

# Understanding high school courses & choices



The transition from grade 8 to grade 9 involves many changes for students, including the option to choose what courses and programs to take— an important decision that can affect their success in high school and impact their choices for postsecondary education.

Schools in Halton provide orientation programs for grade 8 students and their families to help you make these important decisions. Supports commonly offered by schools include:

- grade 8 information nights;
- course selection workshops;
- grade 8 high school tours; and
- visits by high school guidance programs to grade 8 classes.

This tip sheet provides an overview of high school courses and choices. Parents can help their children make good choices by becoming informed and being involved in the decision making process.

## Course information

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### Course Types

**Five types of courses are offered in grades 9 and 10:**

1. Academic courses emphasize theory and abstract problem solving.
2. Applied courses focus on the essential concepts of a subject and develop students' knowledge and skills through practical applications and concrete examples. Students are given more opportunities to experience hands-on applications of the concepts and theories they study.
3. Locally developed (Essential) courses are designed to focus on core knowledge and skills to meet individual student needs.
4. Open courses are appropriate for all post-secondary pathways. These courses prepare students for further study and enhance educational experience.
5. K-Coded courses are alternative curriculum, non-credit bearing courses.

**Six types of courses are offered in grades 11 and 12:**

1. Open courses are appropriate for all post-secondary pathways.

2. College preparation courses prepare students for most college programs and related careers.
3. University preparation courses prepare students for entrance requirements for university programs and related careers.
4. University/College preparation (mixed) courses prepare students for specific university and college programs and related careers.
5. Workplace preparation courses prepare students for a variety of jobs, training programs and careers.
6. K-Coded courses are non-credit bearing courses developed by the school board and focus on preparing the student for daily living.

### Course descriptions

Course offerings and descriptions can be found on your school's website and at [myblueprint.ca/halton](http://myblueprint.ca/halton). Course offerings vary by school. Contact your school's Guidance Office for additional information. Students select their courses for the next school year in January/February with support from teachers, guidance counsellors, special education teachers, parents and online resources including [myblueprint.ca/halton](http://myblueprint.ca/halton).

### Courses versus credits

Successful completion of a 110-hour course has a credit value of 1.0. Typically a course runs for one semester, one period per day to meet the 110-hour requirement. Some courses are offered for half a semester (e.g., Careers, Civics) and have a 0.5 credit value; other courses (e.g., Cooperative Education) have a credit value of 2.0 and are two periods per day.

### Pathways

Pathways in high school prepare students for their chosen post-secondary destination. The destination pathways initiatives are: apprenticeship training, college, community living, university, and the workplace.

Secondary schools offer a variety of course types to meet the needs of all learners. Each pathway includes different course types and may also include specialized regional pathways programs. Pathways are flexible and may be combined and changed. As students begin to know themselves as learners, they have the opportunity to adjust pathway plans as they move through secondary school, with the support of their guidance counsellor and parents. Most students' secondary school experience includes courses from a variety of course types.

## Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD) requirements

### In order to graduate with an OSSD, students must:

- earn 30 credits (18 compulsory credits and 12 elective credits);
- complete 40 Community Involvement hours; and
- successfully complete the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Requirement.

### Compulsory Credits

Compulsory credits are determined by the Ministry of Education.

### Elective Credits

Elective credits are determined by the student based on their pathway plan and post-secondary destination, in consultation with parents and supported by guidance counsellors.

## Ontario Secondary School Certificate (OSSC) & Certificate of Accomplishment requirements

### The Ontario Secondary School Certificate is granted to students who:

- earn a minimum of 14 credits (7 compulsory credits and 7 elective credits);
- are not required to complete 40 Community Involvement hours; and
- are not required to complete the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Requirement.

### A Certificate of Accomplishment is granted to students who:

- earn a maximum of 13 credits; and
- are planning to enter the workplace or other future training and seek recognition of their achievement.

## Grade 9 EQAO math and grade 10 literacy requirements

### The grade 9 EQAO Assessment of Mathematics:

- tests the math skills students are expected to have learned by the end of grade 9;
- is required for students earning a credit in grade 9 Mathematics (Academic or Applied); and
- is part of the final evaluation.

### The grade 10 OSSLT Assessment of Literacy:

- measures whether students are meeting the minimum standard for literacy (reading and writing);
- is written in the spring of grade 10;
- is required for the successful completion the Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD);
- offers an opportunity to rewrite the test (if not successful) or to take the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Course (OSSLC); and
- may offer accommodations to students with special education needs and English language learners as permitted by EQAO.

Students are provided with a wide range of supports both inside and outside the classroom to ensure they are well prepared for EQAO Math and OSSLT evaluations.

### For more information and support

Every high school has a team of support staff to help in many different ways to ensure success for all students. Support staff include: administrators, guidance counsellors, social workers, special education teachers and student success teachers. For more information on high school courses and program options, please visit your school board's website or contact your local school.

*This resource was adapted from the Halton District School Board's Guide to Secondary School by the Our Kids Network Transitions Committee. For a copy of the Guide, please visit [hdsb.ca](http://hdsb.ca), select Parent Info from the main menu, and then Secondary (below Welcome Parents!).*