
OLR Bill Analysis

sHB 6498

AN ACT CONCERNING IMPLEMENTATION DATES FOR SECONDARY SCHOOL REFORM.

SUMMARY:

This bill delays by two years the implementation of several requirements for secondary school reform enacted in 2010, including provisions that:

1. increase the minimum number of credits required to graduate from high school,
2. require school districts to offer students support and alternative ways to meet the new graduation requirements, and
3. require the state to provide grants to help districts implement the requirements.

It also:

1. reorganizes and clarifies the sequence and contents of required State Department of Education (SDE) reports on the implementation and effectiveness of school governance councils for low-achieving schools,
2. expands the types of programs districts may establish to meet an existing requirement to offer an advanced placement (AP) program starting July 1, 2011, and
3. establishes a task force to address implementation issues arising from enhanced high school graduation requirements.

Finally, the bill makes technical changes (§ 8).

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon passage

SECONDARY SCHOOL REFORM DELAY

§ 1 – High School Graduation Requirements

Starting with the class graduating in 2018, current law requires students to earn 25 credits in specified subjects (see BACKGROUND), pass end-of-year examinations in five subjects, and complete a senior demonstration project to graduate from high school. It requires school districts to provide adequate support and remedial services for students, starting with students in the 7th grade in the 2012-13 school year.

The bill postpones the effective dates of these requirements for two years. It requires the increased high school graduation requirements to take effect with the class of 2020 instead of the class of 2018 and requires school districts to provide support and remedial services for 7th graders starting in 2014-15 rather than 2012-13.

§ 2 – Information Collection

The bill delays a requirement that districts collect information on students' career and academic choices every year beginning in grade 6 and continuing through grade 12. Current law requires the data collection to begin in the 2012-13 school year. The bill delays it until the 2014-15 school year.

§ 3 – State Grants and Reporting

For FY 13 through FY 18, current law requires the SDE to provide grants, within available appropriations, to school districts to help them implement the new high school graduation standards and student support services. The bill delays the grants to FY 15 through FY 20.

It also delays, for two years, the submission dates for required status reports on secondary school reform. It postpones, from November 1, 2012 to November 1, 2014, the start of biennial reporting by school boards seeking grant assistance on (1) the implementation status of the higher standards and support services and (2) an explanation of why they need additional implementation funds in the upcoming biennium. It postpones the start of biennial implementation reports from SDE to the Education Committee from February 1, 2013 to

February 1, 2015.

§ 4 – End-of-Course Exams

The enhanced high school graduation standards require students to pass state-developed or -approved end-of-year exams in algebra I, geometry, biology, American history, and 10th grade English. Current law requires SDE to develop or approve these exams over two years starting by July 1, 2012 and finishing by July 1, 2014. The bill delays this requirement to July 1, 2014 to July 1, 2016.

§§ 5, 6, & 10 – REPORTS ON SCHOOL GOVERNANCE COUNCILS

By law, boards of education that have jurisdiction over schools designated as low-achieving must establish a school governance council for each such school. The councils may recommend that the school be reconstituted according to models specified in the law. SDE must monitor and report to the Education Committee on the activities and effectiveness of the councils.

The bill reorganizes the sequence and content of the required reports and specifies that they must be submitted biennially instead of once. The current and proposed report sequence is shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Reporting Requirements and Deadlines

Report	Due Dates	
	Current Law (one-time)	The Bill (biennial starting)
Number of school governance councils established (This is currently also part of a required report due January 1, 2011, which the bill repeals, see below.)	January 1, 2012	December 1, 2011
Evaluation of effectiveness of councils established before January 15, 2011	October 1, 2014	December 1, 2013
Number of councils recommending or initiating school reconstitution and the reconstitution models chosen, including a recommendation whether to continue allowing councils to recommend school reconstitutions	January 1, 2012 and January 1, 2013	December 1, 2015
Monitor and evaluate reconstituted schools according to various measures	No specified date	December 1, 2017

The bill eliminates a requirement that SDE also report on (1) a comparison of the councils that have initiated reconstitutions with those that have not and (2) whether there is increased parental involvement at schools with governance councils. Current law requires the department to start the reporting by July 1, 2011, but because the law includes two conflicting reporting schedules, it is currently unclear whether SDE must submit this report every year or every two years.

§ 7 – EXPANDED ADVANCED PLACEMENT PROGRAM OPTIONS

Current law requires all school boards to provide high school-level courses for which an advanced placement (AP) examination is available through the College Board. The bill expands the types of AP programs a board can provide to include any program that provides college-level instruction as part of a high school credit course. In addition to courses for which AP exams are available, the bill allows such programs to include (1) International Baccalaureate diploma programs and (2) college- or university-level courses offered to high school students under articulation agreements between school districts and higher education institutions.

§ 9 – HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION ISSUES TASK FORCE

The bill establishes a task force to examine issues arising from the enhanced high school graduation requirements and mandatory courses adopted in 2010. The group must address at least special programming needs, requirement waivers, and appropriate placements for courses under the required subject areas. It must report its findings and recommendations to the Education Committee by January 1, 2013. The task force terminates on that date or the date it submits its report, whichever is later.

The task force members must include the education commissioner or his or her designee; one member each designated by

1. the Connecticut Association of Boards of Education;
2. the Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents (CAPSS);

3. the Connecticut Federation of School Administrators;
4. the Connecticut Education Association; and
5. the American Federation of Teachers-Connecticut; and
6. an unspecified number of appropriate people appointed by the education commissioner, including teachers.

Members must be appointed within 30 days of the bill's passage. The CAPSS' representative is the task force chairperson, who must schedule the first meeting within 60 days of the bill's passage. The Education Committee's administrative staff serves as the task force's administrative staff. Appointing authorities fill any vacancies.

BACKGROUND

New High School Graduation Requirements

Table 2 shows the minimum high school graduation requirements currently scheduled to take effect for the graduating class of 2018, and delayed to the class of 2020 under this bill.

Table 2: New Graduation Requirements

<i>Subject Area</i>	<i>Required Credits</i>
<i>Humanities – 9 credits</i>	
English	4, including composition
Social Studies	3, including 1 credit in American history and a half credit in civics and American Government
Fine Arts	1
Humanities Elective	1
<i>Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics – 8 credits</i>	
Mathematics	4, including algebra I, geometry, and either algebra II or probability and statistics
Science	3, including 1 in life science, 1 in physical science
Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math Elective	1
<i>Career and Life Skills – 3.5 credits</i>	
Physical Education	1
Comprehensive health education	0.5
Career and life skills electives, such as career and technical education, English as a second language, community service, personal finance, public speaking, and nutrition and physical activity	2
<i>Other – 3 credits</i>	
World Languages	2

Subject Area	Required Credits
Senior demonstration project or its SBE-approved equivalent	1

COMMITTEE ACTION

Education Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute

Yea 26 Nay 6 (03/17/2011)