2026 NATIONAL REPORT CARD

California

CLASS OF 2026 GRADE	PROJECTED CLASS OF 2031 GRADE
F	A

GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

Is a high school course with personal finance concepts required to be taken as a graduation requirement?

No, personal finance is not included in the graduation requirements, either as a standalone course or embedded in another course, and schools are not required to offer financial literacy courses for the Class of 2026. Graduation from high school in California requires students to take three years of social science, including a one-semester course in economics.

Sources:

- California State Minimum High School Graduation Requirements

PRE-K TO GRADE EIGHT

As described in High School Education Standards, the Instructional Quality Commission (IQC) adopts instructional materials for grades K to eight. California-passed laws require the IQC, in the future, to adopt instructional materials (in particular textbooks) that include specified financial literacy content. This applies to the following educational subjects: social sciences, health, and mathematics. Therefore, textbooks updated since the passage of this law should include personal finance content for grade K to eight.

Sources:

- Instructional Materials FAQ

PROJECTED GRADE FOR CLASS OF 2031

Grade A for the Class of 2031. In June of 2024, the governor signed into law a bill that would add the completion of a separate, standalone one-semester, half-year, course in personal finance to the graduation requirements commencing with students that graduate in the Class of 2031. The new requirement applies to all public and charter high schools in the state. The law allows the course to be offered to students in grades nine to 12. The law does not allow this personal finance course to be combined with any other course. For example, a high school could not comply with this graduation requirement by having students take a one-semester course that combines economics and personal finance concepts in a single half-semester course. Beginning with the Class of 2031, the law allows students that complete the personal finance course to elect to be exempt from the existing graduation requirement to complete a one-semester course in economics. Local school districts are allowed to eliminate one or more locally required courses in order to accommodate the new required personal finance course, commencing with the Class of 2031. The law requires high schools to begin offering the personal finance class to students in the 2027-28 school year. The law also requires that on or before May 31, 2026, that the State Board of Education (SBOE) adopt a curriculum guide and resources for the personal finance course, based on a curriculum guide and resources developed and recommended by the Instructional Quality Commission (IQC). The law requires the curriculum guide and resources to include the financial literacy topics considered by the IQC as part of the history-social science framework revision. The law appropriates $300,000 from the General Fund to the IQC for purposes of developing, and recommending to the SBOE, the curriculum guide

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NEFE National Endowment for Financial Education

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and resources. The law specifies a long list of personal finance topics that the IQC must consider when creating these materials. The SBOE adopted the curriculum guide and resources for this personal finance course on March 11, 2026. This law expressly authorizes a teacher holding a single subject teaching credential in Social Science, Business, Mathematics, or Home Economics to teach the new financial literacy course. The law would also authorize the IQC to additionally establish a supplementary authorization that could allow teachers holding single subject teaching credentials in other subjects to teach the personal finance course. In 2024 the State Superintendent of Public Instruction announced the creation of a Personal Finance Task Force to inform implementation of personal finance education for K-12 students across the state, especially as a source of economic empowerment for those in marginalized communities.

Sources:

- Assembly Bill No. 2927
- State Superintendent Press Release
- Personal Finance Task Force
- Curriculum Guide for Personal Finance

HIGH SCHOOL EDUCATION STANDARDS

Under the current education laws and regulations in California, a student could graduate without ever being taught substantive personal finance concepts in high school.

Content Standards: State law requires the SBOE to adopt standards for all students, from grades K to 12. These educational content standards describe what students should know and be able to do in each subject at each grade. These standards applicable to the Class of 2026 do not include financial literacy topics. The SBOE-approved History-Social Science standards include Principles of American Democracy and Economics standards, but these do not currently include any financial literacy standards. These standards were adopted in 1998.

Frameworks: Curriculum frameworks offer guidance for implementing SBOE-approved content standards. Frameworks describe the curriculum and instruction necessary to help students achieve proficiency. Frameworks are developed by the IQC. These frameworks are tools that local school districts may use, but they are not required to do so by law or regulation. Certain frameworks reference or include financial literacy concepts. The History-Social Studies (HSS) Framework (adopted in July 2016) requires ninth grade students to take two semesters of electives. The framework identifies 12 suggested elective options for grade nine, and one of the options is a personal finance elective. However, *NGPF's 2026 State of Financial Education Report* indicates that nearly 70% of California students attend a high school that does not offer a standalone personal finance course. Recommending that students take a course of this nature in ninth grade is not optimal, since knowledge will fade over time. Such students will not use much of what they learn until many years after the instruction is completed. Laws passed in 2013 and 2016 require that when the IQC next updates the "curriculum frameworks in the social sciences, health, and mathematics" that these frameworks include specified financial literacy content by the following grade band: grades K; one to five; six to eight; and nine to 12. The California Education Code requires that local districts adopt high school textbooks aligned to the state content standards, but they are not required to align to curriculum frameworks.

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Instructional Materials: Instructional materials are used by students and their teachers as a learning resource and help students become proficient in a subject. Instructional materials include textbooks, technology-based materials, other educational materials, and tests. The IQC reviews and adopts textbooks and other instructional materials for use in grades K to eight. The IQC does not adopt instructional materials for grades nine to 12; this is done exclusively by the local school districts.

Sources:

- Instructional Materials FAQ
- Content Standards
- History-Social Science Content Standards (see pages 54–61)
- Instructional Quality Commission
- Curriculum Frameworks & Instructional Materials
- History-Social Science Framework (Chapter 14: Grade nine – Elective Courses in History-Social Sciences and Chapter 18: Grade 12 – Principles of Economics (One Semester))
- California Education Code 51280 to 51284.5
- NGPF's 2026 State of Financial Education Report

EXTRA CREDIT

The California Department of Education offers educators a robust list of financial literacy resources. The CalMoneySmart program provides annual grants of up to $200,000 to nonprofit organizations to provide financial education and financial empowerment programs and services for unbanked and underbanked Californians. California districts and schools are eligible for grant funding for personal finance program development made available by Next Gen Personal Finance (NGPF). One million dollars in grants will be awarded through the NGPF California Challenge Grant Program. Grant awards are limited to one per school and ten per district: (i) $3,500 per school will be awarded to schools teaching the course in the 2025–2026 school year (up to $35,000 per district); and (ii) $2,500 per school will be awarded to schools teaching the course in the 2026–2027 school year (up to $25,000 per district). Grants are designated for exclusive use in the new personal finance course. NGPF is also offering teachers $500 professional development stipends for 20 hours of completed professional development training in personal finance.

Sources:

- California Grades K–12 Financial Literacy Resources
- CalMoneySmart
- Grant Program
- NGPF's California Access to Financial Education Grant Program