



## Matanuska Susitna Borough School District 2021-22 Bell Schedule and Graduation Requirements Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

### Questions from Parents/Guardians, Staff and Community Members:

#### **Why is MSBSD proposing changes to the graduation requirements and bell schedule?**

As the District prepares for the 2021-2022 school year with the hope of removing the current COVID-19 mitigation protocols, the focus and foundation are aimed at raising student achievement. This effort begins with enhanced graduation requirements which create high, but attainable expectations for all students. In meeting this challenge, it is important that our schedule provides a structure to support students and teachers effectively. The proposed schedules incorporate many benefits, including increased instructional time for students, increased planning time for teachers, the introduction of a new Credit, Community, Career, College Readiness (CCCC) class focused on acceleration and remediation opportunities, and incentivizes school success.

#### **Will students have the option to attend school five days a week?**

Yes, the schedules currently under consideration will have students returning to in-person learning five days per week. Upperclassmen who are on track to graduate may be allowed a Friday early release option. An early release option will enable upperclassmen to transition to a part-time job, engage in community activities, and/or enroll in online college credit or Career & Technical Education (CTE) courses.

#### **Will students be able to participate in off-campus courses, for example, work-study options and LDS Seminary?**

Yes. Students will still be able to access off-campus courses. The District recognizes that some students want or need to work. The District will continue to work with students who want to hold part-time jobs. Additionally, the early release option for upperclassmen on Fridays will allow students to take advantage of work-study opportunities or part-time employment. Parents/guardians have sole discretion in determining their children's schedule. Regardless of their schedule, students will be held to the same graduation requirements. See Board Policy 5112.5 for additional information.

#### **Will students be required to attend a post-secondary program (i.e., college, military, or trade school, etc.) to be eligible to graduate?**

No. The District will not require students to enroll in a postsecondary program. The goal is to help support students through the application process so they can make informed decisions about their postsecondary opportunities. Enrolling in and/or attending a postsecondary program will not be a condition for graduating. The choice will be up to the student and his or her family.

#### **Will families still be able to enroll in full-time remote learning for next year?**

Yes. Families who want to continue remote learning can do so through either Mat-Su Central School, Twindly Bridge Charter School, or enroll in the District's iTech program.

#### **When will the new graduation requirements take effect?**

The proposed new graduation requirements will take effect for the graduating class of 2025, which is this year's 8th grade students. The classes of 2022, 2023, and 2024 will be required to meet current graduation requirements of 24.5 credits.

**Will the schedule change still allow current high school students to earn enough credits to graduate?**

By the end of the current school year, the class of 2022 will have had an opportunity to earn 20 credits. Next year, with six classes and the CCCC period, they will have a chance to earn more than 26 credits within the standard school day. Their graduation requirements are 24.5 credits. The classes of 2023 and 2024 will also remain at 24.5.

**Will students who have an IEP be required to meet the new graduation requirements?**

Schools will continue to have the flexibility to provide accommodations and modifications for all students with an Individual Education Plan (IEP). Following the IEP process, these decisions are made by the IEP team.

**Will parents have the option to send their student(s) to school on Fridays even if they are eligible to take advantage of the early release option?**

Yes. Regardless of academic status, parents will still have the option to send their students to school on Fridays for the full academic day. An early release option will be extended to upperclassmen who are passing their classes and are on track to graduate, but only with parental permission.

**Are school start and end times changing with the new graduation requirements or new bell schedule?**

Secondary schools will continue to start at 7:45 am and end at 2:15 pm. Transportation will continue to be provided to and from school five days a week.

**Will more students be allowed to receive high school credits in middle school?**

Yes. The District believes in supporting middle school students who demonstrate that they are ready for early high school credit. In support of the new graduation requirements, the District will work with middle schools to continue to offer high school courses for credit and consider increased opportunities for students who are ready.

**Will all secondary students be required to use Apex next year?**

Apex will not be required as the primary online platform for the 2021-22 school year. Apex will continue to be used for students who want to take classes not offered at their schools, credit recovery, credit acceleration, and summer school.

**What is AP Seminar?**

AP Seminar is a course that allows students to develop and practice their skills in research, collaboration, and communication. Students will investigate topics in various subject areas, write research-based essays, and design and deliver presentations, both individually, and as part of a team. AP Seminar will also help students gather and combine information from multiple sources, view an issue from multiple perspectives, and craft arguments based on evidence.

**Will AP Seminar be a required course?**

AP Seminar will be a requirement for students, beginning with the class of 2025. Students earning a 3, 4, or 5 on the AP Seminar test can receive early college credit. AP Seminar will count as a core academic requirement.

**Who is going to pay for the AP/IB exams and college application fees?**

During the 2021-22 school year, the District will pay for all AP, IB, and CTE exams. Additionally, many college application fees have been waived. The District will work with students who need financial support for college application fees.

## **What will the schedule be for next year?**

### **6 Core Periods:**

- 3 periods per day Monday-Thursday
- Monday/Wednesday: periods 1, 2, and 3
- Tuesday/Thursday: periods 4, 5, and 6
- Friday: 6 periods per day
  - One additional learning period focused on CCCC at the end of the day M-F with Differentiated Individualized Learning
    - Credit recovery/acceleration
    - Career opportunities
    - Community service
    - College advancement/application/etc.

## **What are the advantages of the new schedule?**

- Increased instruction time
- Increased planning time
- Increased support for struggling learners
  - A wave of COVID related credit deficiencies
  - History of intervening at the end of career rather than start of career
- Increased opportunity for academic acceleration
- Increased career and technical opportunities
- Increased community service opportunities

## **Will teachers be asked to teach in-person and at-home learners?**

No. Families who would like to continue to engage in remote learning will be able to do so through one of the District's correspondence programs or through iTech.

## **How do we accommodate students transferring into the MSBSD or from one MSBSD high school to another? AP students moving mid-semester or mid-year from another school may not have their AP class offered at the new school.**

Students transferring into the MSBSD will not be required to make up additional courses. In these cases, requirements may be waived, courses from other districts may be substituted, and schools will work with students to meet their needs on an individual basis in the same way they do currently. In cases where a student transferred within the District and was enrolled in a course (AP or otherwise) that is not offered at the new MSBSD school, counselors and administrators will work with the student and their family in the same way they do currently.

## **How will the District provide professional development in support of the new graduation requirements?**

The District will provide professional development during SAMS, FAMS, and dedicated PD days during the school year. Additionally, voluntary PD with accompanying honorariums will be available. Similar to the progressive increase in graduation requirements, the District recognizes that PD will need to be scaffolded and ongoing over the next several years.

## **How will the graduation requirements and/or bell schedule affect elective course offerings and teachers?**

The District values all teachers and believes that educating the whole child extends beyond English, math, science, and social studies classes. Elective courses will still be prioritized. Students will be required to take seven elective courses in either CTE, fine arts, and/or world languages.

**How many AP/IB classes will each core area teacher be asked to teach?**

The number of AP/IB courses taught by each instructor will be a site-based administrator decision. The goal is to have, at a minimum, an AP section in each of the four core subject areas (e.g., English, math, science, and social studies). Additionally, the District will work with school administrators to ensure teacher workloads are balanced as much as possible.

**Will the new graduation requirements create tracks for students?**

The District does not support tracking students. The graduation requirements will allow students to engage in rigorous academic classes, which include career and technical education, fine arts, and core academic classes. All of these classes teach valuable 21st-century skills.

**Will all secondary schools be required to implement the new graduation requirements and bell schedule?**

Graduation requirements are defined in School Board Policy and all schools are required to adhere to those policy requirements. Daily bell schedules will need to be coordinated with some schools to support students engaging in district-wide course share opportunities.

**How will our students get extra support?**

The schedule under consideration includes a daily CCCC class, which allows students to receive extra support with core and/or elective subjects. Additionally, the CCCC class will enable students to receive support with credit recovery and/or enrichment and exploratory options.

**How many credit hours are being added to the new graduation requirements?**

The previous graduation requirements were 24.5. The District will be requiring an additional .5 credit beginning with the class of 2025. As a result, the new graduation requirements will be 25.0. The classes of 2022, 2023, and 2024 will also remain the same (24.5).

**Will students have more credits than class time?**

No. Students will be required to take 25 credits. Students will take six classes per semester, which is equivalent to six credit hours per year (24 credit hours over four years). The additional 1.0 credit will be earned over four years through CCCC, which occurs during the instructional day.

**Will students be able to take music for four years?**

Yes, students will be required to take 14-16 credits in the core (i.e., math, science, English, and social studies) and seven electives. As a result, students can take four years of music classes or any other elective courses.

**Will students still be able to attend district-wide courses at other schools?**

Yes. Upper-classmen will still be allowed to take advantage of district-wide courses at CTHS and all other comprehensive high schools.

**What are the diploma requirements?**

- AP/IB/Dual College Credit/and or 2 CTE Courses (in sequence) (One must be AP Seminar or IB Theory of Knowledge)
  - Class of 2025 1 AP/IB/Dual College Credit/CTE Concentrator Courses
  - Class of 2026 2 AP/IB/Dual College Credit/CTE Concentrator Courses
- All students meet minimum credit requirements for the Alaska Performance Scholarship.
- Assumes core six-period day with CCCC every day during a final learning period
  - Students earn 0.5 credits of CCCC over 4 years; AND

- Students are supported with credit recovery; AND
- Students on track to graduate can expand their learning in CCCC through:
  - Additional coursework on campus
  - Additional coursework delivered through remote instruction
- Upperclassmen on track to graduate can further expand their learning in CCCC through:
  - Additional career opportunities off-campus with parent permission
  - Additional community service opportunities off-campus with parent permission
- ALL students will be supported with their application to a post-secondary institution or program of their choice:
  - Examples include, but are not limited to: career and technical education programs, AVTEC, military, community college, Job Corps, AmeriCorps, Pipefitters Apprenticeship, IBEW Apprenticeships, HVAC Apprenticeships, NIT, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, culinary school, cosmetology, Alaska Career College, Girls Who Code, university, etc.

**What are the proposed graduation requirements?**

Credits	Math and Science	Credits	Social Studies and ELA
4.0	English: ELA 1, AP Seminar, ELA 2, 1.0 ELA Elective	4.0	English: ELA 1, AP Seminar, ELA 2, 1.0 ELA Elective
4.0	Social Studies: 0.5 Civics, 0.5 AK History, 1.0 World Hlstory, 1.0 US History, 0.5 US Govt, and 0.5 SS elective	4.0	Social Studies: 0.5 Civics, 0.5 AK History, 1.0 World Hlstory, 1.0 US History, 0.5 US Govt, and 0.5 SS elective
4.0	Math: Algebra 1, Geometry, and 2.0 math electives	3.0	Math: Algebra 1, Geometry, 1.0 Math elective
4.0	Science: Physical Science, Biology, 2.0 Science electives	3.0	Science: Physical science, Biology, 1.0 Science Elective
0	World Language	2.0	World Languages
.5	Credit, Community, Career, College Readiness (CCCC)	.5	Credit, Community, Career, College Readiness (CCCC)
1.5	PE/Health	1.5	PE/Health
7.0	Electives: CTE, Fine Arts, World Languages, or Core Electives	7.0	CTE, Fine Arts, World Languages, or Core Electives
25	TOTAL	25	TOTAL