

COMMENCEMENT ACTIVITIES

The Mainland Regional High School District Board of Education endorses graduation activities and ceremonies. The date of graduation shall annually be recommended by the superintendent and approved by the board.

Graduation shall not occur prior to completion of the required 180 days of student instruction.

Guidelines for Graduation Year Activities

Pupil participation in special graduation year activities will require conduct of the highest caliber in all school situations.

Criteria for exclusion from these activities concern consistent behavioral patterns and shall include, but not be limited to:

- A. Consistent involvement in disciplinary action(s);
- B. Dangerous behavior;
- C. Excessive absences;
- D. Failing grades;
- E. Suspension.

The final decision shall be made by the superintendent.

Pupils and parents/guardians shall be given advance notification of these criteria.

Prom and After-Prom

The District believes that all school-sponsored events on- and off-campus are important to the growth, development, and maturation of students. To this end, students identified under the influence and/or in possession of alcohol and/or a controlled dangerous substance (CDS) will be subject to the disciplinary consequences outlined in policy 5131 Code of Student Conduct. Moreover, the Prom and After-Prom are designated and advertised as drug and alcohol free events. Students that are eligible to graduate and determined to be under the influence and/or in possession of alcohol and/or a controlled dangerous substance (CDS) at the Prom and/or After-Prom will be prohibited from participating in the graduation ceremony and commencement activities unless a successful appeal has been brought before the Board of Education. The Mainland Regional High School Board of Education reserves the right to uphold a student's prohibition from the graduation ceremony and commencement activities or prescribe alternative disciplinary consequences in lieu of a student's prohibition because they were determined to be under the influence and/or in possession of alcohol and/or a controlled dangerous substance (CDS) at the Prom and/or After-Prom. In the event that the Board permits a prohibited student to participate in the graduation ceremony and commencement activities, the Board reserves the right to withhold a student's diploma and transcript until the prescribed alternative disciplinary consequences have been completed, recognizing that this may take place after the last day of school for students.

COMMENCEMENT ACTIVITIES (continued)

Voting Information and Registration

Prior to graduation, the board of education shall provide a voter registration form and material describing the role of a citizen and the importance of voting to each eligible high school student.

Graduation Procedures and Ceremonies

No student shall be barred from participation in graduation ceremonies for arbitrary or discriminatory reasons. A student who may be prevented from participation and his/her parents/guardians shall be so notified.

When a student or his/her parents/guardians experiences financial hardship and is unable to pay the costs of participation in graduation ceremonies, the board shall assume the costs of the following items:

- A. Rental or purchase of cap and gown;
- B. One year book;
- C. Other, as may be determined by the board.

Financial hardship shall be defined by eligibility standards for free and reduced price meals under the state school lunch program.

The board reserves the right to deny participation in graduation activities when extreme circumstances warrant it. Such denial shall be treated in the same manner as a suspension and the student so affected shall be afforded the rights of review provided in policies of this board.

The board reserves the right to withhold a diploma and transcripts until all fines are paid.

Awarding of Diplomas

A board member shall present a copy of the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution of the United States and the amendments thereto, and the Constitution of the State of New Jersey and the amendments thereto to each student upon graduation from elementary school.

The president of the board of education and/or another designated member of the board shall award the diplomas. Board members and former board members shall be afforded the opportunity to award diplomas to their own children.

The board shall not prevent, or otherwise deny participation in, constitutionally protected prayer in any district school, consistent with guidance issued by the United States Department of Education and applicable judicial decisions interpreting the religion clauses of the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution.

Adopted: June 2013
NJSBA Review/Update:
Readopted: August 18, 2014, April 26, 2018

Key Words

Commencement Activities, Graduation Ceremonies, Voting, Voting Registration

Legal References: N.J.S.A. 18A:7C-5.1 Boards of education prohibited from excluding students from graduation ceremony or from obtaining yearbook for inability to pay fees

COMMENCEMENT ACTIVITIES (continued)

<u>N.J.S.A.</u> 18A:11-1	General mandatory powers and duties
<u>N.J.S.A.</u> 18A:36-18	Books containing organic laws at graduation
<u>N.J.S.A.</u> 18A:36-27	Voting information
<u>N.J.S.A.</u> 18A:37-2	Causes for suspension or expulsion of students
<u>N.J.S.A.</u> 18A:54-20	Powers of board (county vocational schools)
<u>N.J.A.C.</u> 6A:8-5.1 <u>et seq.</u>	Implementation of Graduation Requirements
<u>N.J.A.C.</u> 6A:16-7.1 <u>et seq.</u>	Student Conduct

Ballato v. Long Branch Board of Education, 1990 S.L.D. (August 20)

Lee v. Weisman, 112 S. Ct. 2649 (1992)

R.L. v. Kingsway Regional Board of Education, 95 NJAR 2d (EDU) 296

D.C. v. Parsippany Troy Hills Board of Education, 96 NJAR 2d (EDU) 697

DO'G v. Ridgefield Park Board of Education, 96 NJAR 2d (EDU) 820

R.F. v. Park Ridge Board of Education, 97 NJAR2d (EDU) 1

American Civil Liberties Union v. Blackhorse Pike Regional Board of Education, 84 F. 3d 1471 (3d Cir. 1996)

Possible

Cross References:

*5113	Absences and excuses
*5114	Suspension and expulsion
*5126	Awards for achievement
*5131	Conduct/discipline
*6111	School calendar
*6115	Ceremonies and observances
*6141.2	Recognition of religious beliefs and customs
*6146	Graduation requirements

*Indicates policy is included in the Critical Policy Reference Manual.