ALABAMA HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION (AHSG)
REQUIREMENTS LEA QUESTIONS
Revised January 2014

1. When will the new diploma be implemented?
   - The new Alabama High School Diploma (AHSD) will apply to all students beginning with the ninth-grade class cohort of 2010-2011. Student transcripts must continue to be true and accurate and must show that the students met the requirements of their courses of study or their Individualized Educational Program (IEP).
   - Whenever there are changes to graduation requirements, a specific cohort is identified as the first to be affected; prior cohorts, as in past changes, continue under the requirements in place at the time they were ninth graders.

2. Are school systems allowed to have a locally developed tiered diploma (Magna Cum Laude, etc.)?
   - Yes.

3. Will this replace all variations of the diploma as in the advanced diploma?
   - Yes. Local education agencies (LEAs) may add endorsements.

4. What is the purpose in making this change?
   - The purpose for the change is to allow more flexibility for students in pursuing their interests. There are many differences in the courses students may take with this diploma; everyone will not take the same courses just because there is one diploma. Also, LEAs may add requirements for additional diplomas.

5. Will any high stakes test be attached to the requirements for receiving this diploma?
   - No.

6. Would it be wise for schools or school systems to remove the “failed” AHSGE scores from a student’s transcript?
   - No. Since a transcript is a legal document, original labels should not be removed. DRC, the company that prints student labels for the Alabama High School Graduation Exam (AHSGE), will print a label that school officials will place on the assessment section of the transcript/cumulative record of each student who entered 9th grade for the first time in 2010-2011 or 2011-2012 who has not cleared a “failed” status on any subject test of the Alabama High School Graduation Exam. The label will read as follows:

   The Alabama High School Graduation Exam (AHSGE) is no longer a diploma requirement for any student who entered 9th grade for the first time in 2010-2011 or later. (See ALSDE Memorandum FY14-2019: Resolution to Modify Graduation Requirements for Students.)
A copy of the Resolution to Modify Graduation Requirements for Students passed by the Alabama State Board of Education on November 14, 2013, should be placed with the transcript in the student’s cumulative folder.

7. How do we obtain approval for locally developed courses to count as an equivalent/substitute course?

- Locally developed CTE courses must be submitted to the CTE Section.
- Locally developed core courses (Mathematics, English, Science, and Social Studies) must be submitted to the Standards/Courses of Study/Textbook Section.
- Once submitted to either Section, a cross-sectional team will review courses for alignment to standards and approval for equivalent/substitute credit.

8. What are the CTE equivalent/substitute courses that can be used to satisfy math, science, Computer Application or CTE requirements?

- The equivalent/substitute courses for science are:
  - Aquascience (science course)—Aquaculture Science (CTE course)
  - Chemistry (science course)—Chemistry of Food (CTE course)
  - Environmental Science (science course)—Environmental Management (CTE course)
  - Forensic Science (science course)—Forensic and Criminal Investigations (CTE course)
  - Genetics (science course)—Introduction to Biotechnology (CTE course)
  - Human Anatomy and Physiology (science course)—Human Body Structures and Functions (CTE course)
  - Botany (science course)—Plant Biotechnology (CTE course)
- The equivalent/substitute course for Algebra II, Algebra with Finance, is currently being approved for implementation in 2014-2015.
- The equivalent/substitute course for Computer Applications is Business Technology Applications (BTA).

9. Can a CTE course be used to meet the math requirement and also be used to meet the CTE/Foreign Language/Arts Ed requirement?

- Yes. If the CTE course is an approved equivalent/substitute course for the mathematics course, it can be used to meet the mathematics requirement. The CTE courses can also be used to meet one or two credits of the CTE/Foreign Language/Arts Education requirement. Please note that the same CTE course cannot meet the requirement for both of these areas.

10. Under math requirements, what is meant by “or its equivalent” after the Algebra II requirement?

- Algebra II, Algebra II with Trigonometry, or an approved equivalent/substitute course is required. Currently, Algebra with Finance is being developed as an equivalent/substitute option for Algebra II. Course information will be made available as soon as the approval process is completed.
11. Is there a minimum level of math required for graduation?

- Yes. The minimum level is Algebra I, Geometry, Algebra II/Algebra II with Trigonometry, or the equivalent/substitute of any of these and one additional math course in this order. For students taking Algebra II instead of Algebra II with Trig, Algebra II is the final/terminating course in the sequence; whereas, Algebra II with Trig allows students to continue taking higher level mathematics courses. Algebra with Finance is an equivalent/substitute terminating math course.

12. What sort of credentials or certificates will be required of CTE teachers whose courses meet the requirements to count as a math or science credit? How will this affect HQ status?

- The current requirements of certification remain in place at this time. A waiver may be requested for a HQ academic teacher and a CTE teacher to team teach a course that meets “core academic” requirements.

13. How will the new diploma affect HQ? Will there be any flexibility as it relates to HQ for any of the subject areas?

- At this time, HQ remains in place. However, we are investigating any possible options related to HQ flexibility. A waiver may be requested for a HQ academic teacher and a CTE teacher to team teach a course that meets “core academic” requirements.

14. According to the CTE and/or Foreign Language and/or Arts Education credits to be acquired, is it a possibility that a student could complete high school with 3 years of foreign language?

- Yes.

15. For clarification—this reflects THREE consecutive years of the same foreign language to graduate. Is that accurate? This would be a change necessitating the hiring of more teachers.

- No. A student may take three consecutive years of foreign language, arts, or CTE; however, he/she may choose to take only one year of each, or two years of one and one year of another.

16. What Arts Education courses can fulfill the Arts Education requirement(s)?

- Any courses from the Alabama Course of Study: Arts Education. Students are not required to take an Arts Education course.

17. With the new diploma, can the student choose any of the following combinations?

- Yes, any of the following combinations are allowed:
  - 2 Foreign Language courses (same language) and 1 CTE or 1 Arts course = 3
  - 3 CTE courses and no Foreign Language and no Arts course = 3
  - 2 CTE courses and 1 Foreign Language or 1 Arts course = 3
  - 1 CTE course, 1 Foreign Language and 1 Arts course= 3
18. There was much discussion about the two courses in CTE, foreign language, and/or art. Some administrators believe the arts may suffer from loss of enrollment. What was the rationale for grouping these together? Many students have an interest in two or three of these areas.

- Actually, this should foster greater opportunity for arts classes. There should be enough elective credits available for students to take additional courses in subjects of interest including art. Also, students may choose to take two sequential courses in one area and one additional course in another area or all three in one area.

19. If students are “encouraged” to take two courses in sequence in CTE, Art, or a Foreign Language, does that mean that taking one of each type course is also allowed (although not encouraged)?

- Yes. It is allowed. However, in CTE, in order to achieve certification/credentials in a specific CTE field, two courses in the same pathway may be necessary.

20. What happens if a student transfers and he/she had chosen not to take a foreign language at the previous school and the new school requires a foreign language?

- Foreign Language is not a requirement for the Alabama High School Diploma (AHSD). Each district determines how to fairly acknowledge previously earned credits. Some colleges do require two years of the same foreign language.

21. Can we still issue an Alabama Occupational Diploma (AOD) in May of 2014 to a student who has met all the requirements of the AOD?

- As of November 14, 2013, an LEA should issue the Alabama High School Diploma if the student has met all of the requirements for the AOD and are part of the 2010-11 cohort. If he/she has not met the requirements of the AOD, the student must be allowed to return to school until age 21 or graduate earlier if he/she meets the requirements. Whenever the student meets the requirements and exits school, the LEA will issue the student a high school diploma.

22. When IEP Teams meet in the spring to develop the annual IEP, how will we complete the transition page of the IEP that includes selecting a diploma option and determining a course of study/program credits to be earned? Was it revised to have just the one diploma option?

- At this time, the form has not been revised. For 10th and 11th grade students who are currently pursuing an AOD, the ALSDE will allow LEAs to issue a regular diploma to students who have earned course credit for the AOD; and these students are not required to take the AHSGE. For 9th graders in the 2013-2014 school year, the IEP Team should choose the Alabama High School Diploma (AHSD) because that will be the only option available when they graduate. Therefore, for students in cohort 2010-2011 or later, the IEP Team should choose the AHSD or if the LEA issues a locally developed diploma they may write that into the student’s IEP. The transition page of the IEP will be revised this year and will come out in the winter release 2015. For students still in school that were first-time 9th graders prior to 2010-2011, the LEA should follow requirements that were in place prior to November 14, 2013.
23. Will the work component be a requirement for students with disabilities?

- Yes. Cooperative Education Seminar/Work-Based Experience will be required for any students with disabilities earning core credits through Essentials/Life Skills courses (formerly known as AOD courses).

24. Can we count the AOD students as graduates this school year?

- Yes. Students in the 2010-2011 cohort who meet all the requirements of the AOD and receive the AHSD can be counted as a graduate.

25. Will this be the last year of AOD or will current 9th, 10th, and 11th special education students that are currently working toward an AOD remain on AOD until they graduate?

- Special Education students who are in the 2010-2011 cohort or a later cohort who were working towards an AOD may receive the AHSD diploma if they meet all of the requirements of the AOD. Ninth grade special education students in 2013-14 will follow the Essentials/Life Skills pathway if so prescribed in their IEP.

26. Will AOD students be required to take the AHSGE to earn a regular diploma?

- As of November 14, 2013, students who are part of the 2010-11 cohort or a later cohort will not be required to take the AHSGE as a requirement for graduation.

27. For students following the “old AOD” pathway, will the End of Course (EOC) assessment reflect just the Life Skills/Essentials Standards or will it address all of the standards of the “regular” course? If it covers all of the standards, how do we avoid penalizing the special needs students?

- If students are in a course that is equivalent to a course requiring an EOC assessment, the student will be required to take the EOC test.

28. What if their EOC test grade causes them to fail the course (special needs students on Life Skills/Essentials standards)? That seems unfair if they were not held responsible for all of the standards.

- There is not a state requirement for counting the EOC tests as part of a student’s grade for the course. This is an LEA decision.

29. Will the content/curriculum standards for special education and regular education students be the same or will there be a Curriculum Guide similar to the ones that are in place now for AOD students?

- The standards for all students will be the same; however, there are Curriculum Guides for special education students that may be used as a resource for regular education students as well. The guides can be found at http://alex.state.al.us/specialed/curriculum.html.
- All students must follow the requirements of the selected pathway leading to the AHSD. We anticipate continuing to develop the Curriculum Guides as the Alabama Courses of Study are revised.
30. Are only IDEA eligible students able to take the “AOD/Essential Coursework” Pathway classes or are we opening up this pathway/coursework to nondisabled students?

- Non-disabled students may take Essentials/Life Skills courses as per the student’s four-year plan. There is one diploma with substitute/equivalent courses. Courses are open to all students. Counselors should advise students carefully of possible outcomes and benefits of taking these courses or regular education courses, including careful consideration to college admissions requirements, NCAA eligibility, etc. Students should be advised as to whether certain courses would adequately prepare them for college- and career-readiness in the future.

31. Will special education students who receive the regular/standard diploma be able to return to school to work on transition skills even though they have received a “terminal” diploma?

- Yes. Special Education Services (SES) would still require LEAs to allow students who meet the requirements for graduation through the “Essential/Life Skills courses” pathway or “AAS” pathway to return to school to work on transitional/life skills until age 21. SES would require the LEA to allow the student to participate in graduation ceremonies and activities with his/her age-appropriate peers (with his/her cohort) and not be awarded the regular diploma until the student actually exits school.

32. Will the students who are working on Alternate Achievement Standards (Extended Standards) now receive the AHSD?

- Yes. Students who are in the 2010-2011 cohort or later will receive the AHSD.

33. Have plans been made for articulating the new requirements to two- and four-year colleges in the state of Alabama?

- Yes.

34. Will you provide LEAs with College and Career Choice forms for building student educational plans and explaining the new diploma requirements to the community and parents?

- Yes.

35. What will we issue to students with disabilities who do not earn an AHSD?

- The ALSDE will have one exit document—the AHSD. An LEA may choose to issue some other type of exit document to a student who does not earn course credit for the chosen pathway.

36. Will the Foundations of Health Science course and the Family Wellness course still be used to meet the Health Education requirement?

- Yes. The two CTE courses are approved for equivalent/substitute credit.
37. Does the Career Preparedness Course have to be taught in ninth grade? Does it have to be taught as a one credit course?

- No. Each LEA is encouraged to determine the most appropriate grade (9-12) for the course to be offered for students. **Part A may be offered in Grade 8. Part B must be offered in Grades 9-12.**
- It is a one credit course, but it may be taught as two one-half credits. In other words, students may take the Part A – College and Career Planning/Computer Applications portion in one grade (8-12) and then Part B – Financial Literacy can be taught in a different grade (9-12). Or, the course can be taught as a whole credit in Grades 9-12. **Part A may be offered in Grade 8. Part B must be offered in Grades 9-12.**

Outcomes for this class are the most important factor to consider. This can be one of the most important courses that students take to help them plan and prepare for college and careers. Contact Nan Burgess (nburgess@alsde.edu) for more information.

38. Will we be able to offer Business Technology Applications (BTA) in the eighth grade? Would we be able to offer personal finance in the eighth grade?

- BTA may be offered in Grade 8 with an approved waiver from the ALSDE. There are only a few content standards related to financial literacy in the BTA course. Due to the content taught in BTA, there is not enough class time to address both BTA and Career Preparedness standards.
- If BTA is taught by a Business/Marketing Education certified teacher, Career Preparedness may count as the BTA prerequisite for the Advanced BTA course required in the Business Management and Administration program in CTE.

39. Will the Online Experience no longer be required when the proposed AHSD is adopted?

- There is no indication that this requirement would be dropped. This requirement can be satisfied in the new Career Preparedness course.

40. Is Career Preparedness a CTE course only?

- Yes. CTE will be where the course is housed due to the content included in the course, but other areas of certification have been approved to teach this course. Approved teacher certification areas are: Agriscience Education, Business/Marketing Education, Business Education, Marketing Education, Family and Consumer Sciences Education, Economics, Social Sciences/Studies (022 area only, not History), and Mathematics.

41. Is Career Preparedness an equivalent/substitute for any CTE or regular course?

- Career Preparedness may count as the BTA prerequisite for the Advanced BTA course required in the Business Management and Administration program in CTE if taught by a certified Business/Marketing Education teacher. No other substitutions are approved.

42. What is the composition (topics) of this course?

- The course includes the topics of Financial Literacy, computer applications, and career development. All of the topics are included in the one-credit course. Computer applications and career development standards are included in Part A. Financial
Literacy and career development standards are included in Part B. Part A is a prerequisite for Part B. Also, the on-line course experience can be satisfied through this course.

43. Can the Career Preparedness course serve as a foundation for other business courses?

- Yes. Career Preparedness may count as the BTA prerequisite for the Advanced BTA course required in the Business Management and Administration program in CTE if taught by a certified Business/Marketing Education teacher.

44. When will students who took BTA in the 8th grade this year and skip Career Preparedness Part A complete the career development activities which include the online experience that are in Part A?

- Eighth graders who are taking BTA this year will be required to develop their individualized four-year school plan in Grade 8. This activity will address parts of the career planning component of the Career Preparedness course. Thus, the student will not be required to take Career Preparedness A. They still have to take Career Preparedness B.

45. Where can the Diploma document be found?

- Diploma FAQ document is found at: http://www.alsde.edu/general/New_Diploma_FAQs_Revised_12-12-13.pdf

46. Where is the equivalent/substitute Career and Technical Education (CTE) course for Algebra II?

- The course (Algebra with Finance) is being approved for implementation in 2014-2015. LEAs will be notified as soon as the course is approved.

47. Will the Alternate Achievement Standards (AAS) Life Skills be the Career Preparedness equivalent?

- Yes. AAS Life Skills offers LEAs flexibility to utilize curriculum and instructional programs that address the three components of the Career Preparedness course.

48. Where can we find a copy of the Subject/Personnel Code Booklet?

- Subject and Personnel Codes may be found on the ALSDE Web site at: http://www.alsde.edu/html/PersonnelCodes.asp

49. Currently, the state requirements are 24 credits for a diploma. Will local systems be allowed to require more than 24 credits for graduation?

- LEAs will be required to offer a minimum of 24 credits for the diploma. LEAs have the flexibility of offering/requiring more than 24 credits for any endorsement to the diploma.
50. Are CTE teachers required to obtain HQ status in science and/or math? Certified in math or HQ in math?
   - Currently, CTE teachers must be highly qualified in mathematics and science to teach substitute/equivalent mathematics and science courses. A waiver may be requested for a HQ academic teacher and a CTE teacher to team teach a course that meets “core academic” requirements.

51. Will the ALSDE provide a standardized form for the 4-year plan?
   - A 4-year education plan template may be downloaded from www.alcareerinfo.org under Career Planning and from Kuder, but is not required to be used.

52. Is there any place in the code that addresses weighting courses?
   - No. LEAs make decisions about weighting and grading.

53. Credit Recovery (CR) information from 2007 said that even with CR courses, a student could not earn more than 10 credits in one year. Is that still applicable?
   - No. When we went to First Choice, the cap was removed completely.

54. It was our understanding that CTE would have a new course of study for FY2015.
   - It may be possible to have the course of study by FY2015, but it may be delayed if more time is required for current courses of study being implemented.
   - Until that time, new courses are being added in CTE as deemed appropriate due to business/industry and workforce trends.

55. We understand we are putting all courses of study (COS) on the table to allow for more time with math standards. Does this include putting a hold on implementation of ELA-CCRS?
   - No. Currently, only the Science COS process is being delayed. If there are any additional delays in the courses of study development/processes, LEAs will be informed and timelines will be adjusted and posted at: http://www.alsde.edu/html/sections/documents.asp?section=54&sort=15&footer=sections

56. If a student passes the computer literacy test in the 8th grade, do they still have to pass both parts, A & B, of the course?
   - If students complete the four-year plan (Career Preparedness component) and pass the Computer Literacy test, Part A may be waived. They will have to take Part B in Grades 9-12.

57. Where do you obtain the form to apply for a waiver for certification for the career preparedness course and the ability to offer the Part A in 8th grade?
   - No waiver is required to teach Part A of the Career Preparedness Course in eighth grade.
58. Will the Career Preparedness teachers have to be trained as online teachers—ACCESS?
   - No.

59. In the future, may we teach Part A embedded in BTA during 8th grade and meet both requirements? We are not asking about Financial Literacy just BTA and Career Preparedness Part A. May Part A and BTA be integrated as one 8th grade course?
   - BTA may be offered in Grade 8 with an approved waiver from the ALSDE. There are only a few content standards related to financial literacy in the BTA course. Due to the content taught in BTA, there is not enough class time to address both BTA and Career Preparedness standards.

60. Can a Special Education teacher who is HQ teach the Essentials/Life Skills courses?
   - Essentials/Life Skills courses must be taught by a teacher who is HQ in the content area being taught.

61. Is the Credit Based Diploma still an option?
   - No. The state of Alabama has one diploma option.

62. As a school system, can we require that cohort 2010-2011 pass the AHSGE in order to receive a diploma?
   - LEAs should not require it, but have the authority to offer and/or recommend it.

63. If a student is on the regular core pathway and is not successful and decides to change to Essential Skills pathway, can he/she go down to a less rigorous Essential Skills course?
   - Students can change pathways; however any student who takes four or more core courses on the Essentials/Life Skills pathway will be required to complete the work component.

64. Should the IEP Team continue to use the form from Preparing for Life—Selecting the Highest Most Appropriate Exit Option, or will a new form be available for the spring?
   - The form for Selecting the Highest Most Appropriate Pathway will be available in the new Preparing for Life document. This document will be available at Alabama’s Annual Transition Conference.