

**Policy**

COMMENCEMENT ACTIVITIES

The Passaic Board of Education endorses graduation activities and ceremonies. Graduation shall not occur prior to completion of the required 180 days of student instruction.

Guidelines for Graduation Year Activities

Participation in all activities related to graduation ceremonies and related events is contingent upon students meeting the requirements for graduation in accordance with the High School Graduation board policy. Participation in such ceremonies and events may be denied in accordance with the Code of Student Conduct and Suspension and Expulsion board policies. Students and parents/guardians shall be given advance notification of these criteria. A student who is excluded from Commencement Activities will be informed in writing by the Principal.

Voting Information and Registration

Prior to graduation, the board of education shall provide a voter registration form and material describing the role of a citizen and the importance of voting to each eligible high school student.

Graduation Procedures and Ceremonies

No student shall be barred from participation in graduation ceremonies for arbitrary or discriminatory reasons. A student who may be prevented from participation and his/her parents/guardians shall be so notified in advance and no later than 10 calendar days prior to the close of the school year.

In the event a student is suspended from school during a period that coincides with ceremonies related to graduation, including, but not limited to, awards ceremonies and commencement exercises, the student will not be allowed to participate. Exclusion from awards ceremonies and commencement exercises due to suspension does not require a 10-day notification.

The board reserves the right to deny participation in graduation activities in accordance with the Code of Student Conduct and the Suspension and Expulsion board policies. Such denial shall be treated in the same manner as a suspension and the student so affected shall be afforded the rights of review provided in policies of this board.

The board reserves the right to withhold a diploma and transcripts until all fines are paid.

COMMENCEMENT ACTIVITIES (continued)Awarding of Diplomas

A board member or designee shall present a copy of the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution of the United States and the amendments thereto, and the Constitution of the State of New Jersey and the amendments thereto to each student upon graduation from elementary school.

Requests to award diplomas by private citizens and employees of the Passaic Public Schools must be made in writing to the Superintendent of Schools or his/her designee. Such a request must be made no later than 30 days prior to the commencement activities. In order for a request to be considered, there must be a significant reason and/or significance to the individual student.

The President of the board of education and/or another designated member of the board shall award the diplomas. Board members and former board members shall be afforded the opportunity to award diplomas to their own children.

The board shall not prevent, or otherwise deny participation in, constitutionally protected prayer in any district school, consistent with guidance issued by the United States Department of Education and applicable judicial decisions interpreting the religion clauses of the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution.

First Reading: December 19, 2016  
 Second Reading: January 30, 2017  
 Adopted: January 30, 2017

Key Words

Commencement Activities, Graduation Ceremonies, Voting, Voting Registration

**Legal References:** N.J.S.A. 18A:7C-5.1 Boards of education prohibited from excluding students from graduation ceremony or from obtaining yearbook for inability to pay fees  
N.J.S.A. 18A:11-1 General mandatory powers and duties  
N.J.S.A. 18A:36-18 Books containing organic laws at graduation  
N.J.S.A. 18A:36-27 Voting information  
N.J.S.A. 18A:37-2 Causes for suspension or expulsion of students  
N.J.S.A. 18A:54-20 Powers of board (county vocational schools)  
N.J.A.C. 6A:8-5.1 et seq. Implementation of Graduation Requirements  
N.J.A.C. 6A:16-7.1 et seq. Student Conduct

Ballato v. Long Branch Board of Education, 1990 S.L.D. (August 20)

Lee v. Weisman, 112 S. Ct. 2649 (1992)

R.L. v. Kingsway Regional Board of Education, 95 NJAR 2d (EDU) 296

COMMENCEMENT ACTIVITIES (continued)

D.C. v. Parsippany Troy Hills Board of Education, 96 NJAR 2d (EDU) 697

DO'G v. Ridgefield Park Board of Education, 96 NJAR 2d (EDU) 820

R.F. v. Park Ridge Board of Education, 97 NJAR2d (EDU) 1

American Civil Liberties Union v. Blackhorse Pike Regional Board of Education, 84 F. 3d 1471 (3d Cir. 1996)

**Possible**

- Cross References:**
- \*5113 Absences and excuses
  - \*5114 Suspension and expulsion
  - \*5126 Awards for achievement
  - \*5131 Conduct/discipline
  - \*6111 School calendar
  - \*6115 Ceremonies and observances
  - \*6141.2 Recognition of religious beliefs and customs
  - \*6146 Graduation requirements

\*Indicates policy is included in the Critical Policy Reference Manual.