

January 2023

## Pennsylvania's Amended Statewide High School Graduation Requirements Take Effect This (2022-23) School Year

Beginning with the graduating class of 2023, students must meet the requirements of at least one approved graduation pathway as defined by [Act 158 of 2018 \(Act 158\)](#). State law allows students to meet statewide graduation requirements by either demonstrating proficiency on Keystone Exams or demonstrating postsecondary preparedness through one of four additional pathways.<sup>1</sup> This means that for students graduating in 2023 and beyond, [five pathways now exist for meeting state high school graduation requirements](#). Students must demonstrate the attainment of one set of pathway criteria to meet the statewide graduation requirement.

- **Keystone Proficiency.** The student attains proficient or advanced scores on the Algebra I, Biology, and Literature Keystone Exams.
- **Keystone Composite.** The student does not score Below Basic on any Keystone Exam, attains a minimum score on at least one Keystone Exam, and attains a Keystone composite score that meets state minimums.
- **Career and Technical Education (CTE) Concentrator.** The student meets local grade-based requirements in each Keystone content area and either attains an industry-based competency certification in the student's CTE program of study, demonstrates a high likelihood of success on an industry-based competency assessment in the student's CTE program of study, or demonstrates readiness for continued engagement in a CTE concentrator program of study.
- **Alternative Assessment.** The student meets local grade-based requirements in each Keystone content area, and for each Keystone Exam for which the student does not have a proficient or advanced score, the student demonstrates **ONE** of the following:
  - A qualifying score on another qualifying assessment, such as the ACT, ACT WorkKeys, ASVAB, PSAT, or SAT;
  - A qualifying score on a related AP or IB exam;
  - A passing grade in a credit-bearing, non-remedial, concurrent enrollment course that is aligned to the respective Keystone Exam content;
  - A passing grade in one LEA-approved, PA Labor & Industry and/or US Department of Labor registered [pre-apprenticeship program](#); or
  - Acceptance into one 4-year program in an accredited non-profit institution of higher education<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> [Keystone Exams](#) will continue as the statewide assessment Pennsylvania uses to comply with accountability requirements set forth in the federal [Every Student Succeeds Act \(ESSA\)](#). Although students will no longer be required to achieve proficiency on the [Keystone Exams](#) to meet the statewide graduation requirement, students must take the [Keystone Exams](#) for purposes of federal accountability and failure to do so will affect a Local Education Agency (LEA) and school's participation rate.

<sup>2</sup> Please Note: This acceptance can be from any non-profit four-year degree granting institution including institutions that do not require ACT/SAT score submissions and institutions that do not charge an application fee to students. If the acceptance is conditional or if the student attains a general acceptance that does not specify acceptance into an explicit degree program or major, some additional criteria must be met. More information about this pathway option is available from the [PA Department of Education](#).

- **Evidence-Based.** The student meets local grade-based requirements for **each** Keystone content area in which a student does not have a score of Proficient or Advanced and provides three additional pieces of evidence as outlined in [PDE's Act 158 Toolkit](#).

Additional pathway opportunities are available to students with special circumstances. A student with a disability who completes a special education program developed by an individualized education program team under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act qualifies to receive a regular high school diploma. A chief school administrator also may waive graduation pathway criteria for a limited number of students who experience extenuating circumstances such as serious illness, death in the student's immediate family, family emergency, frequent school transfers, or transfer from out-of-state in grade 12. Students granted waivers are still required to meet local grade-based requirements in content areas associated with each Keystone Exam.

### For More Information

[PDE's Act 158: Pathways to Graduation Toolkit page](#) provides additional details on the five pathways discussed in this *Advisory* as well as extensive resources and tools to help LEAs and educators understand the Act 158 graduation requirement changes.

For additional information about the implementation of graduation pathways by specific local education agencies, PSEA members should contact their UniServ Representative. For general information about the revised provisions of Act 158, PSEA members can contact PSEA's Education Services personnel: Dr. Gina Gullo ([GGullo@psea.org](mailto:GGullo@psea.org)) for policy inquiries, Ms. Judith Petruzzi ([jpetruzzi@psea.org](mailto:jpetruzzi@psea.org)) for special education inquiries, or Dr. Christopher M. Clayton ([CCLayton@psea.org](mailto:CCLayton@psea.org)) for assessment and certification inquiries.