

STORAGE NAME: h1797s1a.ed

DATE: March 26, 1998

**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
AS REVISED BY THE COMMITTEE ON
EDUCATION APPROPRIATIONS
BILL RESEARCH & ECONOMIC IMPACT STATEMENT**

BILL #: CS/HB 1797

RELATING TO: High School Graduation Requirements

SPONSOR(S): Committee on Education K-12 and Representative Warner

COMPANION BILL(S):

ORIGINATING COMMITTEE(S)/COMMITTEE(S) OF REFERENCE:

- (1) EDUCATION K-12 YEAS 9 NAYS 1
 - (2) EDUCATION APPROPRIATIONS YEAS 13 NAYS 2
 - (3)
 - (4)
 - (5)
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I. SUMMARY:

The bill provides that upon meeting either the state required 24 academic credits or an International Baccalaureate curriculum a student may request a diploma and will be awarded the diploma upon such request. In order to receive the requested diploma, the student must provide notice to the school board prior to the start of the semester in which the graduation requirements would be completed. Once a student has met the credit or curriculum requirements the student is not precluded from remaining in school to earn additional credits.

The bill permits participation in interscholastic sports at the junior varsity or varsity level for two full seasons to satisfy the one-half credit in physical education, provided the student passes a competency test on personal fitness with a score of a "C" or better. The school board may not require that the one-half credit in physical education be taken during the 9th grade year.

The bill restricts the district's ability to establish "requirements" for high school graduation in excess of the state requirements by removing the word "requirements" and inserting the phrase "grade point average requirement." This prevents districts from requiring more than 24 credits for high school graduation.

The bill requires public schools to assist academically qualified and motivated students to graduate early from high school and provides a funding calculation of full-time equivalent student membership for students who graduate early.

II. SUBSTANTIVE RESEARCH:

A. PRESENT SITUATION:

High School Graduation Requirements

Currently, the minimum requirements for high school graduation include the following:

- passage of both sections of the High School Competency Test (HSCT);
- completion of a minimum of 24 credits;
- receipt of the required grade point average (GPA) for graduation. Students who enter the 9th grade during the 1997-98 school year must have a 2.0 cumulative GPA on a 4.0 scale in the courses that apply to the credits required for high school graduation. Students who entered the 9th grade prior to 1997-98 must earn a 2.0 GPA on a 4.0 scale for courses required for high school graduation which are taken after July 1, 1997; or maintain an overall cumulative GPA of 2.0 including all high school courses taken in the student's educational program; and
- successful completion of any other requirements prescribed by the local school board.

The 24 credits required for graduation are distributed as follows:

Required Subject	Number of Credits
English	4
Math	3
Science	3
Social Studies	
American History	1
World History	1
Economics	.5
American Government	.5
Physical Education	.5
Practical Arts Vocational or Exploratory	.5 or 1
Performing Fine Arts	.5 or 1
Life Management Skills	.5
Total Required Credits	15
Total Elective Credits	9
TOTAL CREDITS	24

Currently, there is nothing in state statutes that prohibits students from graduating high school early once they meet the necessary local and state graduation requirements.

Participation in an interscholastic sport, whether at the freshman, junior varsity, or varsity level, for a full season, will satisfy the one-half credit requirement in physical education.

District school boards are authorized to establish requirements for high school graduation in excess of the minimum state requirements. (s. 232.246(4)(c), F.S.) According to the Department of Education (DOE), for the graduating class of 1996-97, four of the 67 school districts required more credits for graduation than the state-required 24: Bay (26), Broward (25), Marion (26), and Martin (26). However, for the graduation class of 1999-2000, the number increases to fourteen districts: Bay (28), Broward (25), DeSoto (28), Escambia (28), Flagler (26), Gilchrist (28), Gulf (28), Lafayette (28), Liberty (28), Marion (26), Martin (26), St. Lucie (28), Santa Rosa (28), and Taylor (28). (State and District High School Graduation Requirements: 1996-97 to 1999-2000, Florida Information Note, Department of Education, December 1996)

Funding of Public Schools

In 1973, the Florida Legislature enacted the Florida Education Finance Program (FEFP) and established the following state policy on equalized funding:

“To guarantee to each student in the Florida public educational system the availability of programs and services appropriate to his educational needs which are substantially equal to those available to any similar student notwithstanding geographic differences and varying local economic factors.” (s. 236.012(1), F.S.)

To provide this equalization of educational opportunity, the FEFP formula recognizes:

- varying local property tax bases;
- varying program cost factors;
- district cost differentials; and
- differences in per student cost for equivalent educational programs due to sparsity and dispersion of student population.

Since 1973, Florida’s education funding system has used the concept of “full-time equivalents” or FTEs to describe full-time students. Five hours of instruction a day, or 25 hours a week, is considered one FTE. The number of FTEs to be served is used as a basis for the enrollment funded by the Legislature in the Appropriations Act. As one of the first steps in the FEFP, districts estimate how many students, or FTEs will be enrolled in each program. The program cost factors, often referred to as program weights, are applied to FTE to determine weighted FTE (WFTE). The base student allocation (BSA) is then applied to each WFTE.

B. EFFECT OF PROPOSED CHANGES:

High School Graduation Requirements

The bill provides that upon meeting either the state required 24 academic credits or an International Baccalaureate curriculum a student may request a diploma and will be awarded the diploma upon such request. In order to receive the requested diploma, the student must provide notice to the school board prior to the start of the semester in which the graduation requirements would be completed. Once a student has met the credit or curriculum requirements he or she is not precluded from remaining in school to earn additional credits.

The bill permits participation in interscholastic sports at the junior varsity or varsity level for two full seasons to satisfy the one-half credit in physical education provided the student passes a competency test on personal fitness with a score of a “C” or better. The school board may not require that the one-half credit in physical education be taken during the 9th grade year.

The bill restricts the district’s ability to establish “requirements” for high school graduation in excess of the state requirements. The bill removes the word “requirements” and inserts the phrase “grade point average requirement,” thus only permitting districts to increase the GPA in excess of the state requirement. This provision prevents districts from requiring more than the 24 credits for high school graduation.

Funding of Public Schools

The bill requires public schools to assist academically talented and motivated students to graduate early from high school and provides a funding calculation of full-time equivalent student membership for students who graduate early. The bill requires the following additional full-time equivalent student membership to be calculated for each student who graduates early:

- a value of 0.25 full-time equivalent student membership for the semester subsequent to the student's graduation for each student who graduates at the end of the first semester of 12th grade; and
- a value of 0.50 full-time equivalent student membership for the school year subsequent to the student's graduation for each student who graduates at the end of the 11th grade.

The additional full-time equivalent student membership must be added to the school district's full-time equivalent student membership and funded as regular full-time students.

C. APPLICATION OF PRINCIPLES:

1. Less Government:

a. Does the bill create, increase or reduce, either directly or indirectly:

(1) any authority to make rules or adjudicate disputes?

Yes, the bill restricts a school district's ability to provide high school graduation requirements in excess of the state requirements, with the exception of increasing the grade point average.

(2) any new responsibilities, obligations or work for other governmental or private organizations or individuals?

No.

(3) any entitlement to a government service or benefit?

No.

b. If an agency or program is eliminated or reduced:

(1) what responsibilities, costs and powers are passed on to another program, agency, level of government, or private entity?

Not applicable.

(2) what is the cost of such responsibility at the new level/agency?

Not applicable.

(3) how is the new agency accountable to the people governed?

Not applicable.

2. Lower Taxes:

- a. Does the bill increase anyone's taxes?

No.

- b. Does the bill require or authorize an increase in any fees?

No.

- c. Does the bill reduce total taxes, both rates and revenues?

No.

- d. Does the bill reduce total fees, both rates and revenues?

No.

- e. Does the bill authorize any fee or tax increase by any local government?

No.

3. Personal Responsibility:

- a. Does the bill reduce or eliminate an entitlement to government services or subsidy?

No.

- b. Do the beneficiaries of the legislation directly pay any portion of the cost of implementation and operation?

No.

4. Individual Freedom:

- a. Does the bill increase the allowable options of individuals or private organizations/associations to conduct their own affairs?

Yes, the bill restricts the number of high school graduation requirements to 24, providing some students the opportunity to graduate earlier than was previously possible. The districts may offer more credits, but a student may request a diploma after completing the state required 24.

- b. Does the bill prohibit, or create new government interference with, any presently lawful activity?

No.

5. Family Empowerment:

a. If the bill purports to provide services to families or children:

(1) Who evaluates the family's needs?

Not applicable.

(2) Who makes the decisions?

Not applicable.

(3) Are private alternatives permitted?

Not applicable.

(4) Are families required to participate in a program?

Not applicable.

(5) Are families penalized for not participating in a program?

Not applicable.

b. Does the bill directly affect the legal rights and obligations between family members?

No.

c. If the bill creates or changes a program providing services to families or children, in which of the following does the bill vest control of the program, either through direct participation or appointment authority:

(1) parents and guardians?

Not applicable.

(2) service providers?

Not applicable.

(3) government employees/agencies?

Not applicable.

D. STATUTE(S) AFFECTED:

The bill amends ss. 232.246 and 236.081, F.S.

E. SECTION-BY-SECTION RESEARCH:

Section 1: Amends s. 232.246, F.S., relating to general requirements for high school graduation; permitting students who have completed the state required 24 academic credits or the International Baccalaureate curriculum to request and receive a diploma; providing a notice requirement; restricting the district's ability to establish

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graduation requirements in excess of the state; and revising methods to satisfy the one-half credit in physical education.

Section 2: Amends s. 236.081, F.S., relating to funding for the operation of schools; requiring public schools to assist academically qualified and motivated students to graduate early from high school and providing a funding calculation of full-time equivalent student membership for students who graduate early.

Section 3: Provides an enacting date of July 1 of the year in which the bill becomes law.

III. FISCAL RESEARCH & ECONOMIC IMPACT STATEMENT:

A. FISCAL IMPACT ON STATE AGENCIES/STATE FUNDS:

1. Non-recurring Effects:

See Fiscal Comments.

2. Recurring Effects:

See Fiscal Comments.

3. Long Run Effects Other Than Normal Growth:

See Fiscal Comments.

4. Total Revenues and Expenditures:

See Fiscal Comments.

B. FISCAL IMPACT ON LOCAL GOVERNMENTS AS A WHOLE:

1. Non-recurring Effects:

N/A

2. Recurring Effects:

See Fiscal Comments.

3. Long Run Effects Other Than Normal Growth:

See Fiscal Comments.

C. DIRECT ECONOMIC IMPACT ON PRIVATE SECTOR:

1. Direct Private Sector Costs:

Not applicable.

2. Direct Private Sector Benefits:

Not applicable.

3. Effects on Competition, Private Enterprise and Employment Markets:

The bill could have a positive, though indeterminate, effect on competition, private enterprise, and employment markets.

D. **FISCAL COMMENTS:**

The base student allocation (BSA) for 1997-98, per WFTE in the K-12 program is \$3,034.96. If a student graduates one semester early the bill allocates \$2,276.22 to the district (a value of .25 FTE for the last semester). If a student graduates a year early the district receives \$1,517.48 (a value of .50 FTE).

The bill limits the number of credits a district can require for high school graduation to 24. If students choose to graduate upon receiving the necessary credits they could potentially be in school for less amount of time which may result in savings.

The bill requires public schools to assist academically qualified and motivated students to graduate early from high school and provides a funding calculation of full-time equivalent student membership for students who graduate early. This funding calculation provides districts with a funding incentive for students who graduate early.

IV. CONSEQUENCES OF ARTICLE VII, SECTION 18 OF THE FLORIDA CONSTITUTION:

A. **APPLICABILITY OF THE MANDATES PROVISION:**

This bill does not require counties or municipalities to expend funds or to take an action requiring the expenditure of funds.

B. **REDUCTION OF REVENUE RAISING AUTHORITY:**

This bill does not reduce the authority that municipalities or counties have to raise revenues in the aggregate.

C. **REDUCTION OF STATE TAX SHARED WITH COUNTIES AND MUNICIPALITIES:**

This bill does not reduce the percentage of a state tax shared with counties or municipalities.

V. COMMENTS:

VI. AMENDMENTS OR COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE CHANGES:

On October 8, 1997, the Committee on Education K-12 passed the bill favorably. The bill was adopted as a committee substitute with one "strike-everything" amendment, which:

1. requires a student to provide advance notice to the school district of his intent to graduate early,
2. requires two full seasons of sports participation, achieves a "C" on a personal fitness competency test along with other requirements for a student to earn one-half credit in physical education as an alternative to taking a physical education course, and
3. clarifies the FTE supplement language for school districts if students graduate early

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On March 26, 1998, CS/HB 1797 was heard by Education Appropriations and passed favorably; two amendments were approved, which are described as follows:

1. requires that a student who earns 24 credits and graduates early must be at least 16 years old.
2. provides that, if a school district increases the required credits to more than 15, it must also reduce the elective credits proportionally, so that the total required for graduation will equal 24.

VII. SIGNATURES:

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION K-12

Prepared by:

Legislative Research Director:

M. Elizabeth Atkins

M. Elizabeth Atkins

AS REVISED BY THE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION APPROPRIATIONS:

Prepared by:

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