

GRADUATION CEREMONIES AND ACTIVITIES

High school graduation ceremonies shall be held to recognize those students who have earned a diploma by successfully completing the required course of study, satisfying district standards, and passing any required assessments. The Governing Board believes that these students deserve the privilege of a public celebration that recognizes the significance of their achievement and encourages them to continue the pursuit of learning throughout their lives.

(cf. 6011 - Academic Standards)

(cf. 6143 - Courses of Study)

(cf. 6146.1 - High School Graduation Requirements)

(cf. 6146.4 - Differential Graduation and Competency Standards for Students with Disabilities)

High school students who have passed a high school equivalency test or the California High School Proficiency Examination must also meet district graduation requirements in order to participate in graduation ceremonies.

(cf. 6146.2 - Certificate of Proficiency/High School Equivalency)

Invocations, prayers, or benedictions shall not be included in graduation ceremonies. The school or district shall not sponsor other ceremonies or programs for graduates that include prayer.

(cf. 1330 - Use of School Facilities)

(cf. 5145.2 - Freedom of Speech/Expression)

Honors and Awards

The Superintendent or designee shall identify other school-sponsored awards which may be given during graduation exercises. A separate awards program may be held to recognize graduating students receiving other school and non-school awards.

(cf. 5126 - Awards for Achievement)

Graduation Attire

The Superintendent or designee may require graduating students to wear ceremonial attire, such as cap and gown, at the ceremony.

(cf. 3260 - Fees and Charges)

Any graduating student who has completed basic training and is an active member of any branch of the United States Armed Forces may, at the student's option, wear a military dress uniform at the ceremony. (Education Code 35183.3)

Students shall be permitted to wear tribal regalia or recognized objects of religious or cultural significance as an adornment to the customary ceremonial attire, as long as the adornment does not cause a substantial disruption of, or material interference with, the graduation ceremony. (Education Code 35183.1)

GRADUATION CEREMONIES AND ACTIVITIES (continued)

Students who desire to wear such adornments shall seek permission from the Superintendent or designee at least 14 days before the graduation ceremony.

Disciplinary Considerations

Students are expected to comply with district and school policies, regulations, and rules throughout the school session, including during graduation and related events. Students shall not be denied the privilege of participating in graduation ceremonies and activities except as discipline in cases of serious misconduct. In no event shall a student be denied participation in graduation ceremonies unless the principal or designee has informed the student and the student's parents/guardians of the misconduct and has given them an opportunity to respond.

(cf. 5131 - Conduct)

(cf. 5144 - Discipline)

During the graduation ceremony, a student may be removed from the ceremony for conduct that is disruptive or that poses a risk to safety.

High school seniors shall be notified of this policy in advance, through the student handbook or other means, and shall be required to acknowledge receiving it.

Legal Reference: (next page)

GRADUATION CEREMONIES AND ACTIVITIES (continued)

Legal Reference:

EDUCATION CODE

35183.1 Graduation ceremonies; tribal regalia or recognized object of religious/cultural significance

35183.3 Graduation ceremonies; military dress uniforms

38119 Lease of personal property; caps and gowns

48904 Liability of parent or guardian; withholding of grades, diplomas, transcripts

51225.5 Honorary diplomas; foreign exchange students

51410-51413 Diplomas

COURT DECISIONS

Workman v. Greenwood Community School Corporation, (2010) Case No. 1:2010cv00293

Cole v. Oroville Union High School District, (2000, 9th Cir.) 228 F.3d 1092

Santa Fe Independent School District v. Doe, (2000) 530 U.S. 290

Lee v. Weisman, (1992) 505 U.S. 577

Sands v. Morongo Unified School District, (1991) 53 Cal. 3d 863

Lemon v. Kurtzman, (1971) 403 U.S. 602

Management Resources:

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION PUBLICATIONS

Pupil Fees, Deposits and Other Charges, Fiscal Management Advisory 17-01, July 28, 2017

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION PUBLICATIONS

Guidance on Constitutionally Protected Prayer in Public Elementary and Secondary Schools, February 2003

WEB SITES

AASA The School Superintendents Association: <http://www.aasa.org>

Antidefamation League: <https://www.adl.org>

California Department of Education, High School: <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/gc/hs>

U.S. Department of Education: <http://www.ed.gov>

Policy

adopted: February 23, 1999

revised: July 25, 2000

revised: May 21, 2002

revised: May 25, 2004

revised: April 14, 2009

revised: July 13, 2010

revised: November 18, 2014

revised: October 23, 2018

revised: October 29, 2019

VISALIA UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

Visalia, California

STUDENTS

GRADUATION CEREMONIES AND ACTIVITIES

Attendance Requirement for Participation in Senior Activities

Visalia Unified School District has a 94% attendance policy that must be met during the senior year for participation in senior activities. This requirement shall be waived for the 2020-2021, 2021-2022, and 2022-2023 school years due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

1. Students must be in class at least 94% of the periods during the senior year of high school to participate in senior activities.
2. This is not an excused/unexcused absence policy. It is an attendance policy. The type of absence does not matter with the following exceptions:
 - a. a licensed medical professional has mandated the student stay at home
 - b. subpoenas to court
 - c. funeral of an immediate family member
 - d. approved and completed furlough
 - e. participated in a school activity
3. It is up to the student to bring verification from the licensed medical professional or court for an exception. Otherwise the absence will count against the policy. Verification must be brought within three school days following the absence.
4. Saturday School attendance (all four hours) may clear an absence. Banking of Saturday School credit is NOT allowed.

Appeal Process

An appeal must be originated by a parent. This appeal must be in writing using the Attendance Policy Appeal Form available in the Attendance Office.

The Appeal Board consists of:

1. Principal
2. Attendance Secretary
3. Counselor/Learning Director
4. Teacher

The Appeal Board's decision is final.

Diploma Distribution at Commencement

The participants in the ceremonial distribution of diploma covers at commencement are to be determined by the Superintendent only. The participants will always include Board members and may include selected staff and will never include students.

Regulation

approved: March 9, 2009
 revised: September 24, 2018
 revised: May 14, 2021
 revised: September 10, 2021
 revised: August 21, 2023
 revised: September 8, 2023

VISALIA UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

Visalia, California