

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

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Operation Graduation

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GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS THROUGH COHORT 2028

24 units

COURSE WORK

ENGLISH 4 UNITS	MATH 4 UNITS	SCIENCE 3 UNITS	SOCIAL STUDIES 3.5 UNITS
ELA 1	Algebra 1	Lab Science	NM History
ELA 2	Geometry	Lab Science	US History
ELA 3	Algebra 2	Science	World History
ELA 4	4th Math		Government/Economics
<i>ELD courses satisfy requirement</i>	<i>One credit must be at the level of Algebra 2 or higher</i>		<i>0.5 credit in NM History</i>

**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:

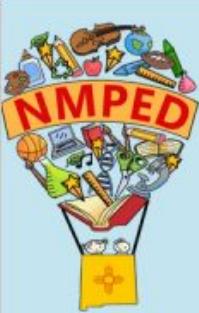
- **Health***
- **Algebra 1***

***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	MATH 4 UNITS	SCIENCE 3 UNITS	SOCIAL STUDIES 4 UNITS
ELA 1	Algebra 1	Lab Science	US History w/ NM History
ELA 2	Geometry	Lab Science	World History
ELA 3	3rd Math	Science	Government/Economics
4th English	4th Math	<i>CTE or WBL can meet this requirement</i>	4th Social Studies
<i>ELD Courses satisfy requirement. CTE or WBL can meet this requirement</i>	<i>CTE or WBL can meet this requirement</i>		<i>NM History can be offered as a stand alone course</i>

PHYSICAL EDUCATION 1 UNIT	HEALTH 0.5 UNIT	ELECTIVES 5.5 UNITS <i>Must include a 2-unit pathway concentration of the student's choice</i>	LOCAL REQUIREMENT 2 UNITS <i>Two units set by each local school board or governing body that meet department academic content and performance standards</i>
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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

2 CREDITS

TRANSFER

IF A HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT WHO HAS TAKEN ONE OR BOTH UNITS MOVES FROM ONE DISTRICT/CHARTER TO ANOTHER, THE RECEIVING DISTRICT/CHARTER SHALL ACCEPT THOSE EARNED UNITS TOWARD THE STUDENT'S GRADUATION.

MENU OF OPTIONS

LEAS WITH MORE THAN ONE HIGH SCHOOL CAN SELECT A MENU OF COURSES TO MEET THE NEEDS OF EACH HIGH SCHOOL.

ONE AREA

A SINGLE COURSE CREDIT MAY FULFILL THE REQUIREMENTS FOR ONLY ONE GRADUATION CATEGORY.

CREDIT FOR THE COURSE CANNOT BE APPLIED SIMULTANEOUSLY TO MULTIPLE REQUIREMENTS, EVEN IF THE COURSE CONTENT OVERLAPS WITH MORE THAN ONE CATEGORY.

EXAMPLE: IF A COURSE SATISFIES BOTH AN "ELECTIVE" AND A "MATH" REQUIREMENT, THE OFFICIAL AND STUDENT MUST DESIGNATE WHICH CATEGORY THE COURSE WILL FULFILL. THE SAME CREDIT CANNOT BE COUNTED TOWARD BOTH REQUIREMENTS.



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

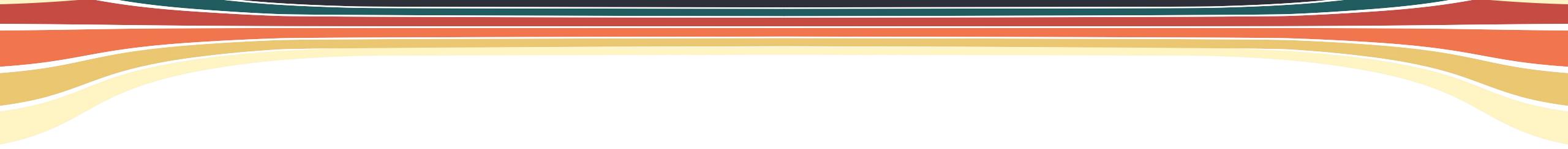
[Home](#) > Waivers

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. Note 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

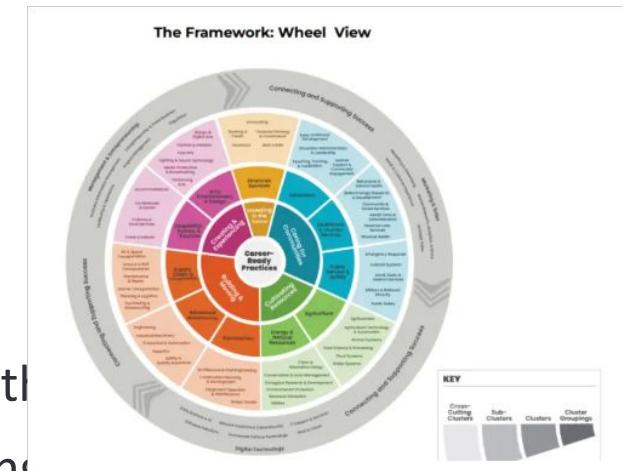
Each student must complete a final next-step plan during the senior year and prior to graduation.

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.



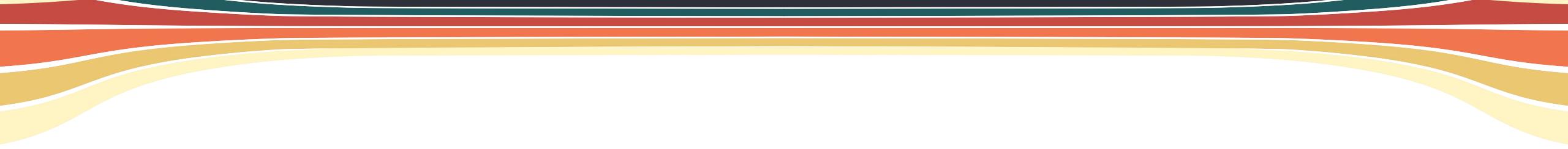
Parent Signature

- 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

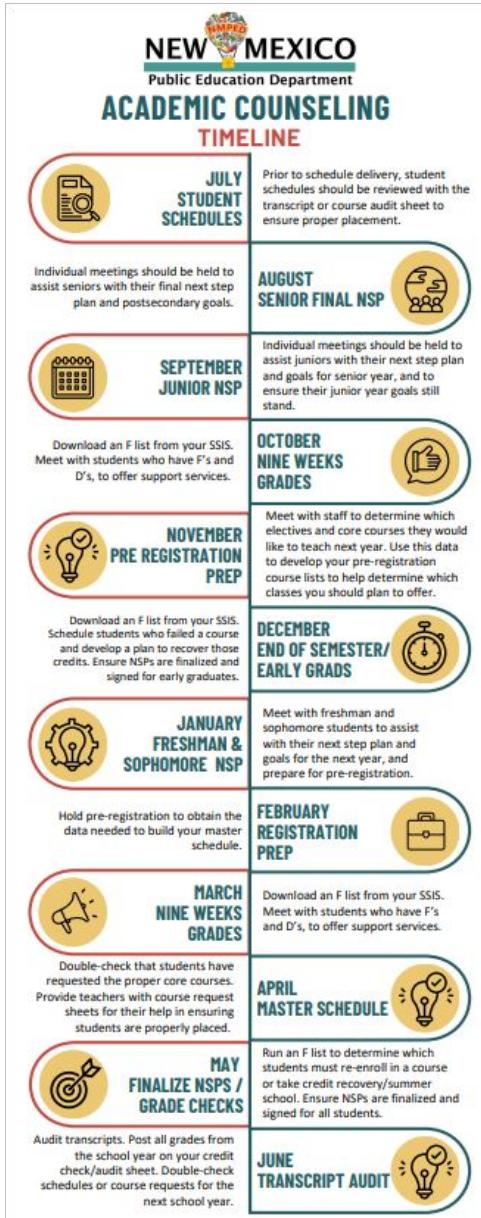
Level All Platform

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

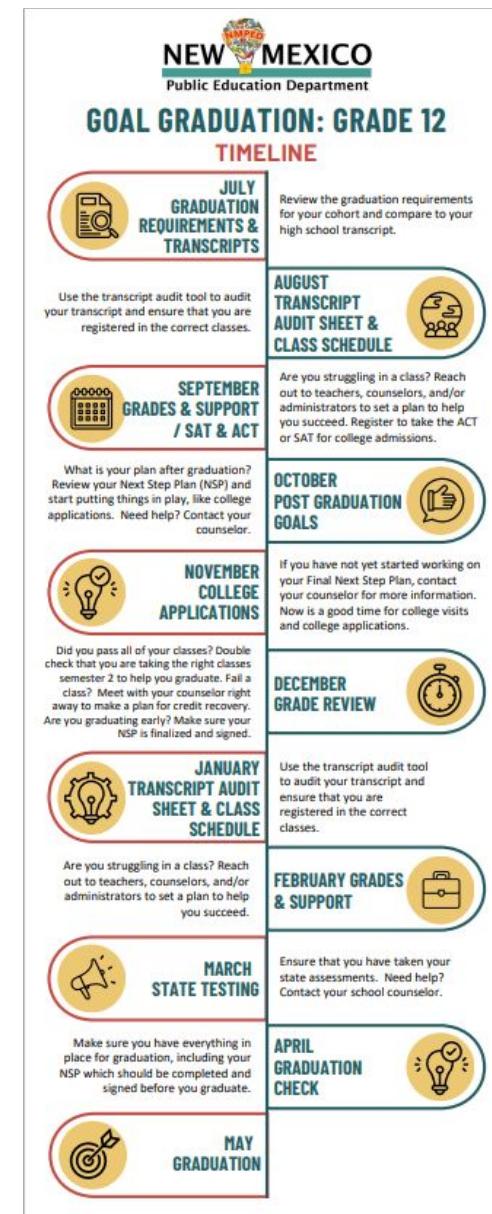
[new NSP tool](#)

Additional Resources



Toolkit to be released soon.

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



For More Information

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