

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Missouri Option Program

In 2002, the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) initiated the Missouri Option Program. The program is approved by the Missouri State Board of Education. The Missouri Option Program has been used by about half of Missouri's local education agencies (LEAs) as an effective means to retain students, decrease dropout rates, and increase the number of students who are prepared for postsecondary education opportunities or to enter the workforce.

What is the Missouri Option Program?

The Missouri Option Program is designed to serve students who lack the credits necessary to graduate with their class and are at risk of leaving school without a high school diploma. The program specifically targets students who are 17 to 20 years of age and are at least one year behind their cohort group or, for other significant reasons identified in the local Missouri Option Program plan, are unable to complete their diploma with their cohort group.

Graduation through the Missouri Option Program is not dependent on Carnegie credit attainment. It is a competency-based program approved by the State Board of Education that utilizes a high school equivalency exam as mastery for graduation purposes. The HiSET® is the exam sanctioned by the state for the Missouri Option program. It is developed and distributed by the Educational Testing Service (ETS). Missouri Option students who successfully pass the exam and complete all other program requirements are eligible to receive a high school diploma.

Note – A credential that includes the word "diploma" will be awarded. The LEA issues a "regular" high school diploma (the same as awarded to all students by local boards of education).

How does the Missouri Option Program benefit a school?

Local education agencies with an approved Missouri Option Program help students who are at risk of not graduating to remain in school, allowing them to successfully graduate. Once the LEA issues a high school diploma, participants are then counted as graduates. Additionally, an LEA can continue to count these students in its average daily attendance (ADA) for purposes of state aid while the students are enrolled in the program.

How does the Missouri Option Program benefit a student?

Missouri Option Program instructors provide ongoing academic/career advisement with supplemental guidance and counseling as needed. Students have access to all educational programs and services available in the LEA, receive valuable academic and life-skills instruction, earn a high school diploma, and, upon successful completion of program requirements, are eligible to participate in commencement ceremonies.

What is required of Missouri Option Program students?

Students must participate in a minimum of 15 hours of academic instruction per week. Students

must also be enrolled in other school-supervised instructional activities (career education courses, elective classes, work experience, etc.) that lead to the student's classification by the LEA as a full-time student. The LEA should provide a level and quality of education that ensures the integrity of the Missouri Option Program and locally issued high school diploma.

Local education agencies may have additional requirements when issuing a regular high school diploma that are consistent with what is required of all students. Missouri Option students must take the required End-of-Course exams (EOCs) – Algebra I (or Algebra II if Algebra was taken prior to high school), English II, Biology and American Government. State law also requires that all graduate candidates take a course in government and the functions of government and pass the required tests related to Civics and the U.S. and Missouri Constitutions. Participants must also complete half-unit courses in Personal Finance and Health and complete 30 minutes of CPR instruction and training in the proper performance of the Heimlich maneuver.

If a student takes the HiSET®, what documentation will the LEA receive from the state verifying the student's results?

The HiSET® tests are designed to measure the major academic skills and knowledge associated with a high school program of study. Students enrolled in the Missouri Option Program take (and must pass) the HiSET® tests in order to demonstrate and document the attainment of high school-level skills. The HiSET® Score Report is one of the academic components required for the awarding of a high school diploma by the local education agency, and as such, is placed in the student's permanent record.

What happens if a student fails to complete the Missouri Option Program?

Occasionally, a student fails to complete all of the program requirements necessary to be awarded a diploma. In these instances, the passing scores on the HiSET® belong to the student, and the LEA should provide guidance on how to obtain a Missouri High School Equivalency Certificate through the DESE High School Equivalency Office (573-751-3504).

What are the requirements for the faculty in the Missouri Option Program?

Teachers working in this program must have a valid Missouri teaching certificate in any content area or in Adult Education and Literacy (AEL).

Are specific funds available to support the Missouri Option Program?

No. The Missouri Option Program is not a grant program. However, LEAs do receive state aid for attendance (ADA) of participating students.

How do Local Education Agencies sign up for the Missouri Option Program?

Local Education Agencies planning to operate a Missouri Option Program must submit a **Missouri Option Program Compliance Plan**. Please follow the directions available on the Missouri Option website under [Missouri Option Program Application..](#)