

Legislative Analysis



HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

Mitchell Bean, Director
Phone: (517) 373-8080
<http://www.house.mi.gov/hfa>

House Bill 5606

Sponsor: Rep. Brian Palmer

Committee: Education

Complete to 1-30-06

A SUMMARY OF HOUSE BILL 5606 AS INTRODUCED 1-24-06

House Bill 5606 would amend the Revised School Code to prescribe high school graduation requirements for public schools and public school academies (charter schools).

Graduation Requirements

The bill specifies that beginning with students scheduled to graduate from high school in 2010, the board of a school district or board of directors of a charter school would be prohibited from awarding a high school diploma to a student unless he or she had successfully completed all the following minimum credit requirements as part of high school course work, aligned with course content expectations development by the Department of Education and approved by the State Board of Education:

- Four credits in English language arts.
- Four credits in mathematics, including at least two algebra courses, one geometry course, and an additional course beyond algebra I and geometry. (However, if any of the courses were completed before high school, another mathematics course would be substituted.)
- Three credits in science, including completion of at least one biology course, one chemistry or physics course, and an additional course approved by the department (at least one of which would be an approved course in earth science).
- One-half credit in civics, one-half credit in economics, one credit in U.S. history and geography, and one credit in world history and geography.
- One credit in health and physical education from among courses approved by the department. and
- One credit in fine arts or music from among courses approved by the department.
- One course or learning experience that was presented online, as defined by the department. (This requirement would begin in the academic year starting after the state board adopted a resolution indicating that its members had determined that

all high school students in Michigan have substantially similar access to the Internet, and to substantially similar computing technology.

Course Content Expectations

The bill requires the Department of Education to develop course content expectations for all elements of the curriculum, as follows:

- All course content expectations would have to be consistent with the state board-recommended model core academic curriculum content standards.
- The course content standards would have to be board-approved.
- The course content expectation would have to state in clear and measurable terms what students were expected to know upon completion of each course.
- Except as otherwise provided, the course content expectation would have to be developed by the department and approved by the state board not later than March 1, 2006. (However, the course content expectations for sophomore-level English language arts would have to be developed and approved before March 1, 2007, the junior-level standards by March 1, 2008, and the senior-level standards before March 1, 2009);

Foci of the Course Content Expectations

The bill specifies the foci of the course content expectations, as follows: English language arts would have to focus on reading and writing; mathematics on the study of measurement, properties, and relationships of quantities and sets, using both numbers and symbols; science would have to include using the scientific methods to critically evaluate scientific theories, and using relevant scientific data to assess the validity of those theories and formulate arguments for and against; civics would have to focus on the Constitution of the United States, the Constitution of Michigan, and the history and present form of government of the United States and of this state and its political subdivisions; economics on the fundamental concepts of microeconomics, macroeconomics, international economics, and personal finance; U.S. history and geography on the history of the American experiment of liberty under law, and cover American colonial heritage and the founding of the republic to present day; world history and geography on the development of cultures before 1600, beginning with consideration of the Mesopotamian and Hebrew civilizations (the course designed to acquaint students with the historical roots of the western heritage); health and physical education on demonstration of competency in motor skills and movement patterns needed to perform a variety of physical activities, and understanding of movement concepts, principles, strategies, and tactics as they apply to the learning and performance of physical activities; and, fine arts or music on analyzing the dynamics of the creative process in a given medium, addressing the interaction between the artist and the cultural milieu, and analyzing the nature of the aesthetic response, and also require firsthand experience with works of art or music.

The Department of Education also would have to develop guidelines for alternative instruction delivery methods.

Course Content Expectations Oversight

Under the bill, the State Board of Education would be required to approve course content expectation developed by the Department of Education before they took effect. Before the department presented the expectations to the state board, it would be required to submit the proposed expectations to a three-person group consisting of a designee of the state board, the chair of the Senate standing committee on education (or a designee), and the chair of the House standing committee on education (or a designee). The bill would prohibit the department from presenting a proposed course content expectation to the state board for approval unless all of the members of the group had determined the expectation was consistent with the requirements of this legislation.

Personalized Alternative Curricula

Under the bill, a student who had completed at least grade 8 could request a modification of his or her individual high school graduation requirements and a personalized alternative curriculum. If all of the requirements were met, then the board of a school district or board of directors of a charter school could award a high school diploma to a student, even if he or she did not meet the graduation requirements specified earlier in the bill.

All of the following would apply to the personalized alternative curriculum:

- It would be developed by a group consisting of the student, at least one of the student's parents or a guardian, at least one of the student's teachers who would be selected by the high school principal; and also the student's high school counselor or another designee selected by the principal. (However, if the student were 18 or older or an emancipated minor, the student could decide whether to include a parent or guardian.)
- The personalized alternative curriculum would have to meet all of the following:
 - Incorporate as much of the graduation requirements as practicable;
 - Establish measurable goals that the student must achieve while enrolled in high school and provide an evaluation method.
 - Be designed to prepare the student for employment after graduation from high school, or for enrollment in a four-year college or university, a community college, or a postsecondary trade, technical, or vocational institution after graduation from high school.

Before the alternative curriculum took effect, it would have to be agreed to by the student's parent or guardian, and by the superintendent of the school district, or chief

executive of the charter school (or a designee). Unless the student were 18, the student's parent or guardian would have to be in communication with each of the student's teachers at least once each calendar quarter to monitor the student's progress toward the goals contained in the personalized curriculum. The student's progress would be monitored annually by the group including the student's parent, teacher, and high school counselor, and modifications could be made if all agreed to them.

Special Education Services

The bill specifies that if a student received special education services, then the student's individualized education plan would supersede the requirements noted above.

Alternative Instructional Delivery Methods

A school district, intermediate school district, or charter school would be required to ensure that content expectations for the courses noted above were met either by providing the course work specified above or by using alternative instructional delivery methods, such as alternative course work, career and technical education, or humanities course sequences.

Responsibilities of School Boards

The bill would require the boards of public schools to make available all elements of the curriculum to all affected students. If the required courses were not offered, the boards would have to ensure that the students had access to the required courses by another means, such as, enrollment in a postsecondary course under the Postsecondary Enrollment Options Act; a cooperative arrangement with a neighboring school district or charter school; or by granting approval for the student to be counted in membership in another school district.

Exemption

The bill specifies that if a student were unable to meet a requirement for a high school diploma because the state board had not approved course content expectations for a course, or the department or state board otherwise had not complied with this section of the legislation, then that particular requirement would not apply to the student.

Successful Completion

Under the bill, a student would be considered to have completed one credit if he or she met the course content expectations. A course would be successfully completed if the student earned at least a 2.0 on a 4.0 scale.

School Accreditation

The bill would require the state superintendent of public instruction to annually review and update the school accreditation standards, using the process prescribed under the law.

Under the current law, the accreditation standards include student performance on MEAP tests. The bill would add student performance on the Michigan Merit Examination when that test has been fully implemented.

The bill specifies that beginning with the 2007-2008 school year, a high school would not be accredited by the Department of Education unless the department determined that the high school was providing all of the elements of the curriculum required under this legislation as finally approved by the state board. If it were necessary for the state superintendent to revise accreditation or summary accreditation standards to comply with the changes made, then the review standards would have to be developed, reviewed, approved, and distributed using the same process currently prescribed under the law.

(Currently under the law, the department develops the standards and distributes them to all public schools; holds statewide public hearings to receive testimony; reviews the testimony and revises the standards; submits them to the state superintendent who may also revise them, before submitting them to the Senate and House committees having responsibility for education legislation. Upon approval by these the committees, the department distributes the standards to all schools.)

Repealer.

The bill would repeal Section 1166 of the Revised School Code, effective July 1, 2006. That section of the code sets the current requirement that a high school student take a one credit, one-semester civics class before graduating.

FISCAL IMPACT:

The fiscal impact of the bill would vary by school district or charter school depending on the extent to which each is already providing and/or requiring successful completion of the proposed course requirements. Districts and charter schools that do not currently provide all the proposed required courses would incur costs either by having to add courses and/or staff or to send students to postsecondary institutions or other districts in order to fulfill certain course requirements. The average cost of education per student also could increase due to an increased number of students needing to retake courses in order to fulfill the proposed requirement that they pass each course with a 2.0 on a 4.0 scale.

Legislative Analyst: J. Hunault
Fiscal Analyst: Bethany Wicksall

■ This analysis was prepared by nonpartisan House staff for use by House members in their deliberations, and does not constitute an official statement of legislative intent.