



## BOARD POLICY ON ALTERNATIVE GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

John Adams Academies, Inc. (hereinafter, JAA) provides a rigorous classical liberal arts educational program, and the JAA Board of Directors has enacted local graduation requirements for its three charter schools that exceed the statewide minimum high school graduation requirements specified in Education Code Section 51225.3. The JAA Board may amend its local graduation requirements during the term of the charters based on changes in California law, UC or CSU requirements, as well as JAA's identification of scholar or program need.

JAA believes that graduating from high school and receiving a diploma is a critical first step for scholars to be successful in college or a career. In accordance with applicable law and the JAA charters, the Superintendent is hereby authorized to waive JAA local graduation requirements for individual scholars consistent with this policy. If an individual scholar may qualify for a waiver of any or all of the local graduation requirements, the Superintendent shall review the circumstances to confirm that the scholar meets the applicable requirements. **Mandatory Exemption for Scholars with Exceptional Needs**

Under Education Code Section 51225.31, JAA shall waive the local graduation requirements and award a high school diploma to a scholar with an individualized education program ("IEP") if the IEP provides that: (1) the scholar is required to take the California Alternative Assessments for ELA and Math; and (2) the scholar is required to meet the statewide minimum graduation requirements under Education Code Section 51225.3. The IEP team must determine and notify the parent/guardian whether the scholar will be eligible for this exemption before the scholar begins 10th grade.

### **Limited Exemption Based on Scholar Need**

For scholars whom JAA has already agreed to waive any or all of the local graduation requirements and place the student on a California diploma track, the Superintendent is authorized to grant the waiver and award a high school diploma upon completion of the California diploma track at JAA.

### **Optional Certificate of Completion for Scholars with Exceptional Needs**

If a scholar with an IEP does not meet JAA's local graduation requirements or the statewide minimum graduation requirements, JAA may award the scholar a certificate of completion if any of the following requirements are met:

- The scholar has satisfactorily completed a prescribed alternative course of study approved by JAA's governing board and identified in their IEP;
- The scholar has satisfactorily met their IEP goals and objectives during high school as determined by the IEP team; or
- The scholar has satisfactorily attended high school, participated in their instruction as prescribed in their IEP, and has met the objectives of the statement of transition services.

### **Mandatory Exemption for Certain Scholars**

Certain scholars may qualify for a mandatory exemption from JAA's local graduation requirements under applicable law, unless JAA finds that the scholar is reasonably able to complete the local graduation requirements by the end of the scholar's fourth year of high school.

Scholars in the following groups may qualify for a mandatory exemption from JAA's local graduation requirements:

- A scholar in foster care;
- A scholar who is a homeless child or youth;
- A former juvenile court school pupil;
- A scholar who is a child of a military family;
- A scholar who is a migratory child as defined by Education Code Section 54441; or
- A scholar participating in a newcomer program.<sup>1</sup>

In order to qualify for a mandatory exemption from JAA's local graduation requirements, the scholar must have transferred between schools any time after the completion of their second year of high school and be in their third or fourth year of high school. However, for a scholar participating in a newcomer program, the scholar only needs to be their third or fourth year of high school.

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<sup>1</sup> A newcomer program is one that is designed to meet the academic and transitional needs of newly arrived immigrant pupils that has as a primary objective the development of English language proficiency.

To determine whether the scholar is in their third or fourth year of high school, the following may be used, whichever will qualify the scholar for exemption:

- The number of credits the scholar has earned to the date of transfer;
- The length of the scholar's school enrollment; or
- For scholars with significant gaps in school attendance, the scholar's age as compared to the average age of scholars in the third or fourth year of high school.

Within thirty (30) calendar days of the date that a scholar who may qualify for this mandatory exemption transfers into JAA (or in the case of a scholar participating in a newcomer program, the date that a scholar commences participation in a newcomer program at JAA) JAA shall notify the following individuals of the availability of the exemption and whether the scholar qualifies for the exemption:

- For a scholar in foster care or former juvenile court school pupil: JAA shall notify the scholar, their educational rights holder, and their social worker or probation officer.
- For a scholar who is a homeless child or youth: JAA shall notify the scholar, their educational rights holder, and JAA's Homeless Youth Liaison.
- For a scholar who is a child of a military family, who is a migratory child, or who is participating in a newcomer program: JAA shall notify the scholar and parent/guardian.

In addition, in applying this mandatory exemption, JAA shall consult the scholar and educational rights holder on the following matters:

- How any of the waived requirements may affect the scholar's postsecondary education or vocation plans, including the ability to gain admission to a postsecondary educational institution.
- Other available options, including a fifth year of high school, possible credit recovery, and any transfer opportunities available through the California Community Colleges.
- The scholar's academic data and any other information relevant to making an informed decision on whether to accept the exemption.

JAA shall grant an eligible scholar's request for this mandatory exemption at any time if the scholar qualifies, regardless of whether the scholar previously declined the exemption.

JAA shall not:

- Require any scholar who would otherwise be entitled to remain in attendance at JAA to accept the exemption.
- Deny any exempt scholar enrollment in or the ability to complete courses for which the scholar is otherwise eligible.
- Revoke an exemption.
- Require or request that a scholar transfer schools in order to qualify the scholar for the exemption. A scholar, a scholar's parent/guardian or educational rights holder, or scholar's social worker or probation officer shall equally not request a transfer solely to qualify for an exemption from JAA's additional graduation requirements.
- Require or request that the exempt scholar graduate before the end of the scholar's fourth year of high school, if the scholar completes the statewide minimum coursework requirements specified in Education Code Section 51225.3 before the end of their fourth year of high school and would otherwise be entitled to remain in attendance.

*Fifth Year Option:* If JAA determines that a scholar who would otherwise qualify for this mandatory exemption is reasonably able to complete the local graduation requirements within a fifth year of high school, JAA shall do the following:

- Inform the scholar and their educational rights holder of the option to remain at JAA for a fifth year to complete JAA's local graduation requirements.
- Inform the scholar and their educational rights holder about how remaining in school for a fifth year to complete JAA's local graduation requirements will affect the scholar's ability to gain admission to a postsecondary educational institution.
- Provide information to the scholar about transfer opportunities available through the California Community Colleges.
- Permit the scholar to stay in school for a fifth year at JAA upon agreement with the scholar if 18 years of age or older, or upon agreement with the scholar's educational rights holder if under 18 years of age.
- For a scholar in foster care or who is a homeless child or youth, inform the scholar and their educational rights holder of the scholar's option to remain in their school of origin.