

GRADUATION POLICY

This Graduation Policy was reviewed and approved by The Cottonwood School (“Charter School” or “TCS”) Board of Directors as follows:

HOMESTUDY PATHWAY - Course Requirements for Graduation

TCS students enrolled in the **Homestudy Program** are expected to meet the requirements as set forth in the Charter. The current Charter requires a minimum of 200 credits as follows:

Subject Area	Graduation Requirements	Credits
Social Studies	6 semester courses <i>(Must include 1 year of US History, 1 year World History, 1 semester of Government, and 1 semester of Economics)</i>	30
English	6 semester courses	30
Math	4 semester courses (Algebra 1 must be completed)	20
Science	4 semester courses <i>(Must include 1 year of Physical Science and 1 year of Life Science)</i>	20
Visual & Performing Arts	2 semester courses	10
World Language		

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Electives	18 semester courses	90
Total =		200 Credits

* Please note that once a subject area graduation requirement has been fulfilled, all excess credits will be rolled over to the Electives category.

Suggested Course Sequence			
9 th Grade	10 th Grade	11 th Grade	12 th Grade
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> English 9 Algebra 1 Physical Science or Earth Science Elective / Elective Elective / Elective 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> World History English 10 Math Biology Elective / Elective 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> US History English 11 World Language or Visual & Performing Arts Elective / Elective Elective / Elective 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Economics and Government Elective / Elective Elective / Elective Elective / Elective Elective / Elective

SITE-BASED PATHWAY – Course Requirements for Graduation

TCS students enrolled in the **SITE-BASED Program** are expected to meet the requirements as set forth in the Charter. The current Charter requires a minimum of 230 credits as follows:

Graduation Requirements	
English	40 credits

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History/Social Science	
World History	10 Credits
US History	10 Credits
US Government	5 Credits
Economics	5 Credits
Mathematics (must include Algebra 1)	20 Credits
Laboratory Science	
Biology	10 Credits
Chemistry	10 Credits
Introduction to Physical Science	10 Credits
College Preparatory Electives	90 Credits
Visual and Performing Arts (included in College Preparatory Electives)	10 Credits
World Language	20 Credits
Total Credits Required	230 Credits

By Graduation, All Site-Based Students Will:

- Plan and participate in one field study a year
- Attempt an independent Design Thinking venture
- Give multiple presentations including performances to the community
- Plan and participate in service-learning each year

COLLEGE PREPARATORY COURSEWORK (“A-G” Requirements)

The graduation course requirements above for both the site-based and homestudy programs do NOT completely align with the A-G requirements that set forth the minimum standards for admission to California State University and University of California Colleges. **Accordingly, a student may meet the requirements to graduate with a diploma from TCS, without having met all course requirements for admission to a CSU or UC college.**

The minimum course requirements for admission to a CSU or UC college are as follows:

A-G	Subject Area	Subject Requirement
a	History Social Science	2 years <i>(1 year of World History and 1 year of US History, or ½ year of US History and ½ year of Government)</i>
b	English	4 years
c	Mathematics	3 years <i>(Algebra or higher)</i>
d	Laboratory Science	2 years <i>(At least 2 of the 3 disciplines of Biology, Chemistry, and Physics)</i>

e	Language Other Than English	2 years (Must be 2 years of the same language)
f	Visual & Performing Arts	1 year (Dance, Interdisciplinary Arts, Music, Theater, or Visual Art)
g	College-Preparatory Elective	1 year

Students who plan to apply to the UC or CSU systems will need to fulfill the “a-g” requirements above.

All “a-g” courses must be completed with a grade of C or better. There are alternative ways to meet “a-g” requirements through testing and community college courses. Students can check the progress of their “a-g” requirements by consulting with their high school counselor.

Subject requirements will vary for private and out-of-state colleges and universities. Students applying to out-of-state or private colleges should check with the admissions office of the college or university of interest to verify requirements ahead of time.

Transfer Credits

To determine whether students transferring into TCS have met course requirements, TCS’s Executive Director or Designee will establish procedures to evaluate the comparability of course and/or students’ understanding of course content. Such procedures shall include methods for determining the number of years of school attendance, the specific courses completed by the student, and the value of credits earned. TCS shall accept for credit full or partial coursework satisfactorily completed by students while attending a public district or charter school, juvenile court school, or nonpublic nonsectarian school or agency.

Reduced Requirements for Foster and Highly Mobile Students

TCS recognizes that certain students are at risk of not completing high school due to interruptions in education and high mobility. TCS shall provide eligible highly mobile youth with the option to complete reduced course requirements to earn a high school diploma.

Highly mobile youth includes a foster youth, a student who is a homeless child or youth, a former juvenile court school student, a student who is a child of a military family, a student who is a migratory child, or a student participating in a newcomer program.

A highly mobile youth who transfers into TCS any time after the youth completed their second year of high school or is participating in a newcomer program, and is unable to complete TCS's course requirements as defined above by the end of the Student's fourth year of high school will have the option to be exempted from all requirements that exceed California's minimum high school graduation requirements.

If a student is found eligible for an exemption to TCS's graduation requirements, TCS will notify the student and the student's parent/guardian/educational rights-holder ("ERH") if any of the requirements that are waived will affect the student's ability to gain admission to a postsecondary educational institution and shall provide information about transfer opportunities available through the California Community Colleges.

An identified youth and/or their ERH have the ultimate right to decide if the youth will pursue a high school diploma pursuant to the California minimum requirements or continue for the fifth year of high school to complete TCS's course requirements. TCS will not require a student to graduate before the completion of their fourth year.

For additional information regarding graduation requirements for highly mobile youth, the Charter School's complete policy Education of Foster and Mobile Youth Policy is available upon request at the main office.

Differential Graduation and Competency for Students with Disabilities

TCS recognizes that students with disabilities are entitled to a course of study that provides them with a free appropriate public education ("FAPE") and that modifications to TCS's regular course of study may be needed on an individualized basis to provide FAPE. In accordance with the law, each student's individualized education program ("IEP") team shall determine the appropriate goals, as well as any appropriate individual accommodations necessary for measuring the academic achievement and functional performance of the student on daily instruction and state and districtwide assessments. The IEP team shall also determine the appropriate graduation track for each student with a disability based on the student's ability to complete the Charter School's prescribed course of study to earn a high school diploma.

No student shall be classified as eligible for differential standards of proficiency for the purpose of circumventing the legal requirement to maintain academic eligibility for extracurricular or cocurricular activities.

Certificate of Completion Pathway

TCS will ensure that its COC pathway has an effective, research-based curriculum that includes life skills. Curriculum will be provided at a student's independent level with access to grade-level general education curriculum and standards. The total number of credits required for a student who is working towards a certificate of completion is 130 credits.

The Charter School Executive Director or designee shall award a certificate of completion instead of a high school diploma if a student with exceptional needs has **minimally met one (1)** of the following requirements:

1. Satisfactorily completed a prescribed alternative course of study (130 credits) approved by the Charter School Governing Board which has jurisdiction over the student as identified in the IEP.
2. Satisfactorily met the student's IEP goals and objectives during high school as determined by the IEP team.
3. Satisfactorily attended high school, participated in the instruction as prescribed in the student's IEP, and met the objectives of the statement of transition services.

The Executive Director or designee shall ensure a student with disabilities who meets any of the criteria specified above shall be eligible to participate in any graduation ceremony and any Charter School activity related to graduation in which a graduating student of similar age without disabilities would be eligible to participate. In addition, the Executive Director or designee shall ensure that the student will continue to have access to special education-related supports and services until the student meets the Charter School's criteria to receive a high school diploma or until age 22.

Whether a student receives a certificate of completion, or a diploma is confidential. TCS does not inform other students whether their peers are receiving a certificate or a diploma, and all students will participate equally in graduation ceremonies and activities.

California High School Proficiency Exam

The California High School Proficiency Examination ("CHSPE") is a test for students who need to verify their high school level skills. In some cases, students take the test and leave high school early to work or attend college. Those who pass the test receive a Certificate of Proficiency, which is equal by law to a California high school diploma, from the State Board of Education. However, the Certificate of Proficiency is not equivalent to completing all coursework required for graduation from high school. If a student is planning to continue their studies in a college or university, they should contact the admissions office of the institution they plan to attend so that the student may understand that institution's admission requirements including whether or not the Certificate of Proficiency will be sufficient for admission.

People who are sixteen years of age or older; or who have completed one year of enrollment in grade ten; or who will have completed one year of enrollment in grade ten at the end of the semester during which the exam is administered may take the test. There is no upper age limit to take the test and current enrollment in high school is not required to take the exam. The CHSPE is given twice each year at many sites throughout the state. In addition to regular examinations, the examinations may also be conducted for all eligible persons at least once during each summer recess and may be conducted at any other time that the California Department of Education ("CDE") deems necessary to accommodate eligible persons whose religious convictions or

physical handicaps prevent their attending one of the regular examinations. The test covers three subjects: language, reading, and mathematics. There is a fee to take the test, though the fee will be waived for homeless and foster youth who submit required paperwork, and for examinees who have not attained 25 years of age as of the date of the scheduled examination

TCS will distribute an announcement to each student in grades eleven and twelve explaining the CHSPE. This announcement will be distributed in time sufficient to enable interested students to meet all examination registration requirements for the fall test of that year.

Honorary Diploma

TCS may confer an honorary high school diploma upon a student who is terminally ill. The honorary high school diploma will be clearly distinguishable from the regular diploma of graduation awarded by TCS.

Retroactive Diploma

TCS may retroactively grant a high school diploma to a student who has not received a high school diploma if they meet the following conditions:

1. The student was in their senior year of high school during the 2019–20 school year;
2. in good academic standing and on track to graduate at the end of the 2019–20 school year, as of March 1, 2020; and
3. unable to complete the statewide graduation requirements as a result of the COVID-19 crisis.

Extended Opportunities for High School Coursework Completion

For any student who, in the 2020–21 school year, was in their 3rd or 4th year of high school, TCS shall:

1. Exempt the student from all coursework and other requirements adopted by the Board that are in addition to the statewide coursework requirements.
2. Provide the opportunity to complete the statewide coursework required for graduation if the student is not on track to graduate. This may include, among other opportunities for completion of the coursework, a 5th year of instruction.

Withholding a Diploma

In accordance with Education Code section 48904, if the student willfully cut, defaced, or otherwise injured the school property or willfully not returned upon demand of an employee any property loaned to the student and after affording the student their due process rights, a student's diploma may be withheld until such time as the student or the student's parent/guardian has paid for the damages. TCS shall notify the parent/guardian/ERH of the student in writing of the pupil's alleged misconduct before withholding the student's diploma. If the student or the student's

parent/guardian are unable to pay for the damages or return the property, TCS shall provide a program of voluntary work for the student in lieu of the payment of monetary damages.

Graduation Ceremony

TCS's graduation ceremony and related activities (e.g., grad night) are extracurricular educational activities, such that participation in these activities is not an absolute right.

To participate in the graduation ceremony, students must demonstrate one of the following:

1. Completion of the minimum 200 or 230 credits (depending on the program/pathway student is enrolled in) as described above.
2. Completion of sufficient credits to satisfy the minimum required credits by the end of summer session and have enrolled in the appropriate summer session classes.
3. Eligibility for a Certificate of Completion, consistent with this Policy.

Students who meet the above requirements may still not be eligible to participate in the graduation ceremony and related activities if the Student does not demonstrate a record of conduct and citizen consistent with TCS's student Conduct and Behavior Policy. The Executive Director or designee will determine a student's ability to participate in graduation ceremonies and/or activities. Prior to denial of the privilege(s), the student, and where practicable their parent or guardian, shall be made aware of the grounds for such denial and shall be given an opportunity to respond to the proposed denial. If privilege(s) are to be denied, the student and parent/guardian shall receive written notice of the denied privilege and the means whereby the individual may appeal this decision. If a student has an IEP plan or 504 plan, any decisions regarding that student's participation in graduation ceremony/activities will be made by the IEP/504 team and will include the parent/guardian.

Any student participating in a graduation ceremony or activity shall comply with TCS policies pertaining to student conduct.

The Executive Director or designee may require graduating students to wear ceremonial attire, such as cap and gown, at the ceremony. Any required attire will be provided to students free of charge for use during the ceremony. A student and/or parent/guardian will have the option of purchasing a cap and gown as a keepsake. Students are permitted to wear tribal regalia or recognized objects of religious or cultural significance as an adornment at the graduation ceremony, in addition to but not instead of the required cap and gown. Any accessory, object or adornment that is likely to cause a substantial disruption of, or interference with, the graduation ceremony will not be permitted. Any graduating student who has completed basic training and is an active member of any branch of the United States Armed Forces may, at their option, wear their military dress uniform at the ceremony.