



Personal Curriculum for Students with Disabilities

Administrative guidelines and forms

January 2015

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Introduction

The Michigan Merit Curriculum identifies a statewide curriculum intended to provide Michigan students with a more rigorous preparation for postsecondary pursuits in an increasingly competitive world economy. In alignment with companion high school content expectations or common core standards adopted by the Michigan Department of Education, school districts choose instructional approaches and design learning environments so that all students, including alternative and at-risk students, are provided the opportunity to benefit from the increased rigor of the MMC. The research is clear--all learners achieve to a higher standard when given the opportunity to learn in a challenging curriculum.

While the MMC is intended to be a rigorous platform for all students, it is not meant to be a barrier to the desired career pathways for individual students. Thus, flexibility is built into the MMC framework by way of the Personal Curriculum (PC) option.

The legislative intent of the PC is to individualize the rigor and relevance of the educational experience by modifying the bar of content expectations to be mastered to a level that is practicable for the student and by permitting certain credit modifications. In this context, “practicable” is an inclusive term meaning as much of the subject area content expectations as possible during the student’s high school instruction. Students with an IEP are permitted somewhat broader latitude for MMC modification, as long as the modifications are necessitated by their disability, are consistent with their IEP and EDP, and do not exceed district decision rules as to what exceeds curriculum modification and instead constitutes the creation of an alternative curriculum. Transfer students from out of state or from a nonpublic school also have the right to request broader MMC modifications, provided certain prerequisites are met.

The PC is an option any student or family can explore as a way to modify certain graduation requirements and still earn a regular high school diploma. The purpose of secondary education is to prepare students for life after high school. Any modification to a student’s graduation requirements needs to be consistent with this purpose. The high school diploma is documentation that the student has met the expectation and possesses the knowledge and skills necessary for postsecondary success. Students who are not pursuing the diploma or students who were are unable to meet modified MMC requirements do not need a personal curriculum.

Learn more about the MMC at www.michigan.gov/highschool

Purpose of the Personal Curriculum

The PC is a process to modify specific credit requirements and/or content expectations based on the individual learning needs of the student. It is designed to serve students who want to accelerate or go beyond the MMC requirements and students who need to individualize learning requirements to meet the MMC requirements.

The personal curriculum option allows the board of a school district or public school academy to award a regular high school diploma provided the student completes the requirements of the PC, including as many of the content expectations of the MMC as practicable.

Providing Flexibility

A PC allows several flexible learning options, including:

- For any student, earning additional credit in specific subject areas and counting these credits toward meeting the state requirements.
- For students challenged with meeting Algebra II expectations, adjusting mathematics requirements.
- **For students with an IEP, allowing modifications of the MMC necessary to demonstrate proficiency.**
- For students transferring to a district from out of state or from a nonpublic school, modifications of requirements under limited conditions.

Above information taken from MDE Personal Curriculum Parent and Educator Guide June 2010. This guidance document will specifically address the Personal Curriculum for students with disabilities.

Personal curriculum background information for students with IEP's

MCL 380.1278b

The Michigan Merit Curriculum law says:

Sec. 1278b(5) The parent or legal guardian of a pupil who has completed grade 9 ...[Goes on to list other requesters] may request a personal curriculum under this subsection for the pupil that modifies certain of the Michigan merit standard requirements . . .

"If all of the . . . requirements are met, then the board of a school district or board of directors of a public school academy may award a high school diploma to a pupil who successfully completes his or her personal curriculum even if it does not meet the requirements of the Michigan merit standard . . ." MCL 380.1278b(5)

Sec. 1278b(5)(k) If the parent or legal guardian of a pupil requests, as part of the pupil's personal curriculum, a modification of the Michigan merit standard requirements that would not otherwise be allowed under this section and demonstrates that the modification is necessary because the pupil is a child with a disability, the school district or public school academy may allow that additional modification to the extent necessary because the pupil's disability if the

group under subdivision (a) determines that the modification is consistent with both the pupil's *educational development plan* under subsection (11) and the pupils *individualized education program*.

Sec. 1278b(6) If a pupil receives special education services, his or her individualized education program, in accordance with the Federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, must identify the supports, accommodations, and modifications necessary to allow him or her to progress in the Michigan Merit Curriculum requirements, or in a personal curriculum, and meet the requirements for a high school diploma.

House Bills 4465 and 4466, which amend the Michigan Merit Curriculum, have some implications for the use and implementation of the Personal Curriculum (PC). These bills take effect for the graduating class of 2015.

The PC amendments are as follows:

- If requested by the allowable parties, a PC must be developed. The developed PC still needs to be agreed upon by the parent or legal guardian and the superintendent or school designee before taking effect.
- The group of individuals that develops the PC must now include a teacher **OR** guidance counselor. This teacher should be directly educating the student and have expertise in the subject area being modified. An in-person meeting is no longer required.
- A student using a PC for the Algebra II content must now complete at least 1 math credit during his or her final 2 years of school. This rule previously stated that the student had to complete a math course in his or her final year.
- Students may substitute a formal Career and Technical Education (CTE) program (regardless of content) for up to 1 credit of social studies; 1 credit of health and physical education; and 1 credit of visual, performing, or applied arts.
- The department or any school district shall not limit or discourage the number of students with a PC on any basis other than the best interest of each individual student.
- Schools shall provide an annual notice to parents or guardians explaining the PC and that all students are entitled to a PC. This notice shall be sent to a student's home and can take several forms including written letter, newsletter, or handbook. This notice shall **ALSO** be posted on the school's public website.

What is a Personal Curriculum?

Personal Curriculum (PC): The PC is a mechanism that can be initiated by a parent or school personnel to modify specific MMC credits and/or content expectations based on the individual learning needs of the student. The intent of the PC option is to assure the relevance of the student's course of study and facilitate the achievement of postsecondary goals. The use of the PC option should be the exception as the intent of the MMC is to provide a rigorous and relevant curriculum for all students who obtain a high school diploma.

The PC must align with the high school content expectations and reduce barriers that may limit a student's opportunity to pursue their career pathway and offer a challenging curriculum.

The legislative intent of the personal curriculum is to individualize the rigor and relevance of the educational experience and provide a tool to help ALL students succeed with the MMC.

Who is eligible for personal curriculum?

All students in grades 9-12 are eligible. Students with a documented disability and individualized education program (IEP) are eligible, if appropriate, to modify the MMC to a greater extent than their non-disabled peers.

Is a student eligible for a high school diploma if they have a PC?

The board of the local school district or public school academy may award a diploma to a student who has successfully completed a PC. However, each variance from the MMC will need to be considered individually. The MMC requires the student to earn credits and certain subject areas in order to earn a Michigan diploma. The student must demonstrate competencies in core subject areas.

Who can request a personal curriculum?

A parent, legal guardian, emancipated or age of majority student, or any qualified school personnel (teacher who is currently teaching the pupil, who currently teaches in or whose expertise is in a subject area proposed to be modified by the PC, or who is determined by the principal to have qualifications otherwise relevant to developing a PC, or a school counselor or school employee qualified to act in a counseling role under state law) can request a PC.

(Note: While the possible need for a PC is an appropriate transition topic to be discussed at an IEP team meeting, IEP teams may not make the request for a PC.)

Who develops the personal curriculum?

- Student
- Parent/Guardian unless student is over 18
- Current teacher or teacher with expertise/relevant knowledge in subject area proposed to be modified
- Student's high school counselor or another designee qualified to act in a counseling role under state law
- For a student who receives special education services, a school psychologist

NOTE: THE PC IS NOT DEVELOPED IN THE IEP PROCESS OR BY THE IEP TEAM

When can a personal curriculum be requested?

For a student with an IEP, a request for modification may be made any time, but the modification cannot take effect until the student begins high school. (MDE PC FAQ June 2010 p 11)

What can be modified for a student with an IEP?

- No restrictions on what can be modified, except the total number of required credits overall in the total number of credits per core content area.
- Must incorporate as much of the content expectations as practicable
- May modify MDE's content expectations
- Subject to oversight/monitoring by MDE (e.g. annual submission of number of PCs per district, percentage of students granted regular high school diplomas versus % demonstrating proficiency on the a ACT)

Can the IEP team determine the modifications for the personal curriculum?

“The intent of the IEP is to support access to and achievement in the general curriculum, not to make exceptions to it... The overarching purpose of the IEP is to identify appropriate supports, accommodations, and modifications necessary to allow the pupil to progress in meeting the requirements of the MMC or in the personal curriculum. It is not the function of the IEP to specify individual classes or curriculum or to determine or modify graduation requirements.”
MDE Q&A p. 59

Please see the document in these guidelines titled, “Accommodations for the IEP.”

Is a student whose course of study is identified as “Certificate of Completion” eligible for a PC?

No. “Course of study” refers to a portion of the IEP for a student with a disability that is filled out in the context of transition planning. This connotes a decision to pursue an alternate curriculum to the MMC. The PC is only available as an option to modify the MMC.

The decision to pursue a certificate of completion versus a high school diploma requires careful reflection based on knowledge of the student's disability and how it impacts the student's progress in the curriculum. This in turn entails examining the student's performance on content expectations over a number of years preceding high school, examining the MMC that will be unfolding, and looking at the decision rules by which PC development teams will be found (i.e. will there be enough latitude to modify the MMC to the point that the student has a realistic chance of succeeding even with the PC). In the end, the decision whether to pursue a regular high school diploma or certificate of completion should be informed by discussion in the IEP team process, but should be a decision that is made by the parents or age of majority student. If, despite the concern of school staff, the diploma course of study is chosen, the best case scenario is

that the student may succeed, with or without a PC. At worst, the decision can be revisited at a subsequent IEP team meeting and the certificate of completion pursued.

Is a student eligible for high school diploma if they have a PC?

A student who successfully completes a PC and fulfills any additional local Board of Education graduation requirements is to be awarded a high school diploma.

What if the student does not complete or pass the courses outlined in the PC?

If the student does not fulfill the approved personal curriculum, the PC is null and void, and the student is obligated to meet the standard MMC requirements that were waived by the personal curriculum in order to be eligible to graduate.

Can a student who is assessed by using a MI-Access alternate assessment be eligible for a high school diploma?

Yes. A student does not need to pass the Michigan merit exam in order to receive a high school diploma in Michigan. However, it is unlikely (although not impossible) that a student who was recommended to take the Supported Independence MI-Access Assessment would be an appropriate candidate for diploma with a PC. For a student recommended to take the functional performance MI-Access assessment, the diploma course of study would not be a certainty but could be a more likely prospect (with a PC).

What are the requirements for monitoring progress towards the goals in the PC?

Public Law 623 section 5(d) states: “the pupil’s parent or legal guardian shall be in communication with each of the pupil’s teachers at least once each calendar quarter to monitor the pupil’s progress towards the goals contained in the pupil’s personal curriculum.”

Specific requirements for a PC for a student with a disability

The personal curriculum modification must have a direct and substantial relationship to the disability.

In order to receive a modification or credit substitution, there must be prior documentation that a deficit exists in the core content area. For example, a student with a learning disability in reading decoding or written expression should not be granted a modification to the math requirement if they do not have a history (with supporting assessments/data) to support this need. Accommodations may be provided through the IEP to address access to the reading portions of the math curriculum.

On the other hand, a student with a mild cognitive impairment will have global delays in all core subject areas and may need modification and multiple requirements.

Personal curriculum must align with IEP and EDP.

The transition page of the IEP should be aligned with the career pathway, career goal, and education/training goal. For students with disabilities, the EDP (which must be completed by the end of eighth grade) fulfills many of the secondary transition requirements of IDEA 2004 long before the IEP transition components are required (the IEP year that the student turned 16). Since the EDP addresses education, career goals, strategies, and classes, it makes sense to complete the initial planning for students with disabilities by incorporating training goals and adult living goals as appropriate. This helps create alignment between the essential accountabilities of both general and special education.

Personal Curriculum and non-disability related work habits.

Maintaining the spirit and intent of the law is a priority for the district if a student is not able to complete a course(s) due to lack of effort, absenteeism (unrelated to disability), etc., this would not be grounds for modification.

Personal Curriculum and total number of credits.

While modifications in course substitutions are allowable, the total number of credits the local school district requires for a high school diploma may not be altered.

Acknowledgements

Any future changes in legislation or local district school board policy will impact this document and will require review.

The content of this document was provided by Michelle Proulx, LCISD Director of Special Education in collaboration with the Elma High School personal curriculum committee and reviewed by Sharon LaPointe, P.C. of LaPointe and Butler and Michigan Department of Education.

Other Support Documents

1. Personal Curriculum – MDE
http://www.michigan.gov/mde/0,1607,7-140-6530_30334_49879---.00html
2. Michigan Association of Administrators of Special Education (MAASE) wiki PC
<http://maase.pbworks.com/w/page/39123598/MMC-and-Personal-Curriculum>
3. MDE Personal Curriculum wikispaces page
<http://mdepersonalcurriculum.wikispaces.com>
4. Michigan School Code <http://www.legislature.mi.gov>
380.1278a Requirements for high school diploma
380.1278b Award of high school diploma: credit requirements; personal curriculum; annual report.
5. Michigan Merit Curriculum www.michigan.gov/highschool
6. HSCE and CCSS Alignment Document
http://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/finall_CCSS_Alignment_Docs_358314_7.pdf
7. Common Core State Standards <http://www.corestandards.org>

Sample Document

Personal Curriculum Modifications for Students with Disabilities

Local district decisions - these may vary per district

✓ Modify the required standards for the course

- Reduce the number of standards required for the course below 100% of power expectations, but no lower than 90%
- Reduce the cut score proficiency level below 60%, but not more than 50%

NOTE: A personal curriculum is NOT required for the following modifications of Algebra II:

- a. Taking the Algebra II content over two years for two credits;
- b. Taking the Algebra II content over 1.5 years for 1.5 credits

✓ Substitute a required MMC course

- Substituted course (such as Algebra II, Chemistry, World Language, etc.) must be listed on PC.
- For substituted course, must have on file: course syllabus including content expectations and assessment measures. Course must be approved by board (through high school course offerings).

✓ Adapted special education classes

- Adapted special education classes are to align directly with the general education class. Essential standards are utilized for instruction and assessment.
- Due to the fact that the curriculum is fully aligned, a PC is not required for a student enrolled in an adapted core class. The exception to this rule would be if the course is utilized as a substitution for a required core class that is not aligned (i.e. World Language, Algebra II, etc.)
 - For example, a student enrolled in transition capstone course in place of English would not require a PC. MMC requires an English credit in 12th grade, not a specific course.
 - If the student was enrolled in life skills or computer aided drafting as a substitution for a world language requirement, a PC would be required

✓ Physical education modification

- Physical education standards/content expectations may be modified if supported by disability.
- Physical education course substitution should only be approved if a physician statement is on file indicating that student cannot participate due to the disability.

Sample Document

Accommodations for the IEP

The following supplemental aids and services may be included in the IEP, and do not require a personal curriculum in order to implement. Remember, accommodations should be required over time, and not just developed for particular assessment (ACT) or purpose (PC).

1. The student will be assessed for proficiency at more frequent intervals than the typical population. Units of instruction which are assessed should not exceed X days/weeks .
2. The student will have more than one opportunity to demonstrate proficiency on summative assessments (i.e. will be allowed to retake the summative assessment after re-teaching and use the higher score for calculating the final grade). IEP should specify course(s).
3. The student will be provided with an alternate assessment format covering the same standards as all other students. IEP must specify format: oral responses instead of essay, multiple choice rather than constructed response, etc. **NOTE:** The format of the assessment cannot undermine the integrity of the assessment or the construct which the assessment is designed to measure.
4. The student will be graded on a pass/fail or credit/no credit option rather than a letter grade. IEP must specify course. **NOTE:** “credit” or “pass” is still based on the minimum proficiency levels established in board policy, so the IEPT would still need to make a decision about the cut score (i.e. proficiency on all standards versus essential standards).
5. The student's grade will be based only on assessments of the standards and will not be based on formative assessments, practice work, or other assignments that are not designed as summative assessments of standards.

The following modifications would require a personal curriculum:

1. Demonstrating proficiency in an MMC course with a performance level of less than 60% (whether on all standards or just the essential standards).
2. Demonstrating proficiency on a subset of standards that is less than the set of essential standards.
3. Substituting another course for required MMC course.
4. Waiving any MMC required course.