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## Michigan Merit Curriculum

PARENT TIP #11

### Preparing Your Middle-Schoolers for Michigan's Higher Standards

By Selena M. Melvin

Over the past eleven years, I have had the privilege of being a secondary education teacher in five different states: South Carolina, Connecticut, Louisiana, Texas, and most recently Michigan. I have to admit that I've found Michigan's high school graduation requirements among the best in the nation. Parents, you should be proud!

Like other states, Michigan Merit Curriculum (MMC) requires students to earn a full complement of math, science, English, and other credits to receive their diploma. However, Michigan distinguishes itself by being the first state to require students to have an online learning experience to prepare them for postsecondary education and the workplace. In addition, students who are members of the Class of 2016 and beyond will also need to complete two credits of language other than English prior to graduation. Students may demonstrate language proficiency at any point prior to high school graduation and may meet the two-credit world language requirement in several ways while in grades K-8 or a combination of K-8 and high school. A formal assessment aligned with the Michigan World Language Standards and Benchmark (2007) is required to determine proficiency. Each local school district is responsible for designing opportunities for students to meet the new world language requirement.

These requirements may seem daunting for struggling students but research shows that students of all abilities are more likely to pass high-level courses than low-level courses, graduate from high school, get better grades, succeed in college without requiring remedial classes, be better prepared for the workforce, and earn higher wages.

Research also shows that students who take algebra and geometry by the end of the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> grades are much more likely to go on to

It's a fact.

The Michigan Merit Curriculum law says a parent, legal guardian, or emancipated student may request a personal curriculum that modifies certain requirements of the Michigan Merit Curriculum. For more information about the Personal Curriculum Guidelines and Supporting Materials, visit [www.michigan.gov/highschool](http://www.michigan.gov/highschool).

Get more info at...

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college than students who do not. In a national sample, 71% of low-income students who took geometry went to college, but only 26% of low-income students who did not take geometry went to college.

In summer time or anytime, here is a list of ideas to support your middle-schooler's learning at home.

### Ideas that support language arts, literacy, and social studies

- **Read the same books** that your children are reading and engage in discussions about the book's themes, characters, and plot.
- **Choose educational television** shows to watch with your children. Consider shows broadcast on The Discovery Channel, The History Channel, TLC and PBS. Talk about the program during commercials and when it's over, check to be sure your child is not just receiving information but rather thinking critically and processing the big idea.
- **Read the morning newspaper** headlines over breakfast and talk about current events with your child.
- During elections, take your children with you when you **vote**. Explain the process of voting and talk about your rights and responsibilities as a citizen in a democracy.

### Ideas that support mathematics, numeracy, and science

- Support math skills and financial literacy by **teaching your kids how to budget**. Have your children plan a family meal with \$25. Have them shop for groceries and prepare the meal they organized. Discuss budgeting challenges and strategies to make money stretch further. When they get good at budgeting for small things, give them more responsibility. Kids could plan the budget for the purchase of a new stove, back-to-school clothes, or even a family vacation.
- Ask your children **questions about the natural world** and talk about the way things work. Go for a walk together and observe the world around you. Think about how birds fly, how flowers bloom, how apples grow, how leaves decompose, how the sun shines and how the snow fall.

Know that by doing any or all of these things, you will propel your child towards greater academic success.

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## What's required?

Michigan Merit Curriculum High School Graduation Requirements	
<i>Effective Beginning with Students Entering 8<sup>th</sup> Grade in 2006 (Class of 2011)</i>	
<b>MATHEMATICS - 4 Credits</b>	
Algebra I Algebra II Geometry One math course in final year of high school	
<b>ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS - 4 Credits</b>	
English Language Arts 9 English Language Arts 10 English Language Arts 11 English Language Arts 12	
<b>SCIENCE - 3 Credits</b>	
Biology Physics or Chemistry One additional science credit	
<b>SOCIAL STUDIES - 3 Credits</b>	
.5 credit in Civics .5 credit in Economics U.S. History and Geography World History and Geography	
<b>PHYSICAL EDUCATION &amp; HEALTH - 1 Credit</b>	
<b>VISUAL, PERFORMING AND APPLIED ARTS - 1 Credit</b>	
ONLINE LEARNING EXPERIENCE Course, Learning or Integrated Learning Experience	
<b>WORLD LANGUAGE - 2 Credits</b> In grades 9-12; OR an equivalent learning experience in grades K-12	
<i>Effective Beginning with Students Entering 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade in 2011 (Class of 2016)</i>	

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