

COMMENCEMENT ACTIVITIES

The Long Hill Township Board of Education endorses graduation activities and ceremonies. The date of graduation shall annually be recommended by the Long Hill Township Chief School Administrator (CSA) and approved by the Board.

Graduation shall not occur prior to completion of the required 180 days of pupil instruction.

Guidelines for Graduation Year Activities

Student participation in special graduation year activities will require conduct of the highest caliber in all school situations.

Criteria for exclusion from these activities concern consistent behavioral patterns and shall include, but not be limited to:

- A. Consistent involvement in disciplinary action(s);
- B. Suspension;
- C. Collaborative evaluation by the staff; and/or
- D. A major disciplinary incident arising within 20 school days of graduation.

The final decision shall be made by the CSA.

Students and parents/guardians shall be given advance notification of these criteria.

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 notified at least ten (10) days in advance of graduation. For a major disciplinary incident arising within 10 school days prior to commencement, notification shall be provided in a reasonable, timely manner.

When a student or his/her parents/guardians experiences financial hardship and is unable to pay the costs of participation in graduation ceremonies, the BOE shall assume the costs of the following items:

- A. Rental or purchase of cap and gown;
- B. One year book; and
- C. Other, as may be determined by the BOE.

Financial hardship shall be defined by eligibility standards for free milk program.

The BOE reserves the right to deny participation in graduation activities when extreme circumstances warrant it. 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 BOE.

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

Awarding of Diplomas

The BOE 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 pupil upon graduation from elementary school.

The President of the BOE and/or another designated member of the BOE shall award the diplomas. Board Members and former Board Members shall be afforded the opportunity to award diplomas to their own children. The CSA or his/her designee shall publicly certify those pupils who have satisfactorily completed the requirements for promotion to the next grade.

A special education student who shall have attained the age of 14 years by graduation or who shall be 13 years of age but who shall attain the age of 14 years based on the District cut-off date for kindergarten enrollment shall be entitled to participate in all graduation-related activities, shall receive the standard District diploma and materials and shall be promoted to an appropriate school of secondary education.

The BOE 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: April 27, 2009

Second reading: May 4, 2009

Replaces Policy 5127 Commencement Activities dated June 11, 2007

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:54-20	Powers of board (county vocational schools)
N.J.A.C. 6A:8-5.1 et seq.	Implementation of Graduation Requirements

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

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

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
*6147	Standards of Proficiency

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