

Class of 2013 face change in both valedictorian and graduation requirements

In an attempt to raise the academic bar, Tennessee has increased the number of credits needed to graduate and raised the standard for Class of 2013's valedictorians. The Class of 2013 is required to have two more credits than previous classes, including a fourth year of math, a personal finance class, and an extra semester of gym. Though these additional credits may seem daunting, the block schedule that Riverdale High School introduced alleviates some of the pressure. These new policies were put into affect due to complaints of graduates being unprepared after graduating high school.

According to employers and colleges, students who were completing their three math credits as soon as possible were not recalling the information when they went to college. To eliminate this problem, the Class of 2013 is required to take four years of math; however, the math credits, which some students received in middle school, do not count towards the four math credits. Consequently, students are forced to take more difficult math courses, which could affect GPA. Thankfully, this is the only serious negative the requirement change caused. A personal finance class, whether students realize it or not, will benefit them in life after high school. Learning how to budget and manage money is a skill in "the real world" that will affect a student's quality of life. Knowledge such as the right insurance to buy, applying for a job, and the basics of investing is gathered by students in this class, if they take the time to listen.

These policies were also implemented to narrow the pool of valedictorians. In the past, Tennessee had an excessive amount of valedictorians, and these new standards help restore the exclusivity of the position. The Class of 2013's valedictorians are required to have a 4.0 GPA, have credit for twelve or above honors courses, and graduate with honors and distinction. Although these requirements may seem harsh, they ultimately ensure that the most deserving graduates hold this position.

Over all, the new credit requirements will benefit the upcoming graduating classes. The extra preparation for the real world and higher expectations to meet valedictorian standards adds rigor to the high school schedule without making it unmanageable.

Valedictorian Requirements for Class of 2013

4.0 GPA

12 Honors or Above Courses

Graduate with Honors

Graduate with Distinction

The Valedictorian/Salutatorian Criteria

1. The valedictorian/salutatorian shall be the student(s) who attain(s) the highest grade point average for grades 9-12; and
2. The valedictorian shall meet all requirements for a student *graduating with honors*; and
3. The valedictorian shall meet all requirements for a student *graduating with distinction* pursuant to the Tennessee Board of Education's criteria; and

4. The valedictorian/salutatorian shall have taken a minimum of twelve (12) honors or above honors level courses.

Graduation With Honors

Meet ACT Benchmarks: English 18, Mathematics 22, Reading 21, Science 24.

Graduation with Distinction

Attain a 3.0 Grade Point Average Plus One of the Following:

- * Participate in at least One Governor's School
- * Participate in one of the state's All State musical organizations
- * Be selected as a National Merit Finalist or Semi Finalist
- * Attain a composite score of 31 or higher on the ACT
- * Attain a score of 3 or higher on at least two Advanced Placement Exams
- * Earn 12 or more semester hours of transcribed postsecondary credit