
OLR Bill Analysis

sHB 7082

AN ACT CONCERNING THE INCLUSION OF AFRICAN-AMERICAN STUDIES IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOL CURRICULUM.

SUMMARY

This bill adds African-American studies to the required courses of study for public schools and requires all local and regional boards of education (“boards”) to include this topic in their curriculum beginning with the 2019-20 school year.

It also:

1. makes African-American studies a one-credit requirement for high school graduation, starting with the graduating class of 2023 (the current 8th grade class);
2. requires the State Department of Education (SDE), by July 1, 2020, to develop the curriculum for a one-credit course in African-American studies that will count as one credit for high school graduation; and
3. requires the State Board of Education (SBE), by July 1, 2020, to develop and adopt a model curriculum for grades kindergarten through eight that is in accordance with the required program of instruction for all schools and includes African-American studies within and among various subject matter areas.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2019, except the provisions regarding SDE developing the one-credit course and the SBE adopting a model curriculum are effective upon passage.

§§ 1 & 2 — AFRICAN-AMERICAN STUDIES AS PART OF THE REQUIRED COURSES OF STUDY

The bill adds African-American studies to the required courses of

study for public schools. By law, the required courses of study includes arts; language arts, including reading and writing; mathematics; physical education; science; and social studies, including citizenship, economics, geography, government, and history. Also included are career education; consumer education; and health and safety, including human growth and development, nutrition, and first aid.

Under current law, SBE must assist and encourage boards to include African-American history, among a number of subjects, in their courses of study. The bill changes the reference from African-American history to African-American studies.

The bill requires all boards to include African-American studies in their curriculum beginning with the 2019-20 school year. In developing and implementing the new curriculum, the bill allows the boards to (1) use existing and appropriate public or private materials, personnel, and other resources, including curriculum material that SBE must make available under the bill, and (2) accept gifts, grants, and donations, including in-kind donations.

§§ 3-5 — HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION REQUIREMENT

The bill makes African-American studies a one-credit requirement for high school graduation starting with the graduating class of 2023 (the current 8th grade class). Under the bill, the course may count towards any of the high school course requirements, which are in six categories, to reach the required 25 credits. By law, these categories include no fewer than (1) nine credits in the humanities, including civics and the arts; (2) nine credits in science, technology, engineering and mathematics; (3) one credit in physical education and wellness; (4) one credit in health and safety education; (5) one credit in world languages; and (6) a one credit mastery-based diploma assessment.

The bill requires SDE, by July 1, 2020, to develop the curriculum for the bill's one-credit high school graduation requirement course in African-American studies. In developing and implementing the course curriculum, the department may use existing and appropriate public

or private materials, personnel, and other resources, including the curriculum materials SDE must make available to school districts under the bill (see § 1).

By law, there are a number of ways, outside of the standard grade nine through 12 window, that a board of education may grant credits that satisfy the graduation requirements. These exceptions include (1) successful completion of a language course taken in grades six, seven, or eight; (2) successful completion of summer coursework at an accredited institution of higher education; and (3) by achieving a passing grade on an education commissioner-approved subject area proficiency exam. The bill adds to this list the successful completion of an African-American studies course as developed under the bill.

§ 6 — MODEL K-8 CURRICULUM

The bill requires SBE, by July 1, 2020, to develop and adopt a model curriculum for grades kindergarten through eight, in accordance with required courses of study for all schools, and include African-American studies within and among various subject matter areas. SBE must make the model curriculum available on SDE's website.

SDE must also provide, for the 2020-21 school year and upon a local board of education's request, technical assistance and training to implement the kindergarten through grade eight curriculum.

BACKGROUND

Related Bill

sHB 7083, favorably reported by the Education Committee, makes the same required course of study, board of education curriculum requirement, and high school graduation course requirement for Puerto Rican and Latino studies.

COMMITTEE ACTION

Education Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute

Yea 35 Nay 0 (03/25/2019)