile** of the student’s school district or charter school and shall be completed on a department-approved template. For students with individualized education programs (IEPs), the transition plan substitutes for the next step plan.

Graduate Profile



The PED has partnered with Advance CTE to provide free resources including standards and guidance.

For more information, contact Brenna Bartlett, Director of Technical Assistance at Advance CTE,

bbartlett@careertech.org

What is a Next Step Plan (NSP)?

The NSP is a personal, written plan that is developed by each student at the end of grades 8–11 and during the senior year (grade 12).

The purpose of the plan is to target the student's postsecondary interests, and set forth the studies he or she will complete during high school in order to be on track for graduation.

The NSP also reflects steps the student will take in collaboration with his or her guidance counselor (or other school official charged with coursework planning) to do the following:

- Research personal career interests or goals
- Plan postsecondary education
- Explore financial aid opportunities
- Examine industry certification or other career options

Interim Next Step Plan (NSP) Timeline

Subsection C

8th Grade	9th Grade	10th Grade	11th Grade
Each 8th grade student shall prepare an interim NSP that sets for the course work for grade 9.	Each 9th grade student shall prepare an interim NSP that sets for the course work for grade 10.	Each 10th grade student shall prepare an interim NSP that sets for the course work for grade 11.	Each 11th grade student shall prepare an interim NSP that sets for the course work for grade 12.

Each year's plan shall

- Be aligned to the graduate profile of the student's school district or charter school.
- Be completed on a department-approved template.
- Explain any differences from previous interim next-step plans.
- Be signed by the student, the student's parent and the student's guidance counselor or other school official charged with coursework planning for the student.

Final Next Step Plan (NSP) Timeline

Subsection D

12th Grade

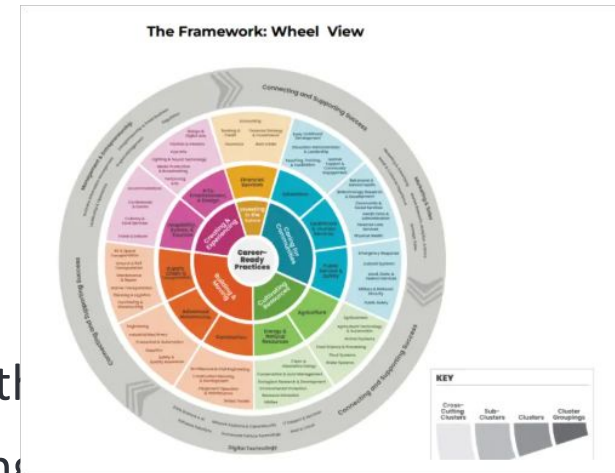
Each student must complete a final next-step plan during the senior year and prior to graduation.

The plan shall

- Be aligned to the graduate profile of the student's school district or charter school.
- Be completed on a department-approved template.
- Be signed by the student, the student's parent and the student's guidance counselor or other school official charged with coursework planning for the student.
- Be filed with the principal of the student's high school.

NSP Requirements

- The next step plan shall address:
 - i. career clusters in career and technical education,
 - ii. academic support and study skills,
 - iii. extracurricular experiences and out-of-school activities,
 - iv. exposure to post-secondary education and career options,
 - v. family and social supports,
 - vi. assessments, credentials and any other relevant information; as part of the next step plan, the advisor shall disseminate and share information concerning advanced placement, honors, dual-credit and distance learning programs.
- The next step plan determines whether or not the student is on track with graduation requirements; the plan ensures that gaps in courses and test-taking are filled.
- The next step plan may be made in large-group, small-group, or individual student settings.



Additional NSP Requirements

- Each grade-level next step plan shall be completed/signed within the last 60 school days of the preceding school year.
- Only one grade-level next step plan shall be completed for a student each year.
- The development of the next step plan shall include the student, the student's parent or guardian, and the advisor, but may include additional relevant parties.
- The advisor shall collaborate with the student and the student's parent or guardian on academic choices that target the student's interests and meet graduation requirements.



Parent Signature

- Under state law at Subsection B of 12-2A-3 NMSA 1978, a person is no longer a minor the moment he or she turns 18 years old. Therefore, for schools working with students who are 18 or older, parental signature and approval of the NSP is not required.

Individualized Education Plan (IEP) and the Next Step Plan (NSP)

An individualized education plan that fulfills the requirements of Subsections C and D and:

- Meets all applicable transition and procedural requirements of the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act for a student with a disability shall satisfy the next step plan requirements.
- The Individualized Education Program (IEP) team for grades 8–12 must incorporate all the state's NSP requirements into the student's IEP.
- Once a student reaches age 14, the IEP must also include all the transition IEP requirements of state special rule at Subsection G of 6.31.2.11 NMAC and the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) at 34 CFR Secs. 300.320(b) and 300.324(c).



Level All

Level All Introduction

The Level All Solution

- 1 *Comprehensive Content Library*
- 2 *Multiple Formats of Engagement*
- 3 *Personalized Journey*
- 4 *Customized Support for Partners*

Level All Platform

We're excited to introduce you to Level All's dedicated New Mexico team, who can help bring the platform to your school to make the process easier for educators and more impactful for students. You are welcome to email the team directly at newmexico@levelall.com

[new NSP tool](#)

Additional Resources

NEW MEXICO
Public Education Department
ACADEMIC COUNSELING
TIMELINE

JULY STUDENT SCHEDULES	Prior to schedule delivery, student schedules should be reviewed with the transcript or course audit sheet to ensure proper placement.
Individual meetings should be held to assist seniors with their final next step plan and postsecondary goals.	AUGUST SENIOR FINAL NSP
SEPTEMBER JUNIOR NSP	Individual meetings should be held to assist juniors with their next step plan and goals for senior year, and to ensure their junior year goals still stand.
Download an F list from your SSIS. Meet with students who have F's and D's, to offer support services.	OCTOBER NINE WEEKS GRADES
NOVEMBER PRE REGISTRATION PREP	Meet with staff to determine which electives and core courses they would like to teach next year. Use this data to develop your pre-registration course lists to help determine which classes you should plan to offer.
Download an F list from your SSIS. Schedule students who failed a course and develop a plan to recover those credits. Ensure NSPs are finalized and signed for early graduates.	DECEMBER END OF SEMESTER/EARLY GRADS
JANUARY FRESHMAN & SOPHOMORE NSP	Meet with freshman and sophomore students to assist with their next step plan and goals for the next year, and prepare for pre-registration.
Hold pre-registration to obtain the data needed to build your master schedule.	FEBRUARY REGISTRATION PREP
MARCH NINE WEEKS GRADES	Download an F list from your SSIS. Meet with students who have F's and D's, to offer support services.
Double-check that students have requested the proper core courses. Provide teachers with course request sheets for their help in ensuring students are properly placed.	APRIL MASTER SCHEDULE
MAY FINALIZE NSPS / GRADE CHECKS	Run an F list to determine which students must re-enroll in a course or take credit recovery/summer school. Ensure NSPs are finalized and signed for all students.
Audit transcripts. Post all grades from the school year on your credit check/audit sheet. Double-check schedules or course requests for the next school year.	JUNE TRANSCRIPT AUDIT

Toolkit to be released soon.

- [Graduation Requirements – New Mexico Public Education Department](#)

NEW MEXICO
Public Education Department
GOAL GRADUATION: GRADE 12
TIMELINE

JULY GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS & TRANSCRIPTS	Review the graduation requirements for your cohort and compare to your high school transcript.
Use the transcript audit tool to audit your transcript and ensure that you are registered in the correct classes.	AUGUST TRANSCRIPT AUDIT SHEET & CLASS SCHEDULE
SEPTEMBER GRADES & SUPPORT / SAT & ACT	Are you struggling in a class? Reach out to teachers, counselors, and/or administrators to set a plan to help you succeed. Register to take the ACT or SAT for college admissions.
What is your plan after graduation? Review your Next Step Plan (NSP) and start putting things in play, like college applications. Need help? Contact your counselor.	OCTOBER POST GRADUATION GOALS
NOVEMBER COLLEGE APPLICATIONS	If you have not yet started working on your Final Next Step Plan, contact your counselor for more information. Now is a good time for college visits and college applications.
Did you pass all of your classes? Double check that you are taking the right classes semester 2 to help you graduate. Fail a class? Meet with your counselor right away to make a plan for credit recovery. Are you graduating early? Make sure your NSP is finalized and signed.	DECEMBER GRADE REVIEW
JANUARY TRANSCRIPT AUDIT SHEET & CLASS SCHEDULE	Use the transcript audit tool to audit your transcript and ensure that you are registered in the correct classes.
Are you struggling in a class? Reach out to teachers, counselors, and/or administrators to set a plan to help you succeed.	FEBRUARY GRADES & SUPPORT
MARCH STATE TESTING	Ensure that you have taken your state assessments. Need help? Contact your school counselor.
Make sure you have everything in place for graduation, including your NSP which should be completed and signed before you graduate.	APRIL GRADUATION CHECK
MAY GRADUATION	

For More Information

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Graduate Profile

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