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Senate Bills 600 and 601 (as introduced 10-24-19)  
Sponsor: Senator Jon Bumstead  
Committee: Education and Career Readiness

Date Completed: 11-5-19

## **CONTENT**

### **Senate Bill 600 would amend the Revised School Code to do the following:**

- **Modify the Michigan merit standards for mathematics, social science, English language arts, and science.**
- **Eliminate from the Michigan merit standard a requirement that a pupil complete at least one credit in subject that includes both health and physical education, and at least one credit in visual arts, performing arts, or applied arts.**
- **Provide a list of courses, credits, or programs that would count as elective credits for a high school pupil if completed and if they were aligned with guidelines developed by the Department of Education and approved by the State Board of Education.**
- **Require the Department to develop subject area content expectations for the proposed Michigan merit standards for mathematics, social science, English language arts, and science.**
- **Require the Department to submit to the Legislature an annual report that evaluated the overall success of the proposed curriculum.**
- **Allow specialty schools to use SAT scores to meet certain requirements to remain a specialty school.**
- **Replace references to the Michigan Education Assessment Program with the Michigan Student Test of Educational Progress.**
- **Allow approved subject area content expectations or guidelines developed by the Department to remain in effect if the content expectations or guidelines are equivalent to those in the bill.**

### **Senate Bill 601 would amend the State School Aid Act to remove references to Section 1278b of the Revised School Code.**

Senate Bills 600 and 601 are tie-barred, and each bill would take effect 30 days after its enactment.

Senate Bill 600 also would repeal Section 1278b. (Section 1278b prescribes additional Michigan merit standard requirements, requires the Department of Education to develop subject area content expectations, and provides for the development of a personal curriculum for pupils. Many of these provisions would be recodified in substantially the same form, while others (such as those pertaining to the development of personal curricula) would be eliminated.)

Senate Bill 600 is discussed in greater detail below.

## Michigan Merit Standard

The Code specifies that, beginning with pupils entering grade 8 in 2006, the board of a school district or board of directors of a public school academy (PSA) may not award a high school diploma to a pupil unless he or she has successfully completed the prescribed credit requirements for the Michigan merit standard before graduating from high school and meets an online course or online learning experience requirement. The bill instead would refer to pupils entering grade 8 in 2020, and would amend the Michigan merit standard, as described below.

Mathematics. To complete the mathematics requirements under the Michigan merit standard, the Code requires a pupil to complete four credits of mathematics that are aligned with subject area content expectations developed by the Department and approved by the State Board of Education, including completion of algebra I, algebra II, and geometry (or an integrated sequence of this content that consists of three credits), and one additional mathematics credit, such as trigonometry, statistics, precalculus, calculus, applied math, accounting, business math, a retake of algebra II, or a course in financial literacy. The Code allows a pupil to satisfy the algebra II requirement by completing an approved formal career and technical education (CTE) program or curriculum, and requires each pupil to complete at least one mathematics course during his or her final year of high school.

Under the bill, a pupil would have to complete at least credit of algebra I and geometry, or an integrated sequence of this content that consisted of two credits. The remaining mathematics credits required would have to be satisfied through successful completion of specified credits, courses, programs, or curricula that aligned with subject area content expectations developed by the Department and approved by the State Board, and that aligned with a student's education development plan (EDP). The list of courses corresponds substantially with the courses currently listed, except that bill would delete the reference to a retake of algebra II. The bill would continue to allow a pupil to satisfy the algebra II requirement by completing an approved formal career and technical education (CTE) program or curriculum.

The bill also would allow for completion of the mathematic requirements by any other credit, course, program, or curriculum that the board of the school district or board of directors of a PSA determined was appropriate and that included the same content as the benchmarks for any of the previously listed courses.

Social Science. To complete the social sciences requirements under the Michigan merit standard, the Code requires a pupil to complete at least three credits in social science that are aligned with subject area content expectations developed by the Department and approved by the State Board, including completion of at least one credit in United States history and geography, one credit in world history and geography, one-half credit in economics, and a civics course that gives instruction on the Michigan and United States Constitutions. The one-half-credit economics requirement may be satisfied by completion of at least a one-half-credit course in personal economics that includes a financial literacy component.

Under the bill, a pupil would have to complete three credits in social science, including the civics course. A pupil would have to satisfy the remaining credits through completion of the specified credits, courses, programs, or curricula that aligned with subject area content expectations developed by the Department and approved by the State Board, and that aligned with a student's EDP. The list of courses corresponds substantially with the courses currently listed.

The bill also would allow for completion of the social science requirements by any other credit, course, program, or curriculum that the board of the school district or board of directors of a PSA determined was appropriate and that included the same content as the benchmarks for any of the previously listed courses.

English Language Arts. To complete the English language arts requirements under the Michigan merit standard, the Code requires a pupil to complete at least four credits in English language arts that are aligned with subject area content expectations developed by the Department and approved by the State Board. The bill specifies that the credits also would have to align with a pupil's EDP.

Science. To satisfy the science component of the Michigan merit standards, the Code requires a pupil to complete three credits in science that are aligned with subject area content expectations developed by the Department and approved by the State Board, including completion of at least biology and either chemistry, physics, agricultural science, anatomy, or an approved course that meets the chemistry or physics benchmark. A pupil may fulfill the third science credit requirement through a computer science course or CTE program.

Under the bill, a pupil would have to complete at least three credits that would have to include completion of any of the following credits, courses, programs, or curricula that aligned with subject area content expectations developed by the Department and approved by the State Board, and that aligned with a student's EDP:

- One credit in biology, chemistry, physics, anatomy, agricultural science, forensics, astronomy, earth science, environmental science, geology, physiology, or microbiology.
- One credit in a program or curriculum that provided the same content as the chemistry or physics benchmarks, as determined by the Department.
- One credit in a Department-approved computer science program or curriculum or an approved CTE program.
- Any other credit, course, program, or curriculum that the board of a school district or PSA determined was appropriate and that included the same content as the benchmarks assessed on the Department-prescribed State high school assessment for any of the credits listed above.

Additional Credits. The bill would eliminate from the Michigan merit standard a requirement that a pupil complete at least one credit in a subject that includes both health and physical education, and at least one credit in visual arts, performing arts, or applied arts. Instead, a pupil would have to complete four credits in addition to those required for mathematics, social sciences, English language arts, and science. A district or PSA would have to determine the subject area and the manner of completion in which these credits would have to be completed.

#### Elective Credit

As noted above, the Michigan merit standard requires a pupil to complete one credit in health or physical education, and one credit in visual, performing, and applied arts. The Code also prohibits the board of a school district or board of directors of a PSA from awarding a high school diploma to a pupil unless he or she has successfully completed during grades K to 12 at least two credits that are grade-appropriate in a language other than English (including American sign language) or substantially equivalent course work. The bill would eliminate these provisions.

Under the bill, instead, the following would count as an elective credit for a high school pupil if completed and if it aligned with guidelines developed by the Department and approved by the State Board:

- A credit in health.
- A credit in a subject matter that included both health and physical education.
- A credit awarded by the district or PSA for approved participation in extracurricular activities involving physical activity.
- A credit in visual arts, performing arts, or applied arts, as defined by the Department.
- Alternative coursework determined to be appropriate by the board of a district or PSA.
- Humanities courses sequences as determined by the board of the district or PSA.
- A CTE, industrial technology, or a vocational course, program, or curriculum.
- A course, program, or curriculum that is a combination of the options described above.
- Any other credit, course, program, or curriculum determined to be appropriate by the board of the district or PSA.

A credit in a language other than English (including American sign language) also could be counted as an elective credit under the circumstances described above. The bill states that the board of a district or PSA is strongly encouraged to ensure that all students complete at least one credit in a foreign language in grades K-6. A pupil could complete all or part of the credit with online course work.

### Subject Area Content Expectations

Under Section 1278b of the Code, the Department must develop subject area content expectations that apply to the credit requirements of the Michigan merit standard, the online course or learning experience, and the requirements for a language other than English. The Code also establishes requirements for the subject area content expectations. Under the bill, the Department would have to develop subject area content expectations for the bill's proposed Michigan merit standards for mathematics, social science, English language arts, and science.

The bill also would require the Department to develop guidelines for the elective credit options. The requirements that would apply to these expectations and guidelines would be substantially similar to those that apply to the current expectations and guidelines, except that the Department would have include in the expectations and guidelines that a credit, unless otherwise specified, could be completed through alternative instructional delivery methods such as alternative coursework, humanities course sequences, CTE, industrial technology courses, or vocational education, or a combination of these.

### Educational Development Plan

Under Section 1278b, the board of a school district or board of directors of a PSA must provide the opportunity for each pupil to develop an EDP during grade 7. Under the bill, the board of a district or board of directors of a PSA would have to ensure each pupil developed an EDP during grade 7. The bill would retain substantially similar provisions as those under Section 1278b.

### Phase-In Plan

Generally, if a school district or PSA is unable to implement the curricular requirements of Sections 1278a and 1278b for pupils entering grade 9 in 2007 or is unable to implement another requirement of those sections, the district or PSA may apply to the Department for permission to phase in one or more of the requirements. Under the bill, this would apply if a district or PSA were unable to implement all of the bill's proposed credit requirements for pupils entering grade 8 in 2020.

## Annual Report

The bill would require the Department, by April 1 of each year, to submit to the Legislature a report that evaluates the overall success of the proposed curriculum, the rigor and relevance of the coursework required by the curriculum, the ability of public schools to implement the curriculum and required coursework, and the impact of the curriculum on pupil success. The report also would have to detail any activities the Department had taken to implement the curriculum or to assist schools in implementing the proposed requirements.

## Subject Area Content Expectations & Guidelines

Under the bill, if the Department had already developed and the State Board had already approved subject area content expectations or guidelines under Section 1278b that would be equivalent to the subject area content expectations or guidelines in the bill, the expectations and guidelines would remain in effect per the terms of the original approval.

## Modification of Michigan Merit Standards

The Code generally permits a district or PSA to allow a modification to the Michigan merit standards if a pupil's parent or legal guardian requests the modification and demonstrates that it is necessary because the student has a disability. If the Superintendent of Public Instruction has reason to believe that a school district or a PSA is allowing modifications inconsistent with these requirements, he or she must monitor the district or PSA to ensure that its policies, procedures, and practices are in compliance with the requirements for additional modifications. The bill would eliminate the latter provision.

## Specialty Schools

A high school that is designated by the Superintendent as a specialty school is exempt from having to provide certain instruction only if the Superintendent finds that school meets certain requirements. Among these, for the most recent year, the mean student scores on both the math and science portion of the ACT must exceed by at least 10% the means scores on math and science for students of the school district in which the greatest number of students of the high school reside.

The bill would allow a specialty school to use the scores on math and science portions of the ACT or SAT, as applicable.

MCL 380.1277 et al. (S.B. 600)  
388.1622b et al. (S.B. 601)

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## **FISCAL IMPACT**

The bills would have an indeterminate fiscal impact on the Department of Education and intermediate school districts, local school districts, and charter schools. The Department has content expectations and guidelines for the core subject areas required for high school completion and likely would not have to develop and approve new grade level expectations for the core subjects and required courses. However, the Department could have to develop expectation and guidelines for alternative coursework since local school districts and public school academies would be allowed to offer any credit, course, program, or curriculum to be used for alternative credit. If the Department had to develop a significant number of additional content expectations and guidelines for alternative credit, then it could experience additional costs. The costs are unknown, but would depend on the number new guidelines that would have to be developed.

The bills could have some indeterminate fiscal impacts on districts and charter schools; it is unknown whether there would be savings or costs. The overall requirement of 18 credits to receive a diploma would remain the same, meaning that the same overall levels of staffing hours likely would be required to ensure students could obtain 18 credits in high school. However, the elimination of requirements for foreign language, visual and performing arts, and health and physical education could result in a district's being able to use fewer distinct teachers. This could drive some savings to a district, but the amount is indeterminate.

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This analysis was prepared by nonpartisan Senate staff for use by the Senate in its deliberations and does not constitute an official statement of legislative intent.