



Research Brief

Research Services

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SUMMARY OF 2020-2021 GRADUATES BY DIPLOMA TYPE

At a Glance

M-DCPS had 21,638 graduates in the 2020-2021 academic year. Most students, 92%, achieved a standard diploma (24 credits). Some students chose an alternative curriculum where 854 (4%) achieved an Advanced International Certificate of Education (AICE) diploma and 447 (2%) achieved an International Baccalaureate (IB) diploma. An additional 384 (2%) students earned an Academically Challenging Curriculum to Enhance Learning (ACCEL) 18-credit diploma.

Over a quarter of graduates (29%) earned the Superintendent's Diploma of Distinction for outstanding academics and community service. Florida's Scholar and Merit diploma designations were awarded to 6,632 (31%) graduates demonstrating academic strength and career industry certification. Over 3,125 (14%) students also earned the Florida Seal of Biliteracy, in Gold or Silver, demonstrating mastery of a foreign language. The rate of Gold State-level designations in Biliteracy increased from the 2018-2019 academic year, while Silver designations decreased.

DIPLOMA OPTIONS

In order to graduate from high school, students must successfully complete one of the following diploma options: (1) Standard diploma program with 24 credits; (2) Advanced International Certificate of Education (AICE) curriculum; (3) International Baccalaureate (IB) curriculum; or (4) Academically Challenging Curriculum to Enhance Learning (ACCEL) 18-credit option. In addition to one of these diploma types, students can earn additional designations provided at the District and State levels to highlight academic achievement, community service, or biliteracy. These additional designations include the Superintendent's Diploma of Distinction, Scholar and Merit designations, and the Florida Seal of Biliteracy. Earning one of these diplomas allows students to become college or career ready and be competitive upon graduation in applying to post-secondary education or joining the workforce.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and closure of schools, students in the previous 2019-2020 graduating class were exempt from statewide, standardized assessment requirements. While most 2019-2020 graduates met the high school graduation test

requirements through statewide testing in previous years or via concordant scores, it is possible that some students may not have met the assessment graduation requirements. Therefore, to understand trends in high school graduation, the 2020-2021 academic year results will be compared to those in 2018-2019 throughout this report.

Please note that the data presented on graduates in this report only include the records of students who graduated in June at the end of each academic year. That is, records of students graduating in the summer are not included.

Standard Diploma

Students entering 9th grade in the 2017-2018 school year have the following requirements for a standard diploma:

- Successfully complete 24 credits, an AICE curriculum, an IB curriculum, or the 18-credit ACCEL option
 - Credits can be obtained through equivalent, applied, or integrated courses or career education courses as defined in Florida Statute, including approved internships.
 - The required credits include four in English Language Arts (ELA), four in mathematics, three in science, three in social studies, one in fine and performing arts, speech and debate, or practical arts, one in physical education, and eight electives. Credits in specific courses must be earned.
 - Students must complete at least one course through online learning offered by the Florida Virtual School, a virtual education provider approved by the State Board of Education, a high school, or an online dual enrollment course.
- Earn at least a cumulative 2.0 grade point average (GPA) on a 4.0 scale
- Attain passing scores on required statewide standardized assessments or concordant scores

There were 21,638 graduates in M-DCPS in the 2020-2021 academic year. The majority (92%) of students in M-DCPS earned a standard diploma. Table 1 shows the number and percentage of students by each of the diploma types, described herein. The number of students achieving an AICE diploma type increased from the 2018-2019 academic year. Less than 1% of graduates fall into the “other” category, which represents students who achieved a Special Diploma or Certificate of Completion. The number of students in this category increased from the 2018-2019 academic year. The students in the “other” category are not included with high school graduates when the federal graduation rate is calculated.

Table 1
M-DCPS Graduates by Diploma Type, 2018-2019 and 2020-2021 Academic Years*

	2018-2019 [†]		2020-2021 [†]	
	Number of Students	Percent	Number of Students	Percent
Standard Diploma	20,869	90%	19,937	92%
AICE	506	2%	854	4%
IB	368	2%	447	2%
ACCEL	445	2%	384	2%
Other	874	4%	16	0.1%
Total Graduates	23,062	100%	21,638	100%

**Due to the exemption from statewide, standardized assessment requirements in 2019-2020 as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, 2020 diploma types are not reported.*

[†]Graduates include students who graduated in June at the end of each academic year. Students graduating in the summer are not included.

Students who participate in the AICE or IB curriculum and satisfy the other graduation requirements receive a standard diploma. In addition, if they satisfy specific requirements of the Cambridge International Examinations or the International Baccalaureate Organization (IBO), they can receive an AICE diploma or IB diploma.

Advanced International Certificate of Education (AICE) Diploma

Students who complete an AICE curriculum and take an exam are eligible to receive an AICE diploma. To receive the AICE diploma, students must achieve a minimum of seven credits in different subject groups. Students must:

- Complete at least one credit in each of the mathematics and science, languages, and arts and humanities subject groups
- Complete one credit in the compulsory course of Global Perspectives and Research
- Receive a score of E, equivalent to a U.S. grade of C, or higher on all subject group examinations

Students who complete the AICE curriculum may earn up to 45 hours of college credit and qualify for the maximum Florida Bright Futures tuition scholarship. In the 2020-2021 academic year, 954 students were eligible for an AICE Diploma. As seen in Table 2, 854 students, or 90% of all eligible students, were awarded an AICE Diploma.

Table 2
Number of Students Receiving Cambridge AICE Diplomas, 2020-2021

	Number of Students
Awarded AICE Diploma	854
Not Awarded AICE Diploma	100
Total Eligible	954

International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma

Students who complete an IB curriculum and take the IB exams are eligible to receive an IB diploma. To receive the IB diploma, students must meet the core requirements including:

- Extended Essay, Theory of Knowledge (TOK), and Creativity, Action, and Service (CAS) as core elements of the curriculum
 - Extended essay is an independent, self-directed piece of research, finishing with a 4,000-word paper. TOK is a practice in which students are asked to reflect on the nature of knowledge, and on how we know what we claim to know. CAS requires students to take part in a range of experiences and at least one project that involves purposeful activities, personal challenge, thoughtful consideration, and reflection.
- Achieve a minimum of 24 points from the three Standard Level and three Higher Level Exams or two Standard Level and four Higher Level exams, one from each of the six subject groups
 - Subject groups include language and literature, language acquisition, individuals and societies, sciences, mathematics, and the arts.
- Demonstrate sufficient breadth in achievement across subjects and the core by meeting the particular requirements stated in articles of the IBO General regulations of the Diploma Programme

Students who successfully pass the IB assessments may earn up to 45 hours of college credit and qualify for the highest level of the Florida Bright Futures tuition scholarship. In the 2020-2021 academic year, 480 students were eligible for the IB Diploma. As seen in Table 3, 447 students, or 93%, were awarded the IB diploma.

Table 3
Number of Students Receiving an IB Diploma, 2020-2021

	Number of Students
Awarded IB Diploma	447
Not Awarded IB Diploma	33
Total Eligible	480

Academically Challenging Curriculum to Enhance Learning (ACCEL)

Students who complete an ACCEL curriculum will receive a standard diploma. Students with above grade level performance on statewide standardized assessments, at least a 3.0 GPA, acceptable attendance and conduct, and letters of recommendation from teachers and/or counselors are eligible for ACCEL options at their school. ACCEL options for eligible students include whole-grade and mid-year promotion, subject-matter acceleration resulting in the promotion or acceleration taking place within the same school or to a new school, and virtual instruction in higher grade level subjects. Students may also take End-of-Course (EOC) Examinations, Advanced Placement (AP), or CLEP exams and receive credit for the corresponding high school course if they pass the EOC, also known as the Credit Acceleration Program. Additional ACCEL options include

enriched and advanced academic coursework and programs, flexible grouping, combined classes, self-paced instruction, industry certifications, work-related internships or apprenticeships, curriculum compacting, advanced-content instruction, and telescoping curriculum.

ACCEL 18-Credit High School Diploma Option

Students are required to obtain at least a 2.0 cumulative GPA on a 4.0 scale. Students are not required to complete physical education or the online course but are required to take three elective courses. Table 4 displays the number of students awarded an ACCEL diploma in 2020-2021.

Table 4
Number of Students Receiving an ACCEL Diploma, 2020-2021

	Number of Students
Awarded ACCEL Diploma	384
Total Graduates	21,638

[†]*Graduates include students who graduated in June at the end of each academic year. Students graduating in the summer are not included.*

DIPLOMA DESIGNATIONS

Superintendent’s Diploma of Distinction

Students can earn the Superintendent’s Diploma of Distinction by meeting the following requirements:

- Complete an academically rigorous program of study, including at least four Advanced Placement (AP), IB, AICE, International Studies (IS), and/or dual enrollment courses
- Complete at least 75 hours of community service
- Earn a 3.5 weighted GPA by the end of the first semester of senior year, with final grades no lower than a C

Table 5 indicates the number of students awarded the Superintendent’s Diploma of Distinction in the 2020-2021 academic year. The percentage of students achieving the Diploma of Distinction increased from the 2018-2019 academic year.

Table 5
Number of Students Receiving the Superintendent’s Diploma of Distinction, 2018-2019
and 2020-2021 Academic Years*

	2018-2019†		2020-2021†	
	Number of Students	Percent	Number of Students	Percent
Diploma of Distinction	6,287	27%	6,367	29%
Not Awarded	16,775	73%	15,271	71%
Total Graduates	23,062	100%	21,638	100%

**Due to the exemption from statewide, standardized assessment requirements in 2019-2020 as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, 2020 diploma types are not reported.*

†Graduates include students who graduated in June at the end of each academic year. Students graduating in the summer are not included.

In addition to the standard 24-credit high school diploma program requirements, students are eligible to receive one or both of the additional State designations on their diploma. Students entering 9th grade in the 2014-2015 school year must meet a set of requirements for a Scholar and/or Merit designation.

Scholar Designation

To earn the Scholar designation, students must meet the following requirements:

- Pass Geometry, Biology 1 and US History End-of-Course (EOC) assessments
 - Students are exempt from this requirement for Biology I or US History if they are enrolled in an AP, IB, or AICE Biology 1 or US History, take the respective examinations, and achieve the minimum score to earn college credit.
- Earn at least one credit in each of the following courses: Algebra 2; statistics or an equally rigorous mathematics course; chemistry or physics; and a course equally rigorous to chemistry or physics
- Earn at least two credits in the same world language
- Earn at least one credit in AP, IB, AICE, or dual enrollment

Merit Designation

Students achieve the Merit designation by attaining one or more industry certifications set forth by Florida Statute, in addition to the 24-credit standard high school diploma requirements. The industry certification must be within an industry that addresses critical local or statewide economic need, is included in the State’s workforce system’s targeted occupation list or be identified as emerging.

Table 6 indicates the number of students graduating with diploma designations (Scholar, Merit, or both) in the 2018-2019 and 2020-2021 academic years. The percentage of students being awarded this designation decreased from 34% in 2018-2019 to 31% in 2020-2021. Of these, a higher percentage of students were awarded the Scholar designation in 2020-2021.

Table 6
Number of Students Receiving Diploma Designations, 2018-2019 and 2020-2021
Academic Years*

	2018-2019 [†]		2020-2021 [†]	
	Number of Students	Percent	Number of Students	Percent
Total Designations	7,870	34%	6,632	31%
Merit	4,351	55%	2,369	36%
Scholar	2,057	26%	3,054	46%
Both	1,462	19%	1,209	18%
No Designation	15,192	66%	15,006	69%
Total Graduates	23,062	100%	21,638	100%

**Due to the exemption from statewide, standardized assessment requirements in 2019-2020 as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, 2020 diploma types are not reported.*

[†]Graduates include students who graduated in June at the end of each academic year. Students graduating in the summer are not included.

FLORIDA SEAL OF BILITERACY PROGRAM

Biliteracy is defined by Florida Statute as achieving a high level of competency in listening, speaking, reading, and writing in one or more foreign languages in addition to English. A foreign language is defined as a language other than English, which includes American Sign Language, classical languages, and indigenous languages. The Biliteracy Seal is designated on the high school diploma as either Gold, with the highest level of competency, or Silver, with the second-highest level of competency.

In order to achieve the Silver Seal of Biliteracy, students must achieve one of the following requirements:

- Earn at least four foreign language credits in the same foreign language with a cumulative GPA of 3.0 on a 4.0 scale
- Achieve a minimum qualifying score on a world language assessment, including SAT, CLEP, IB, AP, AICE, and other standardized assessments as described in Florida Statute
 - For languages that are not tested on nationally recognized examinations, students may provide maintenance of a portfolio of language performance at the Advanced Low level or higher based on the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) Proficiency Guidelines of 2012 in the modes of communication appropriate for that language.

In order to achieve the Gold Seal of Biliteracy, students must achieve all of the Silver requirements listed above, as well as meet both of the following requirements:

- Achieve a level 4 or higher on the grade 10 English Language Arts (ELA) Florida Standards Assessment (FSA) (this is only for the Gold Designation)
- Achieve the highest qualifying score on a world language assessment, including SAT, CLEP, IB, AP, AICE, and other standardized assessments as described in Florida Statutes.

Table 7 indicates the number of students awarded a Florida Seal of Biliteracy in the 2018-2019 and 2020-2021 academic years. The number of students with these seals decreased from the 2018-2019 academic year, while the proportion of Gold and Silver seals remained relatively the same.

Table 7
Number of Students Receiving the Florida Seal of Biliteracy, 2018-2019 and 2020-2021 Academic Years*

	2018-2019 [†]		2020-2021 [†]	
	Number of Students	Percent	Number of Students	Percent
Total Seals	3,240	14%	3,125	14%
Gold Seal	2,688	83%	2,753	88%
Silver Seal	552	17%	372	12%
No Seals	19,822	86%	18,513	86%
Total Graduates	23,062	100%	21,638	100%

**Due to the exemption from statewide, standardized assessment requirements in 2019-2020 as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, 2020 diploma types are not reported.*

†Graduates include students who graduated in June at the end of each academic year. Students graduating in the summer are not included.

In summary, M-DCPS demonstrated an increase in the percentage of standard and AICE diploma types from the 2018-2019 school year. Additionally, the proportion of graduates who earned the Superintendent’s Diploma of Distinction recognizing academic excellence and community service increased by two percentage points. There was a decrease in State Merit designations and in students choosing the “other” diploma option, including Special Diploma and Certificate of Completion, when compared to 2018-2019. The percentage of students earning a Florida Seal of Biliteracy recognizing mastery of a foreign language remained stable.

Students have options in the type of diploma they receive upon completion of high school. Each option has a set of requirements that must be met. Additionally, students are recognized for achievements and performance in academics, community service, and literacy in foreign languages. These diploma types and designations reflect positively on students when applying to post-secondary education or entering the workforce.