

Personal Curriculum



PARENT AND EDUCATOR GUIDE

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The Personal Curriculum

A Tool for Modifying the Michigan Merit Curriculum

Overview

Summary

This guide was developed to help educators, students, and parents understand when it may be appropriate to use a personal curriculum (PC) option to modify the Michigan Merit Curriculum (MMC) requirements. State statute allows personal curriculum modification in order to:

- Go beyond the academic credit requirements by adding more math, science, English language arts, or world languages credits.
- Modify the mathematics requirement.
- Modify, if necessary, the credit requirements of a student with an Individualized Education Plan (IEP).
- Modify credit requirements for a student who transfers from out of state or from a nonpublic school and is unable to meet the MMC requirements.

The MMC defines consistent learning standards that are intended to remain constant from district to district. Districts choose instructional approaches and design learning environments so that all students, including alternative and at-risk students, can meet the requirements of the MMC. The research is clear—struggling learners do better when given the opportunity to learn in a challenging curriculum. Personal curriculum modifications must align with the High School Content Expectations (HSCE) as practicable and must not create barriers that limit a student’s opportunity to be engaged in a challenging curriculum.

The legislative intent of the PC is to individualize the rigor and relevance of the educational experience. In this context, “practicable” is an inclusive term meaning as much of the subject area content expectations as possible during high school instruction. Students with an IEP operate under this same context.

The PC is an option any student or family can explore as a way to modify certain graduation requirements and earn a 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 expectations and possesses the knowledge and skills necessary for postsecondary success. Students who are not pursuing a diploma or students who are unable to meet modified MMC requirements do not need a personal curriculum.

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 a 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.

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)

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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.¹

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.

Coordinating Student Planning

The personal curriculum is not a stand-alone document that drives the high school experience. The PC must be developed and coordinated with other plans, including the Educational Development Plan (EDP) and the Individualized Education Program (IEP). Modifications to the student's academic expectations made through the PC option must not erect barriers to making progress in completing the career pathway or the achievement of postsecondary goals. The EDP is the plan of study or academic course of study for achieving postsecondary goals and will include course titles and appropriate high school graduation and college entrance requirements. It will be used as a guide along with other career planning materials. The EDP should be reviewed each year and may be modified to reflect changing goals.

Options for Meeting or Modifying the MMC Requirements

A student's capacity to learn is a function of effective teaching practices and the school's commitment to helping all students meet the content expectations that define the credits required by the MMC. Teachers are expected to employ a multitude of research-based instructional strategies to help students meet the content expectations. Teachers are encouraged to provide supports, interventions, and accommodations to increase access to the content for students who struggle in traditional instructional approaches. Districts may create integrated courses or combine technical and academic experiences to enhance relevance in credit-earning options. Districts may offer opportunities for credit recovery when students fail to meet some expectations required for earning credit. All options for earning credit should be carefully aligned with content expectations to ensure that all expectations will be met and that students have opportunities to meet the MMC requirements. Supports or flexible delivery options as described above should be available for ALL students and do NOT require a PC.

1 MCL 380.1278 a

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Earning credit in the following non-traditional settings does NOT require a PC:

- Career and technical education courses, humanities courses, industrial education, or applied arts.
- Accelerated courses through dual enrollment, Advanced Placement, or International Baccalaureate programs.
- Online courses.
- Alternative education or credit recovery programs.

Students participating in these programs are expected to meet the MMC credit requirements. If the programs do not fully align with the content expectations, students may earn partial credit in the programs and can meet the additional expectations to complete the credit requirements through testing out, supplemental offerings, or other options offered by the district.

When is a Personal Curriculum Modification Appropriate?

A personal curriculum may be appropriate for a student who has demonstrated one or more of the following:

- The ability or desire to access advanced or specialized content that cannot be met through electives (e.g., district lacks the resources to provide the course/content, or schedule does not allow student to access district offering).
- The ability to succeed in accelerated or advanced math, science, English language arts, or world languages.
- The academic need to modify the Algebra II credit requirement.

For a student with an IEP:

- A documented need to make modifications because the student's disability affects access to and/or demonstration of proficiency in the curriculum.
- Lack of progress on the MMC despite documented interventions, supports, and accommodations.

For a transfer student:

- Transferring from out of state or from a nonpublic school after successful completion of the equivalent of two years of high school credit.

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Prior to considering a personal curriculum modification as a course of action for any student, educators must make every effort to help the student meet the requirements of the MMC using varied and creative strategies such as:

- Integrated and differentiated instruction
- Interventions and support
- Spiraled curriculum
- Online learning
- Work-based learning
- Project-based learning
- Flexible scheduling
- Peer coaching
- Adult mentoring
- Electives
- College credit opportunities

While every request to modify a student's graduation requirements should be considered, the school district or public school academy may deny a personal curriculum request if:

- The request does not comply with state statute.
- Other options for meeting the student's educational needs have not been documented.
- It is not in the best interest of the student.
- The members of the PC development team cannot reach agreement.

A parent, legal guardian, emancipated student, or school personnel may request a PC at any time. The state statute includes restrictions on when the mathematics and social studies requirements may be implemented as described in the "Allowable Modifications" section.

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Accountability

State and Federal

Decisions regarding parameters for evaluating student achievement can be described within an accountability framework, which is defined by federal and state requirements, including the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)*, *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)*, Michigan Merit Curriculum (MMC), and Local Educational Agency (LEA) policy. Each set of requirements includes significant considerations.

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) establishes:

- The requirement of a core curriculum.
- The measurement of student achievement within that curriculum.
- A method for evaluating a school's ability to help students learn the curriculum.
- An expectation that evidence-based practice be applied in the classroom.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act establishes:

- That students with disabilities must be assured access to, support for achievement in, and be assessed against the same standards as all other students.
- Provisions and assurances that students with disabilities are not held to a separate standard.
- An expectation that evidence-based practice be applied in the classroom.

While federal legislation establishes basic parameters, it leaves to states the authority and flexibility to define the core curriculum and how achievement in that curriculum is measured. As a result, in 2006, Michigan established the Michigan Merit Curriculum (MMC).

The MMC establishes:

- The credits that make up the state requirements for graduation.
- Content expectations that define the required credits.

In addition, the Michigan Merit Exam (MME) was developed to measure mastery of the High School Content Expectations (HSCE) that define the new credit requirements.

Local

Local districts and/or boards of education continue to be responsible for establishing criteria for content mastery, the definition of proficiency, allowable modifications, what constitutes credit for specific courses, and additional credit requirements beyond those established by the MMC. Districts must ensure that all students are effectively and consistently engaged in school.

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Curriculum Alignment

Districts continue to be held accountable for offering opportunities for students to meet the High School Content Expectations (HSCE) and thus earn the credits required to earn a high school diploma. Determinations regarding possible requirement modifications cannot be made until decisions about curriculum, instructional delivery, assessment, and defining credit have been made.

Districts design curriculum that:

- Organizes the content to be mastered and skills to be developed as defined in the HSCE—including overarching expectations, habits of mind (dispositions for postsecondary success), and specific content expectations—into courses and units of instruction.
- Defines what students will know and be able to do within each of the units and by the end of each course.
- Determines how mastery of content and skill will be measured using assessments designed for that purpose—
 - ◇ Formative (classroom, ongoing, assessment FOR learning)
 - ◇ Summative (classroom, district and/or state, assessment OF learning)
 - ◇ Flexible opportunities for demonstrating proficiency
- Identifies instructional strategies and specialized instructional programs for supporting ALL students in meeting the content expectations, earning the required credits, and developing the knowledge and skill necessary for postsecondary success. Offering individualized and differentiated instruction does NOT require a personal curriculum (PC).

Districts must also:

- Base decisions about credit assignment (at least in part) on assessments aligned with the instructional model and with the content expectations addressed. Districts may develop their own assessments or use those developed by MDE if they align with the district's instructional model.
- Determine performance standards for earning Michigan Merit Curriculum (MMC) credit (e.g., what will be assessed, assessment instruments, multiple opportunities for demonstrating proficiency, proficiency cut scores, flexibility in assigning credit). All students should have access to multiple opportunities for demonstrating proficiency in meeting the MMC standards and expectations.
- Determine the credit associated with each course. Identify courses in which students may earn partial credit.
- Measure and monitor student progress.
- Develop and implement strategies for accelerating learning for students who have not met state achievement standards [Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP), Michigan Merit Exam (MME)/ACT].

Additional information supporting the development and monitoring of aligned, coherent, inclusive, and articulated curriculum and assessment is provided in the School Improvement Planning Resources.

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Practicable Content

With aligned curriculum, instructional delivery, and assessment systems in place, districts may determine:

- How the graduation requirements might be modified on an individualized basis, within the boundaries for modification described in the state legislation.
- How student progress will be measured and tracked on a district-wide basis.

The legislation states that “the personal curriculum shall incorporate as much of the content expectations” in areas that are being modified as is reasonably “practicable” for the individual student, while maintaining the legislative intent of increased rigor for all students. Practicable content is the mix of existing MMC content expectations and modifications to those expectations driven by student need, that when achieved, will ensure the student progresses toward his or her identified postsecondary and career goal(s).

PC development and identification of practicable content begins with:

- Identification of the student’s career pathway.
- Requirements for achieving career and postsecondary goals.
- Analysis of the student’s current and past levels of performance, including student strengths, which will be enhanced through the PC (i.e., transcript and formal and informal assessment data).
- Identification of the courses and other educational experiences the student needs to progress along the career pathway and achieve postsecondary goals [as identified in the Educational Development Plan (EDP)].

The PC 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.

Modifications to the content must be based on the HSCE. The PC will provide an individualized plan for effectively and consistently engaging the student in accessing the MMC and finding success in high school.

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Critical Questions to Ask Before Making Content Expectation or Credit Requirement Modifications

- How much high school content mastery is necessary to meet or exceed MME performance standards?
- What knowledge and skills are necessary to be considered “college ready” based on the ACT?
- How much content is sufficient to ensure that the student is prepared for postsecondary success?

There are no clear, definitive answers to these questions, but the consensus is that modifications should be made in such a way as to support meeting most or all of the content expectations, where possible.

Modifying Requirements through a Personal Curriculum

The PC is a process to modify specific credit requirements or content expectations based on the individual learning needs of a student. Allowable modifications are described in the chart on the following page.

In addition to identifying content or credit modifications, the PC must:

- Align with the EDP, postsecondary goals, and the IEP.
- Establish measurable goals.
- Provide a method to evaluate whether the student meets the goals.
- Include quarterly communication of progress with parent(s).

Modifications Not Allowed

There are no modifications to credit requirements allowed in the following areas (exceptions may apply for students with an IEP or transfer students):

- English language arts
- Science
- World languages
- Civics/Government
- Online learning experience

Modification restrictions are intended to protect the futures of students by ensuring that the personal curriculum option is not used as a convenient escape door for schools to shy away from providing access to the MMC for students who are more difficult to reach and teach.

The legislation requires that the Superintendent of Public Instruction monitor a school district if there is reason to believe that the school district is allowing modifications inconsistent with the personal curriculum requirements.

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Michigan Merit Curriculum (MMC)

| Subject Area Credit Requirements | Personal Curriculum (PC) Modifications (Sequence and delivery up to district) |
|---|---|
| 4 English Language Arts (ELA) Credits <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 credit in 9th, 10th, 11th, and 12th grade • All credits aligned to state content expectations | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ No modification except for students with an Individualized Education Program (IEP) and for transfer students who have completed 2 years of high school |
| 4 Mathematics Credits <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 credits aligned with the required state content expectations (i.e., Geometry, Algebra I, and Algebra II) • 1 math or math-related credit (not required to be aligned with state content expectations) • 1 math or math-related course required in the final year which could include any of the 4 credits described above or may be an additional district credit • Note: Students may earn 2 math credits for Algebra II when the credit is earned over 2 years, or 1.5 credits over 1.5 years, without requesting a personal curriculum | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ ✓ 1 credit of Algebra II may be modified to ½ credit Algebra II, statistics, or functions and data analysis ✓ Additional modifications allowed for students with an IEP and transfer students who have completed 2 years of high school |
| 3 Science Credits <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 Biology credit • 1 Chemistry or Physics credit • 1 additional science credit • All credits aligned to state content expectations | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ No modification except for students with an IEP and transfer students who have completed 2 years of high school |
| 3 Social Studies Credits <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ½ Civics credit • ½ Economics credit • 1 U.S. History and Geography credit • 1 World History and Geography credit • All credits aligned to state content expectations | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ No modification of Civics ✓ Minimum of 2 social studies credits prior to modification ✓ 1 social studies credit (other than Civics) can be exchanged for an additional English language arts, math, science, or world languages credit ✓ Additional modifications allowed for students with an IEP and transfer students who have completed 2 years of high school |
| 1 Physical Education and Health Credit <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Credit aligned to state guidelines | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Credit can be exchanged for an additional English language arts, math, science, or world languages credit ✓ Additional modifications allowed for students with an IEP and transfer students who have completed 2 years of high school |
| 1 Visual, Performing, and Applied Arts Credit <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Credit aligned to state guidelines | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Credit can be exchanged for an additional English language arts, math, science, or world languages credit ✓ Additional modifications allowed for students with an IEP and transfer students who have completed 2 years of high school |
| 2 World Languages Credits (Begins with Class of 2016) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Credits earned in grades 9-12 <i>or</i> an equivalent learning experience in grades K-12 • Credits aligned to state guidelines | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ No modification except for students with an IEP and transfer students who have completed 2 years of high school |
| Online Learning Experience <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online course, learning experience, or experience is incorporated into one or more required credits | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ No modification except for students with an IEP and transfer students who have completed 2 years of high school |

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Mathematics Modifications

Allowable Mathematics Modifications

A student earns Algebra II credit when he or she has demonstrated proficiency in the required content expectations for Algebra II. Students may take Algebra II over two years for two credits, or over 1.5 years for 1.5 credits, without requesting a PC.

A modification of Algebra II with a PC requires students to complete a minimum of two-and-a-half (2.5) math credits including Algebra I, Geometry, and one-half (0.5) credit of Algebra II, statistics, or functions and data analysis, or the equivalent of these credit requirements in an integrated math or other program, such as Career and Technical Education (CTE). Once this requirement has been met, a student must earn, at minimum one (1) additional math or math-related credit.

| | 1 Credit | 1 Credit | 1 Credit | 1 Credit | Total Credits |
|--|--|----------|---|--|---------------|
| Traditional Model (High School Content Expectations = 3 Credits) | | | | | |
| Michigan Merit Curriculum (MMC) without PC | Algebra I, Algebra II and Geometry (no required sequence) | | | Final year math or math-related credit | 4 |
| MMC without PC allowing Algebra II to be taken over 2 years for 2 credits | Algebra I and Geometry (no required sequence) | | Algebra II | | 4 |
| MMC without PC after successful completion of 2 math credits | Algebra I and Geometry (no required sequence) | | Algebra II content in other program | Math or math-related credit | 4 |
| PC modification after successful completion of minimum of 2.5 math credits | Students required to take Geometry and Algebra I | | ½ credit Algebra II modification | Math or math-related credit | 3.5 |
| Integrated Model (High School Content Expectations = 3 credits) | | | | | |
| MMC without PC | Integrated Mathematics Sequence Integrated Mathematics I, II, and III | | | Final year math or math-related credit | 4 |
| MMC without PC allowing remaining credit to be taken over 2 years for 2 credits | Integrated Mathematics Sequence Integrated Mathematics I and II | | Integrated III | | 4 |
| MMC without PC after successful completion of 2 math credits | Integrated Mathematics Sequence Integrated Mathematics I and II | | Integrated III content in other program | Math or math related credit | 4 |
| PC modification after successful completion of minimum of 2.5 math credits | Students required to complete 2 math credits Integrated I and II | | ½ credit in integrated sequence | Math or math-related credit | 3.5 |

Additional math or math-related courses should address high school content as defined by the district and may include trigonometry, statistics, pre-calculus, financial literacy, pre-algebra, applied mathematics, accounting, business mathematics, and others.

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Enrichment

Modifications to Go Beyond Academic Requirements

Students may request a PC to go beyond academic requirements in mathematics, science, ELA, and/or world languages after the completion of the 9th grade. If a PC is requested and granted and the student does not achieve proficiency in the substituted credits, the PC is null and void and the student will have to take the required credits to graduate.

Allowable Modifications

The PC must align with the Educational Development Plan (EDP) and postsecondary goals.

Social Studies (Michigan Merit Requirement: 3 credits)

- Substituting credit requirement for one social studies credit for students who have successfully completed two required social studies credits [which must include one-half (0.5) credit in Civics], to earn additional credits in English language arts, mathematics, science, or world languages.

Health and Physical Education (Michigan Merit Requirement: 1 credit)

- Substituting credit requirement for one health and physical education credit to acquire additional credits in English language arts, mathematics, science, or world languages.
- Consideration: A previous law remains in effect requiring students who are physically fit and capable to take a physical education course.
- Note: Districts may credit a student's participation in athletics and other extracurricular activities involving physical activity as meeting the physical education requirement.

Visual, Performing, and Applied Arts (Michigan Merit Requirement: 1 credit)

- Substituting credit requirement for one visual, performing, and applied credit to acquire additional credits in English language arts, mathematics, science, or world languages.

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Transfer Students

Allowable Modifications for Transfer Students

The parent or legal guardian of a transfer student from out of state or from a nonpublic school may request a personal curriculum (PC) to modify the requirements of the Michigan Merit Curriculum (MMC) not otherwise allowed, providing the following conditions are met:

- The PC is aligned with the Educational Development Plan (EDP) and postsecondary goals.
- The student has completed the equivalent of two years of high school credit. Districts may use assessments or examinations to determine credits earned.
- The PC includes as much of the subject area content expectations as practicable for the student.
- The student completes one mathematics course in the final year of high school enrollment. If the student is enrolled in the district for one full year, the final year of math must be the equivalent of Algebra I or higher in the normal sequence of mathematics.
- The student's PC must include one-half (0.5) credit in Civics.

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Students With an Individualized Education Program (IEP)

Allowable Modifications for a Student With an Individualized Education Program

The parent or legal guardian of a student with an Individualized Education Program (IEP) may request a personal curriculum (PC) to modify the requirements of the Michigan Merit Curriculum (MMC) not otherwise allowed, providing the PC:

- Incorporates as much of the subject area content expectations as practicable for the student within the context of the MMC requirements.
- Aligns with the EDP and is consistent with the IEP.
- Modifications directly address the effect the student's disability has on his or her ability to access and/or demonstrate progress in the content.

Additionally, the PC:

- May modify components of the content expectations within each credit requirement.
- May modify the credit requirements.
- Should reflect student strengths and outline how those strengths will be enhanced and utilized.

Potential Adverse Effects of Using a Personal Curriculum

Parents and students should understand the possible consequences for modifications of the MMC credit requirements or high school content expectations. Personal curriculum modifications that reduce the number of content expectations mastered by the student may affect the student's:

- Performance on the Michigan Merit Exam (MME)
Admission to, and/or preparedness for success in, college
- Eligibility for college scholarships

- Admission to a trade school
- Ability to secure a job in the career of choice
- Eligibility for NCAA athletic programs

Modifications that erect barriers to student success may impact the district's ability to:

- Achieve Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP).
- Meet improvement targets informed by the Continuous Improvement and Monitoring System (CIMS), the State Performance Plan (SPP), and the Annual Performance Report (APR).

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Processes

Personal Curriculum Modification Process

The personal curriculum (PC) process demands the involvement of many people and should be used only after other options, like the use of supports and research-based interventions, have been exhausted. The PC process should include the student, parent/legal guardian, counselor or principal designee, school psychologist [if available for a student with an Individualized Education Program (IEP)], teacher(s) with content expertise, school district superintendent or public school academy executive, and school board.

- Initiation—Initiated by the parent/legal guardian, emancipated student, or school personnel.
- PC Team—Student; parent/legal guardian; counselor or designee; teacher(s) with content expertise, knowledge of the student, and/or other relevant qualifications, and (if available and where appropriate) school psychologist if a special education student.
- Agreement—Written agreement between the local school district or public school academy superintendent or chief executive, parent/legal guardian, and student.
- Credits and Content—
 - ◊ Must meet as much of the Michigan Merit Curriculum (MMC) as practicable.
 - ◊ Includes measurable goals to be met in high school and a method of evaluation of whether goals are met.
 - ◊ Identifies credits to be earned and describes modifications to existing content expectations or credit requirements.
- Use of Educational Development Plan (EDP)—Aligned with student’s EDP.
- Use of IEP—Consistent with the IEP.
- Quarterly Communication to Monitor Progress—Parent/legal guardian communicates quarterly with each teacher of modified curriculum area to monitor student’s progress (e.g., progress reports, email, or phone communication).
- Revision—Revisions to PC may be made using the same process as used in developing the original PC.

Related Processes

- Awarding the Diploma—A board of the local school district or public school academy may award a diploma to students who complete an approved PC.
- High School Completion Without a Diploma—Students who require significant modifications may not be eligible for a diploma or a PC. Students who need these modifications are still able to progress to good careers, college educations, and more. The significance of completing high school without earning a diploma depends on career choice, future employment requirements, and plans for education beyond high school. A student who completes high school without earning a diploma can enter a trade or vocational school, attend most community colleges, enter certain branches of the armed forces, and apply for scholarships and financial aid.
- Reporting—MDE is required to monitor PC use to ensure compliance and consistent application of the PC requirements. Local school districts and public school academies will provide annual information on the number of PC modifications and reasons for modifications granted.