

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. 6162.52 - High School Exit Examination)

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

High school students who have passed the California High School Proficiency Examination or the General Educational Development Test 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

Graduation ceremonies shall recognize superior academic achievement. The Superintendent or designee shall establish procedures that ensure a fair determination of superior academic achievement.

(cf. 5121 - Grades/Evaluation of Student Achievement)

The Superintendent or designee shall identify other school-sponsored awards which may be given during graduation exercises, for example life membership for the California Scholarship Federation and the California State Seal of Biliteracy award. A separate awards program may be held to recognize graduating students receiving other school and nonschool awards.

(cf. 5126 - Awards for Achievement)

Foreign exchange students may receive honorary diplomas during the graduation ceremony. (Education Code 51225.5)

(cf. 6145.6 - International Exchange)

GRADUATION CEREMONIES AND ACTIVITIES (continued)

Conduct at Graduation Ceremonies

Any student participating in a graduation ceremony shall comply with district policies and regulations pertaining to student conduct.

(cf. 5131 - Conduct)

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

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

Attendance Requirements

Students must have a 94% attendance rate for their senior year to participate in commencement ceremonies.

Disciplinary Considerations

High school commencement is a unique event in that it recognizes the cumulative academic achievement of a student. As such, commencement is considered an educational activity that is an integral part of the educational process. Students may not be denied participation in commencement unless:

- They do not qualify for commencement due to failure to complete all academic requirements for graduation.
- They do not meet the Board-adopted 94% attendance requirement for participation in commencement.
- They are suspended on the day of commencement.

(cf. 5125.2 - Withholding Grades, Diploma or Transcripts)

(cf. 5144 - Discipline)

(cf. 6161.2 - Damaged or Lost Instructional Materials)

(Education Code 49010(a))

Legal Reference: (see next page)

GRADUATION CEREMONIES AND ACTIVITIES (continued)

Legal Reference:

EDUCATION CODE

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*

51410-51412 *Diplomas*

COURT DECISIONS

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:

WEB SITES

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

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

VISALIA UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT
Visalia, California

STUDENTS

GRADUATION CEREMONIES AND ACTIVITIES

Attendance Requirement for Participation in High School Commencement Ceremony

Visalia Unified School District has a 94% attendance policy that must be met during the senior year for participation in commencement ceremonies.

1. Students must be in class at least 94% of the periods during the senior year of high school to participate in commencement ceremonies.
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. doctor appointments or a doctor mandated 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 doctor 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.