Whether you think you will continue your education after high school or pursue other career training options, you need a plan. Develop a written plan for each year in high school. Start with the required courses (see page 43.) South Dakota law requires that students must have a minimum of 22 units of credit to graduate.

What courses will you take for the remaining units of credit required for graduation? What additional courses will fit in your schedule?

Local school boards and other governing bodies sometimes have their own additional graduation requirements.

Think a technical institute education might be in your future? Consider taking high school courses in the same technical career area. They will help you explore whether a field is for you — before you’re paying tuition!

Pick classes you find interesting. High school courses can be a great opportunity to explore career fields of interest. If you’re interested in classes your school doesn’t offer, look into opportunities for distance learning. Ask your teachers, school counselors or principal for more information. You may even want to look into taking college-level courses via distance learning while you’re still in high school. In some cases, you can get both high school and college credit for courses.

You don’t have to go it alone! Remember all the people available to help you develop your high school educational plan. Ask your school counselor, teachers or advisors and parents for help and guidance. A paper or electronic career portfolio, provided in many schools, is a great tool for developing your high school educational plan and tracking your progress.

Remember, for as much of your life as you will likely spend on the job, it is really important that you enjoy the work as much as possible. Even if your career choice requires several more years of education after high school, that’s a small investment of time to be able to do something you want the rest of your life. So, shoot for the moon! Good luck!

“By failing to prepare you are preparing to fail.”

— Benjamin Franklin
South Dakota High School Graduation Requirements

As approved by the South Dakota Board of Education, November 2009

A student’s Personal Learning Plan must document a minimum of 22 credits that include the following:

4 units of Language Arts
Writing: 1.5 units
Speech or Debate: .5 unit
Language Arts Elective: .5 unit

Literature – 1.5 units (must include .5 unit American Literature)

3 units of Mathematics
Algebra I: 1 unit
Algebra II: 1 unit
Geometry: 1 unit

3 units of Lab Science
Biology: 1 unit
Any Physical Science: 1 unit
Chemistry or Physics: 1 unit

3 units of Social Studies
U.S. History: 1 unit
U.S. Government: .5 unit
Social Studies elective: .5 unit
World History: .5 unit
Geography: .5 unit

1 unit of Any Combination
Approved Career & Technical Education
Capstone Experience or Service Learning
World Language

1 unit of Fine Arts

1/2 unit of Personal Finance or Economics

1/2 unit of Physical Education

1/2 unit of Health or Health Integration

In the area of Mathematics, a student may be excused from taking Algebra II or Geometry, but not both. Students must still take three units of math. In the area of Lab Science, a student may be excused from Chemistry and/or Physics. Students must still take three units of Lab Science. A student’s parent or legal guardian and school counselor or administrator must agree to the decision, and the excuse must be documented at the local level.

Beginning with students who entered 9th grade in fall 2013, academic core content may be earned by completing an approved career and technical education course. Approval to offer credit must be obtained through an application process with the Department of Education.


A district may decide to offer credit for extracurricular Fine Arts activities. Students may be granted up to one credit in Fine Arts for participation in extracurricular activities. A maximum .25 credit may be granted for each activity in each school year.

Beginning with students who entered 9th grade in fall 2013, students are required to take .5 unit of Health at any time during grades 6-12. A district may choose to integrate Health across the curriculum at the middle or high school level in lieu of a stand-alone course. See the Health and Health Integration section of the South Dakota Department of Education’s High School Graduation Requirements Handbook for more information.

Double dipping is not allowed. Courses may not be counted more than once to fulfill high school graduation requirements. For example, Economics cannot meet both the Social Studies elective credit requirement and the Personal Finance or Economics credit requirement. It can only meet one of the requirements.

For more information visit www.doe.sd.gov
higher ed
South Dakota's postsecondary education options

Postsecondary Institutes
Lake Area Technical Institute, Watertown, www.lakeareatech.edu
Mitchell Technical Institute, Mitchell, www.mitchellttech.edu
Southeast Technical Institute, Sioux Falls, www.southeasttech.edu
Western Dakota Technical Institute, Rapid City, www.wdt.edu

State Universities (schools in the Board of Regents system)
Black Hills State University, Spearfish, www.bhsu.edu
Dakota State University, Madison, www.dsu.edu
Northern State University, Aberdeen, www.northern.edu
SD School of Mines & Technology, Rapid City, www.sdsmt.edu
South Dakota State University, Brookings, www.sdstate.edu
University of South Dakota, Vermillion, www.usd.edu

Public Higher Education Centers
Capital University Center, Pierre, http://cucpierre.org
Black Hills State University-Rapid City, www.bhsu.edu/BHSURapidCity
University Center, Sioux Falls, www.sduniversitycenter.org

Tribal Colleges and Universities
Oglala Lakota College, Kyle, www.olc.edu
Sinte Gleska University, Mission, www.sintegleska.edu
Affiliate of Sinte Gleska University - Lower Brule Community College,
Lower Brule, http://www.lowerbrulecc.org
Sisseton Wahpeton College, Agency Village, www.swc.tc

Private Colleges and Universities
Augustana College, Sioux Falls, www.augie.edu
Colorado Technical University, Sioux Falls, sf.coloradotech.edu
Dakota Wesleyan University, Mitchell, www.dwu.edu
Globe University, Sioux Falls, siouxfalls.globeuniversity.edu
Mount Marty College, Yankton and Watertown, www.mmtmc.edu
National American University, Ellsworth AFB, Rapid City, Sioux Falls &
Watertown, www.national.edu
Presentation College, Aberdeen, www.presentation.edu
Sioux Falls Seminary, Sioux Falls, www.sfseminary.edu
University of Sioux Falls, Sioux Falls, www.usiouxfalls.edu
South Dakota Board of Regents
Minimum Admission Requirements for State Universities

ACT composite score of 18 or above or Rank in the top 60 percent of high school graduating class or High school GPA of at least 2.6 on a 4.0 scale

All baccalaureate or general studies students under 24 years of age, including students transferring with fewer than 24 credit hours, must meet the following minimum high school course requirements with an overall grade point average of “C” (2.0 on a 4.0 scale) or higher:

4 years of English (emphasis on grammar, composition or literary analysis)

3 years of advanced mathematics (algebra, geometry, trigonometry or other advanced mathematics; does not include arithmetic, business, consumer or general mathematics)

3 years of approved laboratory science (biology, chemistry and physics, with at least one lab period scheduled each week)

3 years of social sciences (history, economics, sociology, geography and government)

One year of Fine Arts (art, theater, music)

Computer skills - demonstrated thorough high school coursework or other means

Admission criteria are subject to change or amendment by the Board of Regents of South Dakota (BOR) and by the six state universities in the Board of Regents system. Alternate criteria for minimum course requirements (e.g. ACT subset scores and Advanced Placement scores) for students who do not successfully complete the requirements listed above can also be found on the BOR website.

Visit the Board of Regents’ website, www.sdbor.edu, for more information and updates. Also check with each university, institute and college for additional admission requirements.