

Legislative Analysis



MERIT CURRICULUM: OPT OUT OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE & ALGEBRA II

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House Bill 5645

Sponsor: Rep. Aric Nesbitt

Committee: Education

Complete to 6-14-12

A REVISED SUMMARY OF HOUSE BILL 5645 AS INTRODUCED 5-16-12

House Bill 5645 would amend the Revised School Code (MCL 380.1278a) to allow students to opt out of the foreign language and algebra II requirements of the Michigan high school Merit Curriculum, if they earned more science credits or successfully completed career and technical education courses. A more detailed description of the bill follows.

Under the bill, *both of the following would apply* to the credit requirements of the Michigan Merit Core Curriculum:

- A student would not be required to successfully complete the algebra II requirement under subsection (1)(a) if the student had successfully completed at least *one additional* science credit, for a total of at least four science credits of the type described in Section 1278(1)(b), or if the student had successfully completed at least *one* career and technical education credit that met the Department of Education's standards for career and technical education.
- A student would not be required to successfully complete the two-credit foreign language requirement, if the student had successfully completed at least *two additional* science credits, for a total of at least five science credits, or if the student had successfully completed at least *two* career and technical education credits that met the department's standards for career and technical education.

Now under the law, a student is considered to have "completed a credit" if he or she successfully completes the subject area content expectations or guidelines developed by the Department of Education. House Bill 5645 would retain this provision, but specify that, for a career and technical education credit, the student would have to complete the subject area content expectations or guidelines developed by the applicable school district or charter school (rather than the Michigan Department of Education).

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Now under the law, a Michigan high school student must successfully complete the Michigan Merit Curriculum to earn a diploma. The required curriculum includes:

- ❖ 4 credits of English language arts
- ❖ 4 credits of mathematics (including algebra, geometry, algebra II, and a math class in the final high school year)
- ❖ 3 credits in social science (including US history and geography, world history and geography, and one-half credit each in economics, and civics)
- ❖ 3 credits in science (including biology and either chemistry or physics)
- ❖ 1 credit in visual, performing, or applied arts
- ❖ 1 credit in health and physical education
- ❖ an online learning experience
- ❖ 2 credits of foreign language (taken at some time over the K-12 experience).

The Michigan Merit Curriculum can be modified in a *personal curriculum plan*, allowing a student to design an individual learning plan. In doing so, a student may substitute an array of arithmetic and mathematics courses for those required (for example, statistics or functions, data analysis, trigonometry, pre-calculus, calculus, applied math, accounting, business math, a retake of algebra II, a course in financial literacy); and, a student may enroll in a formal career and technical education program (such as electronics, machining, construction, welding, engineering, or renewable energy), among other things.

FISCAL IMPACT:

The bill would impose some additional costs and responsibilities on the Department of Education relative to the implementation of the revised high school graduation requirements (informing districts and the public of the revised requirements) and the approval of career and technical education programs. The bill provides that subject area content expectations for CTE programs would be developed by individual districts, rather than by the MDE. This would not, however, negate the responsibility of the department to approve all CTE programs or other department responsibilities under federal CTE laws.

The bill would also impact local course offerings as students are provided additional options in meeting the high school graduation requirements, potentially affecting local staffing and classroom needs.

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