

SENATOR BUMSTEAD BILL ANALYSIS

INTENT OF BILL:

Amend the Michigan Merit Curriculum to give more flexibility to our local school districts for graduation requirements so that students have more opportunities that will allow them to be career and college ready upon graduation.

HIGHLIGHTS:

- Designate 18 credits as Merit Curriculum.
 - 4 mathematics credits
 - 3 social science credits
 - 4 English Language credits
 - 3 Science credits
 - 4 credits determined by school district
- Eliminating current merit curriculum course credits allow more opportunities for students to enroll in career technical education.
- Local school districts will have more freedom to choose what courses their district offers.
- Education Development Plans (EDP) will be used as a critical tool for students throughout their high school career to keep them on track for graduation and college or career bound.
- Eliminating the algebra II requirement gives students the chance to take a math class that is better suited for them.

BACKGROUND/PROBLEM

The Michigan Merit Curriculum (MMC) went into effect in 2006 and created statewide requirements for all high school students in the state. This created a uniformity throughout the entire state and was thought to ensure that all student would be college ready after high school, if they chose to continue their education. Prior to the MMC, graduation requirements were left up to the local school districts.

Currently, students in Michigan must complete the following courses and credits to receive a high school diploma: four credits in English Language Arts, four credits in mathematics (required: Algebra I, Geometry and Algebra II), one credit making

up both physical education and health, three credits in science, three credits in social studies (required: U.S. History & Geography, World History & Geography, Economics, and Civics), one credit in visual, performing, and applied arts, and two credits in world language.

The graduation requirements are very rigid and dissuades students from exploration of courses that may interest them or better prepare them for after high school, like participation in a CTE program.

In addition, requiring algebra II for all students is not realistic. While many students are capable of completing this course and will find it beneficial, it is not fit for every student. Students with learning disabilities and those who are unengaged struggle to pass the course and, in some cases, will drop out of school or not be able to receive a diploma. Algebra II should not hold so much weight that it limits a student’s ability to obtain a high school diploma.

Currently, Michigan is one of only three states in the U.S. that require the completion of algebra II. Florida and Minnesota also require this course. 23 of the top 25 education states in the nation do not require algebra II, Michigan did not make the top 25 list, as determined by US News.

There have been arguments that algebra II is a precursor for college, but, research does not prove this statement. The below chart shows SAT results on the math portion of the SAT for 2018 high school graduates from the College Board, the organization that develops and administers the SAT. The participation rate refers to the percentage of students in a state that took the SAT.

Participation Rate	SAT score for Algebra II Required	SAT score for none Algebra II Required
96-100%	496	506
76-95%	534	548
60-75%	539	536
40-59%	-	542
11-39%	536	566
≤10%	592	625

Data from the College Board.

On average, the SAT score in states that required algebra II was 556 and the average score for a state that did not require algebra II was 561. Generally, SAT math scores are the same or higher in states that do not require algebra II as a graduation requirement.

BILL CONTENT

Credits for graduation requirements

Four credits in mathematics (required: algebra I and geometry), three credits in social sciences (required: civics), four credits in English language arts, three credits in science, and four additional credits as determined by the school district or public school academy.

Credits can be earned by successful completion of specified courses, programs or curriculum developed by the department and approved by the state board. In addition, the board of the school district or board of directors of the public school academy may determine a credit is appropriate if it includes the same content as the benchmarks assessed on the department-prescribed state high school assessment.

For special education students, requirements must be met or modified based off that students Individualized Education Plan (IEP) and their EDP.

Education Development Plan (EDP)

As in current statute, each student will create an EDP during grade 7 and during grade 8 will review and revise it as appropriate before entering high school. A school must ensure that a student then reviews and revises their EDP annually. An EDP must be developed, reviewed and revised by the student under the supervision of a school counselor or another designee qualified to act in a counseling role.

An EDP is designed to assist students in choosing courses that will aid in their career and education goals.

Companion bill

A companion bill has been drafted in conjunction with this bill. Because we have repealed section 1278b (personal curriculum), this companion bill eliminates references to section 1278b within the state School Aid Act of 1979.

In Summary

Creating more flexibility in course credit requirements allows students to take courses they are genuinely interested in and permits districts to teach courses that best fit their student's needs.