

BOARD OF EDUCATION OF HARFORD COUNTY INFORMATIONAL REPORT RECOMMENDATION ON PROPOSED NEW BOARD POLICY

FINANCIAL LITERACY GRADUATION REQUIREMENT

May 2026

Background Information:

The Board maintains a policy manual which sets forth the various policies of the Harford County Public Schools. The manual contains policies which are either required by federal and state law and regulation or which are, in the Board's judgment, necessary and appropriate for the school system to operate in a lawful, appropriate and effective manner.

This informational report concerns a proposed new policy establishing a personal financial literacy graduation requirement for all students pursuing a Maryland High School Diploma from Harford County Public Schools, effective with students entering Grade 9 for the first time in the 2028-2029 school year.

Discussion:

Maryland law and COMAR 13A.04.06 establish personal financial literacy as a required program of instruction in Maryland public schools, and Maryland Education Article §7-205.5 provides the statutory basis for financial literacy instruction at the high school level. In recognition of the growing complexity of personal financial decisions facing young people, this policy is proposed to codify a formal graduation requirement aligned with state standards.

The proposed policy requires all HCPS students pursuing a Maryland High School Diploma to successfully complete a minimum of one-half (0.5) credit in personal financial literacy as a condition of graduation, beginning with the class entering Grade 9 in the 2028-2029 school year (Class of 2032 and beyond). The requirement is grounded in the six financial literacy content domains established by the MSDE Personal Financial Literacy State Curriculum (COMAR 13A.04.06.01):

- Making informed and financially responsible decisions
- Relating careers, education, and income
- Planning and managing personal finances
- Managing credit and debt
- Creating and building personal wealth
- Managing risks and preserving wealth

To ensure students are not subjected to an increased overall graduation credit burden as a result of this new requirement, the policy simultaneously reduces the Physical Education credit requirement by 0.5 credit — from 1.0 to 0.5 credit — effective with the same entering freshman cohort. This reduction aligns the HCPS Physical Education requirement with the Maryland State minimum (COMAR 13A.03.02), and preserves the minimum total graduation credit requirement at 26.0 credits.

Students may satisfy the financial literacy requirement through one of the following approved pathways:

- Successful completion of a standalone personal financial literacy course offered by HCPS and listed in the Student Education Planning Guide (SEPG)
- Successful completion of an approved Career and Technology Education (CTE) course or pathway formally reviewed and approved by the Superintendent or designee as meeting the MSDE financial literacy content standards in full
- Acceptance of equivalent transfer credit from another accredited school system, subject to review and approval by the student’s school counselor and building principal
- Successful completion of a course in any subject area incorporating substantial financial literacy content, formally reviewed and approved by the Superintendent or designee as meeting the MSDE standards in full, and listed in the HCPS SEPG

Students with disabilities who are working toward a Maryland High School Diploma shall be afforded equal access to the financial literacy requirement in a manner consistent with their Individualized Education Program (IEP), in compliance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), 20 U.S.C. §1400 et seq.

The Superintendent or designee is directed to begin developing administrative regulations, course approval processes, and teacher capacity plans no later than the 2027-2028 school year in preparation for full implementation. School counselors will be responsible for informing incoming ninth-grade students and their parents or guardians of the requirement beginning with the 2028-2029 school year, and for incorporating the requirement into each student’s six-year education plan.

The table below reflects proposed changes to the HCPS graduation credit requirements:

HCPS High School Graduation Credit Requirements – Maryland State vs. Current HCPS vs. Proposed HCPS			
Subject Area	MD State Min. (COMAR)	Current HCPS (Class of 2025+)	Proposed HCPS (Class of 2032+)
English	4.0	4.0	4.0
Mathematics (incl. Algebra I & Geometry)	4.0	4.0	4.0
Science	3.0	3.0	3.0
Social Studies (incl. American Government, World History, U.S. History)	3.0	3.0	3.0
Fine Arts	1.0	1.0	1.0
Physical Education	0.5	1.0 *	0.5
Health Education	1.0	1.0	1.0
Computer Science / Technology Education	1.0	1.0	1.0
World Language or CTE / Career Pathway Completer	2.0 min.	4.0–6.0 *	4.0–6.0 *
Local Electives	At LEA discretion	Varies (to reach 26.0 total)	Varies (to reach 26.0 total)
Financial Literacy	Not Required	Not Required	0.5 (NEW)

Minimum Total Credits Required	22.0	26.0	26.0
---------------------------------------	-------------	-------------	-------------

** HCPS currently requires 1.0 credit of Physical Education (exceeding the state minimum of 0.5). Under this policy, the HCPS Physical Education requirement is reduced to 0.5 credit, aligning with the state minimum, effective with students entering Grade 9 in the 2028-2029 school year. HCPS requires 4.0–6.0 credits for Career Pathway & Completer Programs (exceeding the state minimum of 2.0 credits of World Language or CTE); this requirement is unchanged by this policy. Green cells indicate the newly added financial literacy requirement.*

Attachments:

- Proposed new Board Policy: Financial Literacy Graduation Requirement

Recommendation:

For the foregoing reasons, the undersigned Board member respectfully requests that the Board consider for possible approval at a future Board meeting the proposed new policy establishing a financial literacy graduation requirement for all students pursuing a Maryland High School Diploma from Harford County Public Schools, effective beginning with students entering Grade 9 in the 2028-2029 school year.

Respectfully submitted,

James McVicker

James McVicker III

Student Board Member

Board of Education of Harford County