

**Arkansas**

**High School Graduation Requirements for Current Seniors (2014-2015)**

**Course & Diploma Requirements**

The state requires districts to enroll high school students in the Smart Core, unless parents sign a waiver to opt their children out of the default curriculum. While the two diploma pathways require the same number of course credits in each subject area, specific course requirements vary.

| <b>Subjects</b>    | <b>Smart Core</b> | <b>Core</b> | <b>Common Requirements</b>  |
|--------------------|-------------------|-------------|---|
| English            | 4                 | 4           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ English 9th Grade</li> <li>➤ English 10th Grade</li> <li>➤ English 11th Grade</li> <li>➤ English 12th Grade</li> </ul> |
| Mathematics        | 4                 | 4           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Algebra I or equivalent</li> <li>➤ Geometry or equivalent</li> </ul>   |
| Science            | 3                 | 3           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Biology</li> </ul>   |
| Social Studies     | 3                 | 3           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ American History – 1 unit</li> <li>➤ World History – 1 unit</li> <li>➤ Civics – ½ unit</li> </ul>                      |
| Oral Communication | 0.5               | 0.5         |   |
| Physical Education | 0.5               | 0.5         |   |
| Health and Safety  | 0.5               | 0.5         |   |
| Fine Arts          | 0.5               | 0.5         |   |
| Career Focus       | 6                 | 6           |   |
| <b>Total</b>       | <b>22</b>         | <b>22</b>   |   |

| <b>Subjects</b> | <b>Smart Core</b>   | <b>Core</b>   |
|-----------------|---|---|
| Mathematics     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <b>Algebra I</b> or First Part and Second Part Algebra I (Grades 7-8 or 8-9)</li> <li>➤ <b>Geometry</b> or First Part and Second Part Geometry (Grades 8-9 or 9-10)</li> <li>➤ <b>Algebra II</b></li> <li>➤ A fourth math unit chosen from:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Advanced Placement Math</li> <li>○ Advanced Topics and Modeling in Mathematics</li> <li>○ Algebra III</li> <li>○ Calculus or Pre-Calculus</li> <li>○ Linear Systems and Statistics</li> <li>○ Mathematical Applications and Algorithms</li> </ul> </li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <b>Algebra I</b> or its equivalent</li> <li>➤ <b>Geometry</b> or its equivalent</li> <li>➤ All math units must build on the base of algebra and geometry knowledge and skills</li> <li>➤ <b>Note:</b> A two-year algebra equivalent or a two-year geometry equivalent may each be counted as two units of the 4 unit requirement.</li> </ul> |
| Science         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <b>Biology</b></li> </ul> <p>Two units from the following three options:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Physical Science</li> <li>➤ Chemistry</li> <li>➤ Physics or Principles of Technology I &amp; II or PIC Physics</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ At least one unit of <b>Biology</b></li> <li>➤ At least one unit of a <b>physical science</b></li> </ul>   |

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Students who do not complete the Smart Core curriculum are ineligible for the **Arkansas Academic Challenge Scholarship**. Unconditional admission to more selective public universities requires the completion of the Smart Core.

The state requires high school students to take a half-unit **digital course**.

### **Assessment Requirements**

All students enrolled in courses for which End-of-Course (EOC) exams are administered, shall take the criterion-referenced assessments on the testing dates established by the Department. The state administers EOCs in Algebra I, Geometry, Biology, and high school literacy.

### **College and Career Readiness**

The Arkansas Department of Higher Education, in conjunction with the Arkansas Department of Education, offers ACT's **Educational Planning and Assessment System** (EPAS) for eighth and 10<sup>th</sup> grade students. The Arkansas Department of Education requires all 10<sup>th</sup>-grade students to take the PSAT or the ACT PLAN. Test results identify students who do not meet college readiness benchmarks in English, reading, or math.

Arkansas plans to administer the Common Core-aligned PARCC assessment during the 2014-15 school year. Score indicators from the PARCC exam will provide one measure of college readiness.

The state department of education has incorporated results from ACT, end-of-course tests, and AP tests into school and district report cards.

### **Academic and Career Planning**

Middle grades' students explore careers, but state policy does not require high school graduation plans and postsecondary advisement until ninth grade. State rules require school counselors to provide a "career planning process for each student to include career awareness, employment readiness, career information, and the knowledge and skills necessary to achieve career goals."

The **Arkansas Works** program leverages federal funds to deliver college and career planning to middle grades and high school students through a corps of career coaches. These career coaches provide several types of support, including tutoring, mentoring, and career and financial aid counseling. The same program supports the **Arkansas College and Career Planning System**, an online platform that allows students to explore education and career options.

Arkansas's statewide college planning portal is SayGoCollege.com; the site provides access to online resources for Arkansas students and their families to help them plan, apply, and pay for college.

### **Accelerated Learning Options**

#### **Dual and Concurrent Enrollment**

High school students may enroll in college courses and earn high school and college credit for their work, as long as they meet institutional eligibility requirements and attend districts with established concurrent enrollment programs. Students in grade 12 who possess at least an ACT sub-score of 17 in English, reading, or mathematics may enroll in remedial/developmental courses at a postsecondary institution. Students and families bear the cost of concurrent enrollment, unless the costs are paid by the district or a private foundation.

## Advanced Placement

The **Advanced Placement Incentive Program** provides state funds to ensure that districts provide students access to at least one AP test in each of the four core subject areas—English, math, science, and social studies. The program encourages broad student participation by paying all or part of the testing fees. Schools benefit by receiving a one-time reward for each student that passes an AP exam.

## Early High School Graduation

Arkansas law allows students to graduate early if they have earned the number of credits required by the district for graduation.

## Career and Technical Education

The state offers career and technical education (CTE) courses in agriculture, business education, computer science, family and consumer science, marketing, and medical professions.

## Postsecondary Admissions and Placement

State department of education rules require high school counselors to advise students to take college placement tests in 12th grade. Students who pass placement tests can request districts send these results to state postsecondary institutions as evidence of achieving enrollment requirements. Students can take the placement test at no cost, if they complete a postsecondary preparatory program or are enrolled in a college readiness course.

## University Admissions and Placement

Students must have a high school diploma or GED credential. For unconditional admission, students must complete the high school curriculum requirements defined below with a minimum grade-point average (GPA) of 2.0.

| <u>Courses</u>   | <u>Unconditional Admission</u> | <u>Academic Challenge Scholarship</u> |
|------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| English          | 4                              | 4                                     |
| Mathematics      | 4                              | 4                                     |
| Science          | 3                              | 3                                     |
| Social studies   | 3                              | 3                                     |
| Foreign language | —                              | 2                                     |
| <b>Total</b>     | <b>14</b>                      | <b>16</b>                             |

Students must earn scores of at least 19 on the English, math and reading sections of the ACT (or equivalent scores on the ASSET, SAT or Compass) for placement into college-level courses. First-time freshmen who do not meet the unconditional admission criteria may receive conditional admission. During the first 30 semester hours, these students must take 12 hours of core academic courses and any necessary remedial courses while maintaining a GPA of at least 2.0.

## Community and Technical College Admissions and Placement

Community and technical colleges are open-access institutions. However, the placement cut scores above apply to all public postsecondary institutions in Arkansas. A first-time associate degree-seeking student with a high school diploma or GED and/or with a 62 or below on the COMPASS Reading Skills test must be admitted to the college under the status of conditional-prep which could preclude the student from being eligible to pursue selected programs.

## Feedback Reports

Annual feedback reports provide information on Arkansas high school graduates enrolled in college, subdivided by district, school, and institution. The reports include data on (1) high school and first-

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semester college GPAs; (2) scores on college entrance and placement tests; (3) the percentage of students who completed the Smart Core; and (4) the number of students enrolled in remedial courses.

### **State Financial Aid**

The state lottery funds the merit-based **Arkansas Academic Challenge Scholarship Program**. Freshman students receive \$2,000. Students receive one thousand more dollars for every 30 credit hours completed. Students may receive up to \$5,000 if they have senior standing. Students receive financial aid only if they maintain a 2.5 GPA and earn 30 credit hours per year.

Students qualify for aid in two ways: (1) high school grades and assessment scores or (2) college freshman GPA.

Recent high school graduates must complete the Smart Core curriculum and achieve one of the following: GPA of at least 2.5 or an ACT composite score of at least 19 (or SAT equivalent). Full-time college students can earn the merit scholarship if they receive a first-semester GPA of at least 2.5 or produce an ACT composite score of at least 19. Academic Challenge Scholarship recipients must maintain a 2.5 GPA to continue receiving aid.

Two other merit scholarships exist on a more-limited basis. The **Arkansas Governor's Scholars** program rewards up to \$4,000 a year to the most highly qualified student in each county. Selection is based on a weighted formula that includes ACT/SAT score, high school GPA, class rank, and leadership skills. Renewal of the Governor's Scholarship is contingent on maintaining a 3.0 GPA. Depending on available funding, Arkansas also gives up to \$10,000 to 300 **Governor's Distinguished Scholars**. Governor's Distinguished Scholars must have a high school GPA of 3.5 or higher and score at least 32 on the ACT (i.e., an equivalent of SAT score of 1410). To retain the reward, students must maintain a 3.25 GPA in college. Recipients of both awards may renew the scholarship for up to three additional years based on GPA and hours earned.

In addition to the Academic Challenge and Governor's Scholars programs, Arkansas provides a number of other merit- and need-based scholarships to students based on family attributes or specific programs of study.

### **Special Thanks**

We would like to thank the staff at the following agencies for their assistance in carefully reviewing and confirming the accuracy of the policies and programs described in this document:

Arkansas Department of Education  
Arkansas Department of Higher Education

### **Sources**

|  |   |
|--|---|
| ACT Inc.                                       | <a href="http://www.act.org">http://www.act.org</a>                       |
| Arkansas Department of Career Education        | <a href="http://ace.arkansas.gov">http://ace.arkansas.gov</a>             |
| Arkansas Department of Education               | <a href="http://arkansased.org">http://arkansased.org</a>                 |
| Arkansas Department of Higher Education (ADHE) | <a href="http://www.adhe.edu">http://www.adhe.edu</a>                     |
| Arkansas General Assembly                      | <a href="http://www.arkleg.state.ar.us">http://www.arkleg.state.ar.us</a> |
| College Board                                  | <a href="http://www.collegeboard.com">http://www.collegeboard.com</a>     |
| Say Go College                                 | <a href="http://www.saygocollege.com">http://www.saygocollege.com</a>     |