Graduation Ceremonies And Activities

Participation in High School Graduation Ceremony

To encourage and support the purpose and integrity of the high school educational program during the senior year, the district establishes the following minimum requirements for each student's participation in the high school graduation ceremony:

Achievement

To participate in the high school graduation ceremony, a student must earn 25 out of 30 credits during the 2nd semester at traditional-schedule high schools or 35 out of 40 credits in the 3rd and 4th terms at block-schedule high schools.

Students who transfer to a district school from one outside of the district during their senior year must meet all district requirements to earn a diploma from the district school. If the student does not meet district requirements, but does meet the requirements of his/her prior school or school district, the student’s diploma shall not be issued by the district, but the student may request a diploma be issued from his/her prior school or school district. Foster youth, homeless youth, or students who previously were enrolled in a juvenile court school, and who enroll in a district school during their 11th or 12th grade year but who are unable to meet the district's graduation requirements will be allowed to graduate upon completion of the state's graduation requirements rather than the district's.

(cf. 6146.1 Graduation)

Good Citizenship/Discipline

A senior student who receives an off-campus suspension from school in the second semester or 3rd and 4th terms of the school year will be notified in writing that if a second off-campus suspendable offense occurs, he/she may not be allowed to participate in the graduation ceremony.

Any senior student who receives an off-campus suspension within the last 20 school attendance days prior to the date of graduation may be denied the privilege of participating in the graduation ceremony, even if that off-campus suspension is the student's first off-campus suspension during his/her senior year.

If a student receives an off-campus suspension that falls on the day of graduation practice or of the graduation ceremony, that student will not be allowed to participate in graduation.

Unpaid Damages

In cases where a senior student has willfully damaged, or otherwise injured the property of the district, or failed to return the property of the district that has been loaned to the student, that student may be denied the privilege of participating in the graduation ceremony until the student or student's parent or guardian has paid for the damage or replacement costs of the district's personal property.

The principal or administrative designee of the student's high school will provide the student and student's parent or guardian written notice of unpaid amounts accrued and due to the district (under Education Code section 48904) based upon the student's damage or other injury to district personal property, or the student's failure to return personal property of the district loaned to the student.

This written notice will inform the student and the student's parent or guardian that failure of the student
to pay the amounts due under Education Code section 48904 may result in revocation of the student's privilege to participate in a graduation ceremony. The written notice shall be provided to the student and student's parent or guardian at least 5 school days before any graduation ceremony for which the student's participation may be revoked under district policy and regulation because of the failure to pay the amounts due under Education Code section 48904.

The written notice will also inform the student and student's parent or guardian of the opportunity to meet with the school site principal or the principal's designee to discuss the facts relating to unpaid amounts due relative to Education Code section 48904. This written notice and opportunity to be heard under this policy will constitute sufficient due process for the student in advance of the revocation of the student's privilege of participating in the graduation ceremony.

Graduation Practice Attendance

Each student is required to attend the scheduled graduation practice/s at the school from which he/she is graduating. Unless the absence is approved by the principal, failure to attend the scheduled practice/s may result in the revocation of the student's privilege to participate in the graduation ceremony.

Personalized Adornment of Graduation Attire with Single Item

In addition to required graduation attire and the permissible wearing of any district or school-issued awards or regalia, students participating in the graduation ceremony may choose to wear one (1) item of personal significance and/or individual expression during the ceremony. As a district and school-related graduation ceremony, for which there is a deserved measure of decorum expected by ceremony participants consistent with the occasion, a student’s single item of personal significance and/or individual expression may properly include, but is not limited to, expression representative of a student’s academic or extra-curricular participation and/or achievements in school, or a student’s personal characteristic of ethnicity, culture, religion, sex, gender, gender identity, nationality, race, color, ancestry, sexual orientation, marital or parental status, or military service. Any such expression, however, shall be consistent with the reasonable limitations on student expression identified in Board Policy 5145.2, as well as with other requirements set forth in this policy regarding “Physical Parameters” for a student’s personalized graduation attire adornment. For those students who choose to wear an item of personal significance and/or individual expression during the graduation ceremony, such students and their parents/guardians are strongly encouraged to ensure that such expression is fitting for a graduation ceremony and does not distract from the formality of the occasion and students’ achievement of commencement.

Physical Parameters for Personalized Graduation Attire Adornment

All students participating in district graduation ceremonies shall wear a district approved cap, gown, and tassel unless exempted for sincerely-held religious beliefs.

A student’s optional single item of personal significance and/or individual expression may be worn as an addition to the graduation tassel, or as a lei, necklace, cord, or stole around the neck or shoulders, and shall be subject to pre-approval by school administration. Apart from adorning the tassel on a graduation cap, graduation caps, themselves, shall not be modified, and students may not adorn their graduation caps with their item of personal significance and/or personal expression.

Any item affixed to the graduation tassel shall be inanimate and shall hang down from the tassel and not exceed the size, length, or width of the tassel. Items worn around the neck or shoulders shall be one-dimensional, inanimate and shall not exceed the width and length of district-issued honor stoles and/or cords. No item shall be enhanced by audio, video, light, and/or movement.
Limitations on Personalized Graduation Attire Adornment

Consistent with Board Policy 5145.2, the district, superintendent or designee, or principal or designee may prohibit a student’s single item of personal significance and/or individualized expression that:

1. The district reasonably believes will clearly and directly incite students to commit unlawful acts on school premises, or at the graduation ceremony violate school rules, invade the rights of other students or substantially disrupt the school’s/ceremony’s orderly operation.

2. Includes any expressions, words, material or content which are obscene, libelous or slanderous. For the purposes of this policy, “obscene” shall mean expression or materials objectionable or offensive to contemporary community standards and lacking serious literary, artistic, political, or scientific value; “libelous” shall mean any publication that is injurious to the reputation of another; and “slanderous” shall mean the speaking of false and malicious words concerning another; whereby injury results to his or her reputation;

3. Includes any expressions, words, material or content that incite students as to create a clear and present danger of the commission of unlawful acts on school premises or at the school’s graduation ceremony, or the violation of school rules;

4. Includes any use of “fighting words,” including epithets or gestures, or depictions thereof, if the language is abusive and insulting rather than a communication of ideas, and presents an actual danger that it will cause a breach of the peace;

5. Includes expression, words, material or content that is discriminatory or harassing to other students, staff or members of the public, based upon those characteristics protected under Education Code section 220 or any other characteristic that is contained in the definition of hate crimes set forth in Penal Code section 422.55; or

6. Includes expressions, words, material or content that infringe upon the rights of other students.

The criteria above shall apply to items worn at all district graduation events, regardless of venue.

Pre-approval by School site of Personalized Graduation Attire Adornment

Annually, the district shall announce the date by which senior students must submit their proposed single item of personal significance and/or individual expression for review and approval by the site principal or designee. Upon approval from the site principal or designee, students will receive a confirmation of approval. Students shall bring this confirmation to the graduation ceremony and have it available for presentation to site or district staff, in order to confirm that the item of personal significance and/or individual expression has been appropriately pre-approved. Students who fail to have in their possession at the graduation ceremony evidence of pre-approval, i.e., the school site issued confirmation of approval, may be prohibited from wearing their item of personal significance or individual expression before and during the ceremony, including during the recessional at the end of the ceremony.

If a student’s single item of personal significance and/or individual expression is not approved by the site principal or designee during the advance approval process because the student did not timely seek approval of same under the identified deadline, the student shall be prohibited from wearing the item before and during the ceremony, including during the recessional. If a student’s single item of personal significance and/or individual expression is not approved by the site principal or designee during the advance approval process for any other reason, the student shall have the opportunity to appeal the denial and/or present an alternative item for approval prior to the graduation ceremony in accordance with the district timeline. The immediate appeal shall be made to the site principal. Subsequent appeals may be directed to appropriate District-level personnel.
The district and school site administrators shall not prohibit a student’s adornment of the required graduation attire with a single item of personal significance and/or individual expression on the basis of the student’s actual or perceived disability, sex, gender, gender identity, gender expression, nationality, race, ethnicity, color, ancestry, religion, sexual orientation, marital or parental status, or association with a person or group with one or more of these actual or perceived characteristics.

Parent Notification and Appeal

Each high school student and parent/guardian shall receive annual notification of this policy and regulation as related to achievement, citizenship/discipline, unpaid damages, and graduation practice attendance. High school seniors shall also receive additional notification of this policy and regulation at the beginning of the second semester.

Should a student be informed by the school's principal that he/she may not participate in the graduation ceremony, the student's parents/guardians will be notified in writing of their right to appeal the decision of the principal to the Office of Secondary Education.

Regulation ELK GROVE UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

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