

GETTING TO GRADUATION:

What Does Your Student Need?

- Minimum number of credits to graduate from the School District of Philadelphia: 23.5
- Credits must include:
 - 4 credits English
 - 3 credits Math
 - 3 credits Science
 - 3 credits Social Studies
 - 2 credits World Languages
 - 2 credits Arts & Humanities
 - 1.5 credits Health & Phys. Ed.
 - 5 credits Electives (must include a higher-level science or math)
 - Interdisciplinary Graduation Project
 - Service-Learning Project

Helping Your Student Reach Graduation On Time

According to the Philadelphia Educational Longitudinal Study (PELS), about 80% of ninth grade students in the School District of Philadelphia have sufficient course credits at the end of their ninth grade year to move up to the tenth grade with their class. However, less than three-quarters of these seemingly promising students will graduate with their class, and a staggering 27% will fall behind or drop out of school entirely. How can you help your teen reach graduation on time?

Know Which Math Course Your Teen is Taking

Research shows that steady progress through a rigorous high school curriculum heavy in math is strongly associated with access to—and success in—college. Knowing which math classes your teen is taking, and encouraging his/her enrollment in higher-level math courses, will increase your teen's chances of going to college. According to PELS data, ninth grade students whose parents knew what math they were studying had a much greater chance of being promoted to the tenth grade on time than teens with parents who did not know.

A recent national study confirms that reaching a high level of math in high school is key to college success, with Algebra II being an especially important "gateway" to handling college-level work. Students who successfully completed Algebra II had a better chance of earning a

college degree than those who did not take Algebra II. With the workplace demanding increasingly higher-level math skills from our students, it is especially important to stay current with your teen's math credits.

Community learning briefs like this one provide suggestions for improving students' academic performance.

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The Philadelphia Education Fund is an independent non-profit organization dedicated to improving the quality of public education throughout the Philadelphia region. For 20 years, the Ed Fund has been working in partnership with school districts, universities, non-profits and businesses to initiate and implement innovative educational programs, improve teacher quality, engage the community in school reform and conduct research. The Ed Fund is one of the largest of 86 education funds affiliated with the Public Education Network. Visit www.philaedfund.org

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The Philadelphia Education Fund's Community Learning Briefs are designed to keep parents, families and communities central to the academic success of our young people.

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How You Can Track Your Teen's Course Credits

Students in Philadelphia, and elsewhere, earn credits as they move through high school. A **credit is what a student earns when he or she successfully completes a course**. A student needs a specific number and type of credits to successfully complete promotion and graduation requirements.

We posed the following question to parents of students who would have been in the tenth grade had they progressed with their class.

Does your teen have:

- A) As **many** course credits as he/she should have by now?*
- B) **Almost as many** as he/she should have by now?*
- C) **Many fewer** credits than he/she should have by now?*

The results are startling. One-fifth of parents whose students were *already* a year or more behind their class, at the time believed that their student had adequate credits to advance to the next grade. This is despite the fact that these students were repeating the ninth grade for the first or second time.

One-third of parents thought that their teens had almost as many credits as they needed to be promoted with their class. **Just 40% of parents of students who were behind their class knew that their students had "many fewer credits" than they should have.**

When we followed ninth-grade students forward to graduation, confusion among parents persisted. For parents of teens who did not graduate within five years of entering the ninth grade, 30% of them nonetheless believed that their student was on track in the ninth grade. About one-quarter of parents thought that their

student had fewer credits than he or she should have.

How many Credits *should* your Teen Have?

If you are interested in seeing your students advance through school successfully, it is important that you stay on top of their student's coursework and credit accumulation.

In 2006-2007, the promotion requirements (the number of credits each student needs to advance to the next grade) in the School District of Philadelphia are:

- Grade 9 to 10: 5 credits
- Grade 10 to 11: 11 credits
- Grade 11 to 12: 17.5 credits
- Graduation: 23.5 credits

Know your school's course offerings and the number of credits your student needs to move ahead. One way to start is to review the School District's promotion and graduation requirements. This is especially important as changes are underway, to take effect in 2007-08. Just another great way to help your student stay on track to graduation.

The Philadelphia Educational Longitudinal Study (PELS), a project of the Philadelphia Education Fund, followed more than 2000 students in Philadelphia public schools from the summer after their 8th grade year (1996-1997) until three years after expected graduation. During that time, researchers repeatedly interviewed students and parents, gaining their perspective on the teens' high school experience.