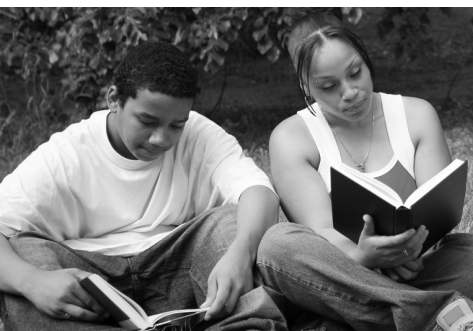


# Personal Curriculum



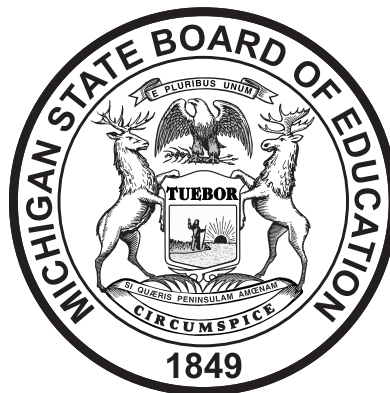
## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Supplement to the Personal Curriculum Parent and Educator Guide

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**Frequently Asked Questions**

**Personal Curriculum Suggested Roles and Responsibilities**



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# The Personal Curriculum

## A Tool for Modifying the Michigan Merit Curriculum

### Background Information

The Michigan Merit law outlined above allows a parent or legal guardian of a student to request certain modifications to the state high school graduation requirements under limited conditions to ensure all students are effectively and consistently engaged in school regardless of need or disability.

According to the American College Test (ACT) report *Crisis at the Core: Preparing All Students for College and Work*, only 32 percent of U.S. students entering ninth grade graduate prepared for college. For African Americans, the number is 20 percent; for Latinos, it is 16 percent. In fact, most high school graduates readily admit they were not significantly challenged in school or ready for employment or college. Forty percent say they wished they had worked harder, especially in math, science and English. Employers and college leaders say high school graduates need to master higher-level mathematics and communications skills. The key to students succeeding in college or the workplace is taking advanced high school courses in English, science and math beyond Algebra II.<sup>1</sup>

Research suggests that:<sup>2</sup>

- The quality of courses completed in high school is a greater predictor of college success than test scores, class rank, or grade point average.
- Students are more likely to pass high-level courses than low-level courses. Thus, the research suggests that increasing access by all students to advanced academic course work will improve student academic achievement.
- Those who enter high school with test scores in the lowest quartile learn more in academically rigorous courses than they do in either the low-level vocational or general courses in which they are traditionally enrolled. Moreover, students enrolled in lower-level courses were more likely to earn a “D” or “F” in those courses despite their level of ability.
- When minority students are required to take rigorous college preparatory curricula, they rise to the challenge:
  - ◇ For example, the San Jose Unified School District in California recently showed dramatic results after it required all students to take the A–G curriculum required for admission to the University of California system. Between 1998 and 2002, test scores of African American 11th graders increased nearly seven times as much as those of African American students across the state.
  - ◇ What’s more, the more rigorous requirements have not resulted in the increase in dropout rates that some had predicted.
  - ◇ Taking a rigorous high school curriculum that includes math, at least through Algebra II, cuts in half the gap in college completion rates between white students and African American and Latino students.

**Section 380.1278a of the Revised School Code regarding the Michigan Merit Curriculum requirements for a high school diploma may be accessed and read online at:**

[www.legislature.mi.gov/\(hzka3q2cfmj4r0vc4mdmp055\)/documents/mcl/pdf/mcl-380-1278a.pdf](http://www.legislature.mi.gov/(hzka3q2cfmj4r0vc4mdmp055)/documents/mcl/pdf/mcl-380-1278a.pdf)

**Section 380.1278b of the Revised School Code regarding the Michigan Merit Curriculum and personal curriculum may be accessed and read online at:**

[www.legislature.mi.gov/\(hzka3q2cfmj4r0vc4mdmp055\)/documents/mcl/pdf/mcl-380-1278b.pdf](http://www.legislature.mi.gov/(hzka3q2cfmj4r0vc4mdmp055)/documents/mcl/pdf/mcl-380-1278b.pdf)

1 Improving High School Graduation Requirements Michigan Merit Curriculum – Research Says That...v.2.07.06

2 Improving High School Graduation Requirements Michigan Merit Curriculum – Research Says That...v.2.07.06

# The Personal Curriculum

## A Tool for Modifying the Michigan Merit Curriculum

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### Background Information *continued*

In August 2006, Education Commission of the States researcher, Jennifer Dounay, reported the following about students and parents aspiration and expectations for completing a college degree:<sup>3</sup>

- Most high school students today (and their parents) believe they should—and will—graduate from high school and complete some form of postsecondary education.
- Six out of ten parents—62%—say a college education is “absolutely necessary” for their child.
- Sixty five percent of Hispanic parents say a college education “is the one thing that can most help young people succeed.”
- Nine out of ten respondents said it was a “very” (63%) or “somewhat” (27%) serious problem when told only 29% of graduates who start high school will eventually graduate from college.
- Ninety percent of Latino and African American high school students in Chicago hoped to attend a four-year college.
- Students (and their parents) are misinformed about what it takes to prepare for college.
- Students whose parents did not go to college need the most assistance in setting goals and choosing high school courses for graduation and post secondary education.
- Research confirms that not all students are able to learn successfully at the same pace, with the same approach, in the same environment, on the same path, and in the same style and manner. Research confirms that every individual assimilates information according to his or her own unique learning style, need, and interest. Learning styles vary. Some students are visual learners, others learn by auditory means, others kinesthetically. Some students learn at a faster pace, others need more time. Some students are distracted when trying to learn in a noisy environment with 30+ other kids. Some students feel intimidated or unsafe in a large classroom environment.
- Research shows high school students who study the arts earn better grades and scores; are less likely to drop out of school; watch fewer hours of television; are less likely to report boredom in school; have a more positive self-concept; and are more involved in community service.<sup>4</sup> Studies show that many students who have difficulty learning through traditional methods can benefit from teaching strategies that include learning in and through the arts.<sup>5</sup>

Further studies show health education and social skills programs improve school and test performance, attendance, and school connectedness.<sup>6</sup> Physical education, structured physical activity and higher fitness levels also directly impact a student’s ability to achieve academically.

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3 Jennifer Dounay, “Involving Families in High School and College Expectations,” High School Policy Brief, Education Commission of the States, Denver, CO, August 2006. [www.ecs.org](http://www.ecs.org)

4 Critical Links: Learning in the Arts and Student Academic and Social Development. Arts Education Partnership. 2002.

5 Howard Gardner, *Disciplined Mind: Beyond Facts Standardized Tests K 12 education that Every Child Deserves*, 2000.

6 Connell, D., Turner, R., and Mason, E. (1985). Summary of findings of the school health education evaluation: health promotion effectiveness, implementation, and costs. *Journal of School Health*, 55(8), 316-321.

# The Personal Curriculum

## A Tool for Modifying the Michigan Merit Curriculum

### Michigan Merit Curriculum (MMC)

| Subject Area Credit Requirements  | Personal Curriculum (PC) Modifications<br>(Sequence and delivery up to district; support courses can count for credit regardless of year)   |
|---|---|
| <b>4 English Language Arts (ELA) Credits</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 credit in 9th, 10th, 11th, and 12th grade</li> <li>• All credits aligned to state content expectations</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ No modification except for students with an Individualized Education Program (IEP) and for transfer students who have completed 2 years of high school</li> </ul>  |
| <b>4 Mathematics Credits</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3 credits aligned with the required state content expectations (i.e., Geometry, Algebra I, and Algebra II)</li> <li>• 1 math or math-related credit (not required to be aligned with state content expectations)</li> <li>• 1 math or math-related credit required in the final year which could include any of the 4 credits described above or may be an additional district credit</li> <li>• Note: Students may earn 2 math credits for Algebra II when the credit is earned over 2 years without requesting a personal curriculum</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Minimum of 2 credits aligned to math content expectations prior to any modification</li> <li>✓ ½ credit of Algebra II can be exchanged for a math or math-related course</li> <li>✓ Additional modifications allowed for students with an IEP and transfer students who have completed 2 years of high school</li> </ul>   |
| <b>3 Science Credits</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 Biology credit</li> <li>• 1 Chemistry or Physics credit</li> <li>• 1 additional science credit</li> <li>• All credits aligned to state content expectations</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ No modification except for students with an IEP and transfer students who have completed 2 years of high school</li> </ul>   |
| <b>3 Social Studies Credits</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ½ Civics credit</li> <li>• ½ Economics credit</li> <li>• 1 U.S. History and Geography credit</li> <li>• 1 World History and Geography credit</li> <li>• All credits aligned to state content expectations</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ No modification of Civics</li> <li>✓ Minimum of 2 social studies credits prior to modification</li> <li>✓ 1 social studies credit (other than Civics) can be exchanged for an additional English language arts, math, science, or world languages credit</li> <li>✓ Additional modifications allowed for students with an IEP and transfer students who have completed 2 years of high school</li> </ul> |
| <b>1 Physical Education and Health Credit</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Credit aligned to state guidelines</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Credit can be exchanged for an additional English language arts, math, science, or world languages credit</li> <li>✓ Additional modifications allowed for students with an IEP and transfer students who have completed 2 years of high school</li> </ul>  |
| <b>1 Visual, Performing, and Applied Arts Credit</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Credit aligned to state guidelines</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Credit can be exchanged for an additional English language arts, math, science, or world languages credit</li> <li>✓ Additional modifications allowed for students with an IEP and transfer students who have completed 2 years of high school</li> </ul>  |
| <b>2 World Languages Credits (Begins with Class of 2016)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Credits earned in grades 9-12 <b>or</b> an equivalent learning experience in grades K-12</li> <li>• Credits aligned to state guidelines</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ No modification except for students with an IEP and transfer students who have completed 2 years of high school</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Online Learning Experience</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Online course, learning experience, or experience is incorporated into one or more required credits</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ No modification except for students with an IEP and transfer students who have completed 2 years of high school</li> </ul>   |

# The Personal Curriculum

## A Tool for Modifying the Michigan Merit Curriculum

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# The Personal Curriculum

## A Tool for Modifying the Michigan Merit Curriculum

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# The Personal Curriculum

## A Tool for Modifying the Michigan Merit Curriculum

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### Frequently Asked Questions *continued*

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# The Personal Curriculum

## A Tool for Modifying the Michigan Merit Curriculum

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### Frequently Asked Questions *continued*

#### Part I: Definitions

**1. Q: What is a personal curriculum?**

**A:** A personal curriculum (PC) is a tool that is provided for in Michigan law 380.1278b that allows specific modifications to be made to certain requirements of the Michigan Merit Curriculum (MMC) in order to individualize the rigor and relevance of the educational experience. While the law specifies the areas in which modifications may be made for specific groups of students, the personal curriculum is intended to help make the MMC accessible to all students while maintaining the academic rigor required to uphold the integrity of the high school diploma.

Allowable modifications to the Michigan Merit Curriculum through the use of a personal curriculum are outlined in the table (*Michigan Merit Curriculum*) above.

**2. Q: Who is eligible to receive a personal curriculum?**

**A:** A personal curriculum may be developed to address the needs of an individual student for one of four reasons:

- A student demonstrates need for modification to the Algebra II requirement of the MMC. The student must complete 2 credits of math (including or equivalent to Algebra I and Geometry) before requesting a PC to modify the Algebra II requirement.
- A student with an IEP demonstrates need for modification to the MMC within the area(s) of his/her disability.
- A student who transfers from a school outside of Michigan or from a non-public school to a public high school after completing the equivalent of two years of high school demonstrates need for modification to the MMC based on previous academic experience.
- A student demonstrates need to modify Social Studies, PE/Health, and/or Visual, Performing, and Applied Arts in order to take credits beyond those required in the areas of Math, English Language Arts, Science, and/or World Languages. The student must earn 2 credits in Social Studies, including .5 credit in Civics before requesting a PC to modify the Social Studies requirement.

**3. Q: Can a student who is considered academically “at-risk” and/or in danger of dropping out of high school, but who does not have an IEP, be provided a PC?**

**A:** A student without an IEP may request a personal curriculum to modify the Algebra II requirement as described above or the Social Studies, VPAA, or PE/Health requirements to earn additional credits of English/Language Arts, Math, Science, or World Languages as described above. Unless the student is also a transfer student, he or she does not qualify for modifications to any other requirements of the MMC.

Students who are considered academically “at-risk” may and should be offered other interventions as identified and developed by schools and/or districts. These interventions may include, but are in no way limited to, differentiated instructional strategies, mentoring, academic support classes, and Response to Intervention (RTI).

# The Personal Curriculum

## A Tool for Modifying the Michigan Merit Curriculum

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### Frequently Asked Questions *continued*

**4. Q: What modifications are allowable through a personal curriculum?**

**A:** See table above entitled *Michigan Merit Curriculum*.

**5. Q: How is the need for a personal curriculum determined?**

**A:** The need for, and potential effectiveness of, a personal curriculum must be determined on a student-by-student basis. A student's Educational Development Plan (EDP), inclusive of postsecondary goals, and Individualized Education Program, or IEP, (for students with disabilities only) should be examined in addition to the student's prior and current academic performance. There are many instructional and structural interventions available to a student that may help him or her access the full MMC successfully without a personal curriculum.

For example, a student who wants to take more English Language Arts, Math, Science, or World Language courses may be able to find space in his or her class schedule to take these courses in lieu of electives rather than modify the MMC credit requirements. A student who is struggling in math may benefit from simultaneous enrollment in a regular Algebra II class and a math support class rather than modify the MMC with a personal curriculum. A student with a disability who is failing his or her science course due to disengagement, boredom, or the need for an alternate instructional strategy may benefit from completing the credit through online learning rather than modifying the MMC with a personal curriculum.

**6. Q: Is a personal curriculum necessary for an alternative education program?**

**A:** No. A PC is not necessarily needed to offer an alternative education program. If a student in an alternative education program is at risk of not meeting graduation requirements or dropping out of school, a parent or guardian may request a PC to make allowable modifications to the MMC. However, a PC is not a vehicle to track all alternative education students in a curriculum that is not consistent with the MMC.

**7. Q: How does the educational development plan (EDP) impact the personal curriculum?**

**A:** Michigan law 380.1278b(11) requires that all students be given the opportunity to develop an educational development plan (EDP) in the 7th grade, and that all students have one completed before entering high school. This means that every student in the State of Michigan enters high school with a plan in place that outlines the student's individual career goals, postsecondary education and/or training goals, and the plan of action the student needs to follow in high school to achieve these goals.

When considering the personal curriculum as an option for any student, the content of his or her EDP must be taken into account in order to determine how or if the PC modifications will impact the goals outlined in the EDP. The need for, and benefit of, the PC modifications must then be weighed against the potential impact on the student's goals as outlined in the EDP. The implementation of a personal curriculum should in no way work against the intent of the MMC to provide all students with a rigorous high school curriculum that prepares them to meet their postsecondary goals.

# The Personal Curriculum

## A Tool for Modifying the Michigan Merit Curriculum

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### Frequently Asked Questions *continued*

**8. Q: What does “practicable” mean in developing appropriate modifications within a personal curriculum?**

**A:** Practicable is an inclusive term meaning as much of the subject area content expectations as possible during high school instruction. Practicable means that the student can reasonably achieve the expectations set forth by the modification while maintaining academic rigor and challenge for that student. Great professional judgment and integrity are required in deciding what is practicable for an individual student in that one must locate the appropriate intersection of challenge and ability, keeping in mind that when expectations are set high, students tend to rise to meet them.

## Part II: Requesting and Approving a Personal Curriculum

**9. Q: Who can request a personal curriculum?**

**A:** Michigan law states that “the parent or legal guardian of a pupil may request a personal curriculum....” An emancipated student may request a PC on his or her own behalf. Further, because 380.1278b does not specifically prohibit school districts from requesting a PC, the law may also be read (in light of the “General Powers” section of 380.11a) to allow schools to initiate the process of developing a PC for a specific student by recommending the PC option to students and/or parents. Regardless of who initiates the PC process, both the parent/legal guardian (or emancipated student) and the superintendent (or designee) must agree to the PC that is developed by the committee in order for it to take effect.

**10. Q: When can a personal curriculum be requested?**

**A:** A request for modification to the Algebra II requirement may be made after the student earns 2 math credits aligned with required state content expectations, including Algebra I and Geometry, or the equivalent thereof.

A request for modification(s) for a student with a disability may be made at any time, but the modification(s) cannot take effect until the student begins high school.

A request for modification to the Social Studies credit requirement in order to earn additional credits in English Language Arts, Math, Science, or World Languages may be made after earning 2 Social Studies credits, including 0.5 credit in Civics.

A request for modification to the PE/Health modification or Visual, Performing, and Applied Arts credit requirements in order to earn additional credits in English Language Arts, Math, Science, or World Languages may be made as early as 9th grade, but must be accompanied by a written four-year plan that clearly shows the additional credits the student intends to take in place of the required credits.

A request for modification(s) for a transfer student may be made upon enrollment in a Michigan public high school after an assessment of previous credits earned determines that the student has completed the equivalent of two years of high school.

# The Personal Curriculum

## A Tool for Modifying the Michigan Merit Curriculum

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### Frequently Asked Questions *continued*

**11. Q: By what process is a personal curriculum developed?**

**A:** Michigan law states that "The personal curriculum shall be developed by a group that includes at least the pupil, at least 1 of the pupil's parents or legal guardian, and the pupil's high school counselor or another designee... selected by the high school principal. In addition, for a pupil who receives special education services, a school psychologist should also be included in this group." This committee is charged with convening to examine the student's request in light of the student's EDP, past and current academic performance, supports and interventions, IEP (if applicable), and any other supporting documents deemed necessary by the committee. The committee develops a proposed PC plan based on the needs of the student, using his or her EDP, which must incorporate as much of the MMC content expectations as is practicable for the student, establish measurable goals, and include a method of evaluation to determine whether or not these goals are met while the PC is in effect.

**12. Q: When does a personal curriculum take effect?**

**A:** A personal curriculum takes effect when it is agreed to by the pupil, the pupil's parent or legal guardian, and the superintendent of the school district or chief executive of the public school academy or his or her designee. If either party refuses agreement, the personal curriculum will not be in effect for the student.

If revisions are made to the PC after it has been put into effect, the revisions must also be agreed to by both parties in order to take effect.

A PC may not take effect until a student is enrolled in high school.

**13. Q: Is there an appeals process for students and/or parents if the request for a PC is denied?**

**A:** Legislation addressing the personal curriculum does not require the establishment of an appeals process for students whose PC is not agreed to, and request consequently denied. School districts may find that establishing such an appeals process before the need arises will support fairness and integrity in the PC process.

**14. Q: Can a personal curriculum be developed for a student to culminate in the completion of high school without a diploma if everyone on the committee, including the student and his or her parent(s), agrees to it?**

**A:** No. As defined in 1278b, the personal curriculum "modifies certain of the Michigan merit standard requirements" in order that a local district "may award a high school diploma to a pupil who successfully completes his or her personal curriculum". The intent of the law is that:

- 1.) the Michigan Merit Curriculum is the foundation for the personal curriculum, both of which are meant to provide a rigorous academic program for all students.
- 2.) a personal curriculum is meant to modify only as much of the MMC as is necessary to make it accessible to and achievable for an individual student.

The intent of the law is not to allow a pathway for schools and/or students and their parents to create a less rigorous course of study for students.

# The Personal Curriculum

## A Tool for Modifying the Michigan Merit Curriculum

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### Frequently Asked Questions *continued*

*The personal curriculum offers an individualized approach to helping students meet the requirements of the MMC and earn a diploma. It is an option for students and schools to use to modify the means by which they achieve the defined end: a diploma. It is not an option to be used to change the end goal itself.*

### Part III: Roles and Responsibilities

**15. Q: What are the roles and responsibilities of the various stakeholders in the PC process?**

**A:** See the table in Appendix A that summarizes these roles as well as additional responsibilities related to ensuring student academic success through the PC process.

**16. Q: Will MDE provide specific forms and procedures for districts to use in implementing the PC option?**

**A:** No. Local districts and their governing boards reserve the power to develop policies, forms, and procedures for use in their districts. The MDE will, however, continue to provide guidance on the PC, including the development of accessible shared spaces, such as the personal curriculum wikispace (located at <http://mdepersonalcurriculum.wikispaces.com/>) for districts to share their work across the state so that ideas may be exchanged and discussed.

**17. Q: Are local districts required to offer the personal curriculum option to students?**

**A:** Yes. Because Michigan law 380.1278b gives parents (and legal guardians) the power to request a personal curriculum, districts and schools are obligated to respond to such requests through the committee described in 1278b(5)(a).

**18. Q: Who qualifies as a “designee” on the PC committee in lieu of a certified counselor?**

**A:** 1278b indicates that the personal curriculum committee shall include “the pupil’s high school counselor or another designee qualified to act in a counseling role under section 1233 or 1233a selected by the high school principal.” This means that the principal has the authority to determine who may serve as the “counselor designee qualified to act in a counseling role” under section 1233 or 1233a of the school code.

### Part IV: Implementing the Personal Curriculum

**19. Q: Does the personal curriculum lead to a diploma?**

**A:** The personal curriculum should be designed to lead to a diploma, incorporating as much of the MMC as is practicable for the individual student while maintaining the rigor of the MMC and the integrity of the diploma.

Should a student fail to meet the requirements of the personal curriculum, the PC will be considered null and void, and the student will be responsible for meeting all standard requirements of the MMC in order to receive a diploma.

# The Personal Curriculum

## A Tool for Modifying the Michigan Merit Curriculum

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### Frequently Asked Questions *continued*

**20. Q: How does a district uphold the rigor of the Michigan Merit Curriculum and the integrity of the high school diploma while offering the personal curriculum option?**

**A:** One underlying assumption of the Michigan Merit Curriculum is that all students can learn and achieve at high levels. This does not mean, however, that all students learn in the same way or on the same timeline. The personal curriculum acknowledges that while we must maintain high expectations of all students, we cannot have a one-size-fits-all approach to ensuring that all students meet these high expectations.

There are many instructional strategies that can and should be utilized to differentiate and individualize instruction for students within the traditional MMC. The intent of the personal curriculum is that students are provided yet one more way of individualizing the rigor and relevance of the educational experience so that they can access and achieve the standards and expectations set by the MMC. The limited scope of allowable modifications under the PC serves to support students in their ability to complete the MMC rather than undermine its integrity.

**21. Q: How should the quarterly communication between parents and teachers be structured for students with a PC as required by 1278b(5)(d)?**

**A:** Local districts have many options in determining how this communication may best take place. Districts may find that it is a helpful function of the PC committee to set up methods and dates of communication in conjunction with the development of the personal curriculum so that all parties have advance notice and can ensure their participation in future progress monitoring activities. Written communication journals, phone conferences, and email are but several alternatives to traditional face-to-face conferences. Local schools and districts tend to know which methods are most successful at maximizing parent participation within their school community.

## Part V: Students with an IEP

**22. Q: Does an IEP supersede the Michigan Merit Curriculum?**

**A:** No. The MMC legislation establishes state requirements for a diploma. The IEP is a written statement for a child with a disability that is developed, reviewed, and revised in accordance with the IDEA. While the two documents are distinct in the purposes, the IEP provides for the child's involvement in and access to the general education curriculum. (See section 300.320 of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act for a more complete definition of the IEP.) Together, the MMC credit requirements and the High School Content Expectations define the general education curriculum for each pupil in the state. The IEP as a separate document provides specific supports to help the student make progress and achieve in the MMC.

**23. Q: Does a student with an IEP automatically receive a personal curriculum?**

**A:** No. Every effort must be made to provide students with an IEP full access to the MMC before making modifications. The majority of students receiving special education services will not need a personal curriculum, as differentiated instructional strategies and interventions do not require a PC.

# The Personal Curriculum

## A Tool for Modifying the Michigan Merit Curriculum

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### Frequently Asked Questions *continued*

When it is determined that a student with an IEP needs a PC, the modifications contained therein should be specific and targeted and NOT based solely on eligibility. It must be the student's disability and not the instructional environment that creates the barrier to access or proficiency. If additional instructional supports and interventions, flexibility in demonstrating proficiency, and additional instructional time will allow the student to meet the expectations, these supports and accommodations should be implemented before resorting to a PC.

**24. Q: How do a student's IEP, EDP, and PC work together to support academic achievement?**

**A:** The first planning tool for a student preparing for high school is the Educational Development Plan (EDP). The EDP outlines the educational pathway including the course of study that provides access to the learning experiences necessary for preparation for success in postsecondary activities (work, community, and continuing learning). The PC is a documented and agreed-upon change to the requirements of the MMC. The PC modification must align with the EDP. The EDP and the PC are the educational plan that outlines the requirements for a diploma. Once a student has established their plan for achieving a diploma, the IEP should support the learning of the requirements necessary for the achievement of a diploma.

**25. Q: Can a student with an IEP receive a PC in the 8th grade in anticipation of starting high school?**

**A:** A student with an IEP may request a personal curriculum at any time, but it cannot take effect until the student begins high school. A personal curriculum allows the modification of Michigan's high school graduation requirements. It cannot be used to modify learning requirements at the elementary or middle school levels.

With the exception of a very small percentage, students with an IEP are required to take the Michigan Merit Exam, which assesses the content covered in the Michigan Merit Curriculum. Students who do not get access to the content of the Michigan Merit Curriculum are unlikely to demonstrate proficiency in that content. If students are denied access to content assessed on the MME, their chances of earning scholarships or demonstrating college readiness are diminished. Therefore, assumptions about a student's capabilities should be carefully considered given the possible negative impact modifications could have on equitable access to the curriculum and postsecondary outcomes.

With targeted interventions and supports, students may surpass the expectations stated in a PC developed in middle school. It is imperative that student progress is monitored to allow students to meet as much of the MMC content as practicable in preparation for success beyond high school.

**26. Q: How much of the Michigan Merit Curriculum (MMC) requirements can be modified for a student with an IEP?**

**A:** Based on current evidence and research, a majority of students receiving special education services will not need a personal curriculum. They will be able to meet the graduation requirements if provided with appropriate supports and instructional interventions.

# The Personal Curriculum

## A Tool for Modifying the Michigan Merit Curriculum

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### Frequently Asked Questions *continued*

Every effort must be made to provide students with an IEP full access to the MMC before making modifications. Modifications to state (MMC) standards and expectations may affect a student's preparation for postsecondary success, ability to perform well on the Michigan Merit Exam, achieve a college ready score on the ACT, access Michigan Promise Scholarship money, and the opportunity to earn a diploma.

For a student with an IEP, the personal curriculum modifications must:

- Incorporate as much of the subject area content expectation as practicable for the student.
- Align with the Educational Development Plan (EDP) and be consistent with the Individualized Education Program (IEP).
- Be based on the impact the student's disability has on accessing or demonstrating proficiency in meeting the expectations.

The modification is allowable if it is determined to be based on the student's disability and how that disability affects performance in the general curriculum.

- Translation – it is the student's disability and not the instructional environment that creates the barrier to access or proficiency. The student's response to supports and interventions needs to be taken into account when determining the appropriateness of any modification.

Modifications are limited to the extent made necessary by the disability.

- Translation – modifications should be specific and targeted and not based solely on eligibility.

Additionally, the personal curriculum modifications should:

- Facilitate progress along the student's career pathway and the achievement of postsecondary goals.
- Enhance the relevance of the student's educational experience.
- Provide access to MMC content knowledge, processes, and skills.
- Provide full access to statewide assessments.
- Provide a gateway to employment and productive adult living.
- Maintain the integrity of the diploma.

The PC must maintain the same number of credits required under the MMC. Modifications to the content must be based on the High School Content Expectations.

#### **27. Q: Does a student with a 504 plan qualify for the same modifications within a PC as a student with an IEP?**

**A:** No. The provisions in the MMC that allow for the consideration of modifications beyond what the personal curriculum allows for general education students are not available to students with 504 accommodations, as they do not meet the federal IDEA 2004 definition of a student with a disability. A student with a 504 plan may, however, request a PC for Algebra II or to take additional courses in English Language Arts, Math, Science, or World Languages as allowed for all students.

# The Personal Curriculum

## A Tool for Modifying the Michigan Merit Curriculum

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### Frequently Asked Questions *continued*

**28. Q: What is meant by “modification not otherwise allowed”?**

**A:** It means that exceptions to the limitations on the personal curriculum stated in the law (e.g., no modifications of ELA, Science, online, etc.) may be allowable for a student with an IEP. However, it is not permissible to create an alternative pathway to graduation. Modifications that erect barriers to progress along the student’s career pathway or jeopardize the achievement of postsecondary goals need to be carefully considered. Ultimately, decisions regarding performance standards for earning MMC credit (i.e., the definition of proficiency in meeting the content expectations that define required MMC credits) and determination of the credit associated with each course, are local district/board decisions. See question 8 for additional information.

The expectation is that the PC will include as much of the High School Content Expectations in the particular subject area as possible.

**29. Q: What modifications are appropriate for a student with an emotional impairment?**

**A:** The committee convened to develop the student’s PC is responsible for making that determination.

Often, a student with an emotional impairment may benefit from an instructional setting or delivery that is different from the traditional classroom. Keep in mind that schools have flexibility within the MMC to vary the method or setting of instructional delivery without impacting the student’s least restrictive environment (LRE) as defined in their IEP. For example, the student may be able to earn a number of credits toward the MMC through a Career and Technical Education (CTE) program or online learning, and these alternatives may be offered without a PC.

**30. Q: Will a personal curriculum allow a student with a cognitive impairment to earn a diploma?**

**A:** The personal curriculum only modifies the Michigan Merit Curriculum. If a student with a cognitive impairment has an IEP that identifies the MMC as his or her course of study, then it would be possible for him or her to have a personal curriculum in place that, like all PCs, should be developed with the intent that it lead to a diploma. If, however, the student’s IEP identifies a course of study other than the MMC, a personal curriculum would not be applicable.

**31. Q: Can a student with an IEP develop a personal curriculum that exempts him or her from Algebra II altogether?**

**A:** A student with an IEP may have a PC that modifies Algebra II beyond the standard 0.5 credit modification allowable with a PC for general education students. The student’s PC may reduce the number of Algebra II content expectations on which the student must demonstrate proficiency.

It is the responsibility of the PC committee to determine what is practicable for the student, while maintaining the rigor of Algebra II and the MMC. Using information about the student’s current ability in the area as well as limitations determined by the disability, and other information in the EDP and IEP, the committee must determine which, if any, of the Algebra II

# The Personal Curriculum

## A Tool for Modifying the Michigan Merit Curriculum

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### Frequently Asked Questions *continued*

HSCE the student can reasonably be expected to master if provided appropriate and targeted supports and interventions.

The PC committee is also responsible for determining the course placement that will best offer the opportunities for meeting as many of the expectations or as much of the content as practicable. For some students, the practicable Algebra II content (e.g., the equivalent of less than half of the Algebra II content) may be best accessed through other courses (e.g., statistics, a special support class, or in a CTE program). The PC should indicate how/where the reduced number of Algebra II expectations will be met and should provide rationale for how the placement supports postsecondary goals.

#### **32. Q: Can local boards of education establish separate diploma requirements?**

**A:** No. The legislation clearly stipulates that a diploma shall not be awarded unless the pupil successfully completes all of the credit requirements in MCL 380.1278a and 380.1278b. This does not prevent districts from issuing alternative certificates such as a GED or certificate of completion for students who do not meet all of the requirements of the MMC. A certificate of completion, however, has no legal standing as a substitute for a diploma. For students with a disability, only a diploma ends the entitlement to a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE). Further, the personal curriculum option is not meant to be used as a convenient escape door for schools to shy away from providing access to the general curriculum for students who are more difficult to reach and teach.

#### **33. Q: What are the implications of completing high school without earning a diploma?**

**A:** The significance of completing high school without earning a diploma depends on career choice, future employment requirements, and plans for education beyond high school. For example, students who complete high school without earning a diploma may enter trade schools, community colleges, and the armed forces. A student may not enroll in a four-year college or university without a diploma, however, and eligibility for the Michigan Promise Grant and other scholarship programs may be compromised. Further, a certificate of completion has no legal standing and does not end a student's right to a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE).

## **Part VI: Transfer Students**

#### **34. Q: Can a previously home-schooled student request a personal curriculum upon enrolling in a public high school?**

**A:** Yes – as long as the student has completed the equivalent of two years of high school credit before enrolling in a Michigan public high school or public school academy. This school or district may use “appropriate assessment examinations to determine what credits, if any, the pupil has earned....”

#### **35. Q: Does a personal curriculum follow a student if he or she moves to a new public school or district within Michigan while in high school?**

**A:** No. Because the law states that the superintendent of the district must agree to the PC, a personal curriculum cannot automatically transfer from one district to another. The student

# The Personal Curriculum

## A Tool for Modifying the Michigan Merit Curriculum

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### Frequently Asked Questions *continued*

may, however, request a PC upon entering the new district, and the PC from the previous district will be a valuable planning tool in developing the PC for the student in the new district.

**36. Q: How does a school or district determine a transfer student's earned credits toward the MMC?**

**A:** It is up to the local school district to determine the criteria by which it will determine credits already earned by the transfer student. For example, if a student transfers from an accredited public high school in another state, the district may choose to transfer credits as comparably as possible based on the student's transcript and corresponding courses of the MMC and/or district graduation requirements. For a student transferring from an unaccredited non-public school within Michigan, the district may choose to require the student to take end-of-course assessments or assessments used for "testing out" purposes, to determine credits earned toward the MMC and/or district graduation requirements. Or the district may base placement and credit transfer on the student's transcript and ability to function effectively in the new course placement.

**37. Q: Can a migrant student be considered a transfer student for the purpose of providing a personal curriculum?**

**A:** The student may be considered a transfer student if he or she has transferred from another state or non-public education program.

## Part VII: Math Modifications

**38. Q: What can be done for a general education student who is struggling to earn the prerequisite math credits necessary to qualify him or her for a personal curriculum modification of Algebra II?**

**A:** A personal curriculum should not be considered a first step in intervention for struggling students. There are a myriad of interventions and strategies, both instructional and structural, that can and should be attempted to support students who are struggling to master Algebra I, Geometry, and/or any content expectations within the MMC. It is vital that these strategies and interventions be implemented in a directed and efficient manner, so that strategies are matched to specific student needs, and support acceleration and mastery rather than repeated failure. Approaches may range from differentiation strategies at the daily lesson level, to Response to Intervention at the course level, to offering the student a daily support class or extended class block to accommodate learning differences. With these same levels of support in middle school mathematics instruction, more students will be prepared for meeting the MMC requirements in high school.

**39. Q: Is a personal curriculum required for a student to take Algebra II over two years for two credits?**

**A:** No. Legislation passed in December 2008 revised 1278a to allow Algebra II to be taken over two years for two credits *without* a personal curriculum.

# The Personal Curriculum

## A Tool for Modifying the Michigan Merit Curriculum

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### Frequently Asked Questions *continued*

**40. Q: If a student plans to take Algebra II over two years for two credits, but then completes only the first year of Algebra II and takes another math course the next year, will he or she have earned one credit in Algebra II?**

**A:** No. The Michigan Merit Curriculum requires students to demonstrate proficiency of content in order to earn credit rather than requiring a specific amount of seat time to earn credit. Lawmakers intended the specific Algebra II revision, allowing students to earn two credits over two years, to be a unique exception to this rule and to allow students more time to master the content of Algebra II. Therefore, if a student intends to take Algebra II over two years for two credits, but then completes just one of the two years, he or she has only been provided the opportunity to demonstrate mastery in half of the Algebra II content and should be awarded only 0.5 credit in Algebra II.

**41. Q: Can a PC be used to modify the 4th year MMC math requirement?**

**A:** No. All students are required to earn a math or math-related credit in their final year of high school. This is an opportunity for students to match a course offering to their postsecondary goals as outlined in their Educational Development Plan (EDP).

**42. Q: Can Geometry or Algebra I be taken over two years for two credits with a personal curriculum?**

**A:** No. This is not an allowable personal curriculum modification of the MMC for general education students. Alternate strategies for addressing the needs of students who may be struggling with these courses are briefly described in question 35. Algebra I and Geometry credits are earned when the content expectations that define the credits are met, regardless of the time involved in earning the credit. Students may take Algebra I or Geometry over two years and earn 0.5 credit for each year.

## Part VIII: Enrichment

**43. Q: Can a modification for Health/PE be implemented at any time?**

**A:** Yes, provided the local district allows the Health/PE requirements to be modified by a personal curriculum. While PC legislation allows for modification to be made to the Health/PE requirement, Michigan statute also requires that all students take PE (380.1502) and receive instruction on HIV/AIDS (380.1169). Because of these conflicting laws, local districts must decide whether or not to allow personal curriculum modification to the Health/PE requirement. Should a district determine that modifications are allowable, a student requesting a PE/Health modification or Visual, Performing, and Applied Arts modification in order to earn additional credits in English Language Arts, Math, Science, or World Languages may request a personal curriculum as early as 9th grade, but must provide a written four-year plan that clearly shows the additional credits the student intends to take in place of the required credits.

# The Personal Curriculum

## A Tool for Modifying the Michigan Merit Curriculum

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### Frequently Asked Questions *continued*

**44. Q: Can a student who completes AP Calculus and all prerequisites before the 12th grade develop a PC to remove the MMC requirement that the student complete a math course in his or her final year of high school?**

**A:** No. All students are required to earn a math or math-related credit in their final year of high school. The student may explore options unavailable at his or her high school through dual enrollment or online coursework.

### Part IX: Miscellaneous Questions

**45. Q: What if a student does not meet the requirements established in his or her personal curriculum?**

**A:** If a student fails to meet the requirements of the PC, then the PC is considered null and void, and the student is responsible for meeting all requirements of the MMC in order to graduate with a diploma. If quarterly communication is maintained as required, then the likelihood that a student does not fulfill the requirements should be significantly reduced.

**46. Q: Will English Language Learners need a personal curriculum to forego the World Languages requirement of the MMC (starting with the class of 2016)?**

**A:** No. The Michigan Merit Curriculum requires 2 credits in World Languages earned in grades 9-12 OR an "equivalent learning experience in grades K-12". Demonstrated proficiency in the student's native language may count as an "equivalent learning experience".

**47. Q: Could a student who transfers in during the final year of high school, but who has only earned math credits equivalent to pre-Algebra, receive a PC to exempt him or her from one or more math courses in order to graduate on time with a diploma?**

**A:** It is possible, depending on the decision of the PC committee and the proficiency guidelines set by the local school district. The PC is intended to allow students to make modifications that provide access to the MMC while upholding its rigor and the integrity of the diploma. It is the role of the local school district to determine the proficiency levels below which the integrity of the diploma is undermined. If the transfer student is enrolled in the district for one full year, the final year of mathematics must be the equivalent of Algebra I or higher. A student who transfers during the senior year should be supported in meeting at least the Algebra I expectations. District policy may determine a higher level of mathematics proficiency.

**48. Q: Can a personal curriculum be created that includes extended time in high school beyond four years?**

**A:** It is not the role of the PC to create an extended timeline for completion of the MMC. Rather, a PC is intended to allow certain modifications that may be needed by certain students to access and demonstrate proficiency on the MMC. An extended timeline falls outside of the scope of the personal curriculum, but may be available as an option for students receiving additional support services.

# The Personal Curriculum

## A Tool for Modifying the Michigan Merit Curriculum

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### Frequently Asked Questions *continued*

**49. Q: Can a personal curriculum be created that incorporates the fourth MMC math or math-related credit into CTE?**

**A:** A personal curriculum is not necessary to earn a math or math-related credit in a CTE program. Students may earn a mathematics credit in a CTE program if the CTE program is fully aligned with the mathematics expectations that define the credit. Students may earn a math-related credit in CTE programs that apply high school mathematics concepts.

**50. Q: Are additional resources that support the implementation of the PC process available for use by districts and schools?**

**A:** A number of new and revised guidance documents and tools are available at the MDE Office of School Improvement website ([www.michigan.gov/mde](http://www.michigan.gov/mde)). A wikispace (<http://mdpersonalcurriculum.wikispaces.com/>) has also been created to facilitate the sharing of work done by local districts and ISDs as they support the development of local policies and procedures.

## Personal Curriculum Suggested Roles and Responsibilities

|                                      | <b>Before a Personal Curriculum is Requested</b>   | <b>Requesting and Developing a Personal Curriculum</b>  | <b>Implementing and Monitoring a Personal Curriculum</b>  |
|--------------------------------------|--|---|---|
| <b>Local Board of Education</b>      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Determine policy for personal curriculum process.</li> <li>• Align course curricula with content expectations.</li> <li>• Determine the credit associated with each course.</li> <li>• Determine proficiency levels for content mastery for credit.</li> <li>• Determine assessments to measure mastery and proficiency levels.</li> <li>• Commit to preparing all students for success beyond high school.</li> </ul>  |   |   |
| <b>School District</b>               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish the protocol for participation on the PC Committee.</li> <li>• Develop a PC agreement, including forms and procedures, that includes:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◊ Alignment with EDP (and IEP, if applicable).</li> <li>◊ Measurable goals.</li> <li>◊ Method of evaluation.</li> <li>◊ Quarterly communication with the parent/guardian.</li> <li>◊ As many of the HSCE as is practicable for the student.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> |   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Superintendent must agree to the personal curriculum developed.</li> <li>• Collect data on personal curricula implemented in the district.</li> <li>• Determine that personal curriculum meets district policy in awarding diploma.</li> </ul> |
| <b>School</b>                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide a guaranteed and viable curriculum aligned with the HSCE.</li> <li>• Provide challenging goals and effective feedback to all students.</li> <li>• Facilitate parent and community involvement.</li> <li>• Establish and maintain a safe and orderly environment.</li> <li>• Maintain collegiality and professionalism among faculty and staff.</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School personnel may initiate the personal curriculum process on a student's behalf by discussing the option with the parent/guardian.</li> </ul>  |   |
| <b>Personal Curriculum Committee</b> |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review student academic and behavior records.</li> <li>• Determine what is practicable for the student.</li> <li>• Establish goals and performance measures.</li> <li>• Develop the PC to align with EDP and IEP (if applicable).</li> <li>• Must include school psychologist if PC is for a student with a disability.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Convene to revise PC as needed.</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Counselor</b>                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide counseling and education and career guidance services to students.</li> <li>• Collaborate with staff to plan instructional interventions, curriculum, and behavior management plans.</li> <li>• Consult and collaborate with students, families, school personnel, and other agencies regarding behavior and education concerns.</li> <li>• Assess students.</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Must participate on the PC committee (or designee).</li> </ul>   |   |
| <b>Teacher</b>                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plan instruction based on HSCE that is designed to help student master content and achieve proficiency.</li> <li>• Manage the classroom to ensure an environment that is conducive to high levels of learning.</li> <li>• Maintain rigor and relevance of instruction and establish relationships with students to facilitate the learning process.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May participate on the PC committee.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participate in quarterly communication with parent/guardian about student's progress.</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Parent/Guardian</b>               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create a home environment that is conducive to supporting learning, study skills, and completion of assignments.</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May request a PC.</li> <li>• Must participate on the PC committee.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Must agree to the personal curriculum developed.</li> <li>• Participate in quarterly communication with teachers about student's progress.</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Student</b>                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish an Educational Development Plan to share postsecondary education and career goals and direct high school course selection.</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May request a personal curriculum if emancipated minor or over age of 18.</li> <li>• Must participate on the PC committee.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrate proficiency on HSCE included in PC.</li> <li>• May participate in quarterly communication with teachers and parent/guardian about PC progress.</li> </ul>  |