

# **P.A. 15-237: An Act Concerning High School Graduation Requirements**

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## ***Background Information for Policy Review Committee***

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This Act delays, by one year, implementation of the scheduled changes to the state's high school graduation requirements that were set to apply to the 2020 graduating class (the class beginning high school in fall 2016). Under the Act, they apply to the 2021 graduating class (the class beginning high school in fall 2017).

Under the requirements, students must (1) earn 25, rather than 20, credits to graduate from high school (includes an additional credit each in math and science and a new two-credit world language requirement); (2) pass end-of-year exams for Algebra I, Geometry, Biology, American History, and 10<sup>th</sup> grade English; and (3) complete a one-credit senior project in order to graduate. The Act also delays, by one year, the requirement that school districts offer students support and alternative ways to meet the new graduation requirements if they are unable to meet them.

The Act also creates a nine-member task force to study (1) the alignment of the high school graduation requirement changes with the Common Core State Standards adopted by the State Board of Education (SBE) and (2) the feasibility of adding training in cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) as a high school graduation requirement. (PA 15-5, June Special Session, §299, also requires the task force to study the feasibility of substituting a student's participation in interscholastic athletics in place of the physical education credit in order to satisfy the high school graduation requirements.) The task force must submit its report to the Education Committee by January 1, 2016.

The Act also clarifies that boards of education may grant students high school credit for successful completion of coursework earned from an accredited institution of higher learning taken either during the school year or summer months.

The Act also requires SBE to grant a student a community service recognition award if he or she satisfactorily completes at least 50 hours of community service and meets statutory criteria to earn one-half credit toward graduation.

### **Task Force to Study the Alignment of the New Graduation Requirements to The Common Core State Standards**

The Act establishes a nine-member task force to study (1) the alignment of the class of 2021 high school graduation requirements with the Common Core State Standards; and (2) the feasibility of adding CPR training as a high school graduation requirement.

The task force consists of the following members:

1. The Commissioner of Education, or her designee;
2. One representative designated by each of the following six associations: Connecticut Association of Boards of Education, Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents (CAPSS), Connecticut Association of Schools, Connecticut Federation of School Administrators, the Connecticut Education Association, and the American Federation of Teachers-Connecticut; and
3. Two people selected by the Commissioner of Education, including teachers and any other person the Commissioner deems appropriate.

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All appointments must be made no later than July 30, 2015 (i.e., 30 days after the Act's effective date). Any vacancy must be filled by the appropriate appointing authority.

The CAPSS representative serves as the chairperson, and he or she must schedule the first task force meeting no later than August 29, 2015 (i.e., 60 days after the Act's effective date).

By January 1, 2016, the task force must submit its report with findings and recommendations to the Education Committee. The task force terminates on January 1, 2016 or the day it submits its report, whichever is later.

The effective date of this legislation is July 1, 2015, except the task force is effective upon passage.

### **Policy Implications**

Policy #6146, "Graduation Requirements," pertains to this topic. It has been updated and follows for your consideration. This policy is considered a "good practice" recommended policy for inclusion in a district's policy manual.

## Instruction

### Graduation Requirements

Graduation from our public school implies (1) that students have satisfactorily completed the prescribed courses of study for the several grade levels in accordance with their respective abilities to achieve, (2) that they have satisfactorily passed any examinations and satisfactorily demonstrated the district's performance standards, assessed in part by the statewide mastery examinations, established by the faculty and approved by the Board of Education, and (3) that they have fulfilled the legally mandated number and distribution of credits. Graduation shall not be held until 180 days and 900 hours of actual school work are completed.

The Board of Education, in establishing a graduation date, may establish for any school year a firm graduation date for students in grade twelve which is no earlier than the one-hundred-eighty-fifth day in the Board's adopted school calendar. After April first in any school year the Board may establish a firm graduation date for the school year which, at the time of such establishment provides for at least 180 days of school.

The Principal shall submit to the Board of Education through the Superintendent his/her detailed requirements and standards to agree with the goals of our schools as adopted by the Board of Education. It is expected that the faculty will apply measures of achievement to provide evidence that each student has progressed far enough toward school goals to warrant graduation according to the terms of paragraph #1 above.

The Board of Education, in recognition of its responsibility for the education of all youths in the school system, including those who do not successfully complete the assessment criteria listed above, and those who drop out of school, shall make available to all the school district's youths a course of study or alternative programs for meeting standards that will enable them to acquire a high school or vocational school diploma.

The Board of Education shall award a high school diploma to any World War II veteran or veteran of the Korean Hostilities or Vietnam Era veteran requesting such diploma who left high school for military service as defined in the statutes. *(optional)*

The Board of Education shall award a high school diploma to any person who (1) withdrew from high school prior to graduation to work in a job that assisted the war effort during World War II, December 7, 1941 to December 31, 1946, inclusive, (2) did not receive a diploma as a consequence of such work, and (3) has been a resident of the state for at least fifty (50) consecutive years. *(optional)*

The Board of Education may grant students high school credit for successful completion of coursework earned from an accredited institution of higher learning taken either during the school year or summer months.

## Instruction

### Graduation Requirements (continued)

Commencing with the graduating class of 2021, in order to graduate and be granted a diploma students must satisfactorily complete (1) a minimum of twenty-five credits, including not fewer than: (A) Nine credits in the Humanities, including not fewer than (i) four credits in English, including Composition; (ii) three credits in Social Studies, including at least one credit in American History and at least one-half credit in Civics and American Government; (iii) one credit in Fine Arts; and (iv) one credit in a Humanities elective; (B) eight credits in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics, including not fewer than (i) four credits in Mathematics, including Algebra I, Geometry and Algebra II or Probability and Statistics; (ii) three credits in Science, including at least one credit in Life Science and at least one credit in Physical Science; and (iii) one credit in a Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics elective; (C) three and one-half credits in Career and Life Skills, including not fewer than (i) one credit in Physical Education; (ii) one-half credit in Health and Safety Education and (iii) two credits in 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; (D) two credits in World Languages, (E) a one credit senior demonstration project or its equivalent, as approved by the State Board of Education; and (2) end of the school year examinations for the following courses: (A) Algebra I, (B) Geometry, (C) Biology, (D) American History, and (E) grade ten English.

A student shall be excused from the physical education requirement upon presentation of a certificate from a physician or advanced practice registered nurse indicating that participation in physical education is medically contradicted because of the student's physical condition. The credit for physical education may be fulfilled by an elective.

In addition, also beginning with the graduating class of 2021, the Board of Education will provide adequate student support and remedial services for students beginning in grade seven (2014-2015 school year). Such student support and remedial services shall provide alternate means for a student to complete any of the high school graduation requirements, previously listed, or end of the school year examinations, if such student is unable to satisfactorily complete any of the required courses or exams. Such student support and remedial services shall include, but not be limited to, (1) allowing students to retake courses in summer school or through an on-line course; (2) allowing students to enroll in a class offered at a constituent unit of the state system of higher education, allowing students who received a failing score, as determined by the Commissioner of Education, on an end of the school year exam to take an alternate form of the exam; and (4) allowing those students whose individualized education plans state that such students are eligible for an alternate assessment to demonstrate competency on any of the five core courses through success on such alternate assessment.

## Instruction

### Graduation Requirements (continued)

The Board of Education shall grant a student credit towards meeting high school graduation requirements for (1) completing a world-language course provided by a non-profit organization and (2) passing a subject area proficiency test identified and approved by the Commissioner of Education. Up to four credits for a private non-profit world language course shall be granted if the student achieves a passing grade on a test prescribed by the Commissioner of Education. In other subject areas, credit shall be granted, based upon successful passage of the subject area proficiency tests prescribed or identified and approved by the Commissioner of Education,\* regardless of the number of hours spent by the student in a public school classroom learning the subject matter. *(optional)*

*\*The Commissioner, per statute, must prescribe or identify and approve the examinations within available appropriations.*

The fulfillment of the mandated two credit foreign language requirement, beginning with the class of 2021, can include the successful completion of a world language course in grades six seven or eight, or an online course successfully completed, or the successful completion of a course offered privately through a nonprofit provider, provided such student achieves a passing grade on an examination prescribed by the Commissioner and such credits do not exceed four.

All credits earned toward meeting any of the graduation requirements through the successful completion of online courses must fulfill the requirements established in policy #6172.6, “Virtual/On-line Courses.”

The Board shall create a student success plan for each enrolled student, beginning in grade six. Such plan shall include a students’ career and academic choices in grades six to twelve, inclusive.

**Note:** On or after July 1, 2014, the SDE shall commence development or approval of the end of the school year examinations.

Per statute (C.G.S. 221a(f)) the determination of eligible credits is at the discretion of the Board of Education, provided the primary focus of the curriculum of eligible credits corresponds directly to the subject matter of the specified course requirements. The Board may permit a student to graduate during a period of expulsion if the Board determines the student has satisfactorily completed the necessary credits. The graduation requirements shall apply to any student requiring special education except when the Planning and Placement Team (PPT) determines the requirement not to be appropriate.

A credit shall consist of not less than the equivalent of a forty-minute class period for each school day of a school year except for a credit or part of a credit toward high school graduation earned (1) at an institution accredited by the Board of Regents for Higher Education or State Board of Education or regionally accredited, (2) through on-line course work or (3) through a demonstration of mastery based on competency and performance standards, in accordance with guidelines adopted by the State Board of Education.

## Instruction

### Graduation Requirements (continued)

Only courses taken in grades nine through twelve, inclusive, shall satisfy the graduation requirements except that the Board may grant a student credit toward meeting a specified course requirement upon successful completion in grade seven or eight of a course that corresponds directly to the subject matter of a specified course requirement in grades nine through twelve.

### Academic Advancement Program

The Board of Education permits students in grades eleven and twelve to substitute (1) achievement of a passing score on an existing nationally recognized examination as determined, by the State Department of Education, or series of examinations approved by the State Board of Education, (2) a cumulative grade point average determined by the State Board of Education and (3) at least three letters of recommendation from school professionals (defined in 10-66dd), for the required high school graduation requirement. The State Board of Education will issue an Academic Advancement Program Certificate to any student successfully completing such program. The Academic Advancement Program Certificate shall be considered in the same manner as a high school diploma for purposes of determining eligibility of a student for enrollment at a Connecticut public institution of higher education.

The Board of Education shall permit a student to graduate from high school upon the successful completion of the above described academic advancement program.

(cf. 5121 – Examination/Grading/Rating  
(cf. 6111 – School Calendar)  
(cf. 6146.2 – Statewide Proficiency/Mastery Examinations)  
(cf. 6172.6 – Virtual/On-line Courses)

Legal Reference: Connecticut General Statutes

10-5c Board examination series pilot program. Issuance of certificate (as amended by P.A. 13-247)

10-14n State-wide mastery examination. Conditions for reexamination.  
Limitation on use of test results. (as amended by Section 115 of PA 14-217)

10-16(l) Graduation exercises. (As amended by P.A. 96-108, An Act Concerning Student Use of Telecommunication Devices and the Establishment of Graduation Dates)

## Instruction

### Graduation Requirements

Legal Reference: Connecticut General Statutes (continued)

10-221a High school graduation requirements. (As amended by P.A. 00-124, An Act Concerning High School Diplomas and Veterans of World War II, P.A. 00-156, An Act Requiring A Civics Course for High School Graduation, P.A. 08-138, An Act Concerning High School Credit for Private World Language Courses and Other Subject Areas, P.A. 10-111, An Act Concerning Education Reform in Connecticut, P.A. 11-135, An Act Concerning Implementation Dates for Secondary School Reform, P.A. 13-57, An Act Concerning Honorary Diplomas for Vietnam Veterans, P.A. 13-122, An Act Concerning Minor Revisions to the Education Statutes, P.A. 13-247, Budget Implementer Bill and P.A. 15-237, An Act Concerning High School Graduation.)

10-233(a) Promotion and graduation policies. (as amended by P.A. 01-166)

P.A. 13-108 An Act Unleashing Innovation in Connecticut Schools.

P.A. 13-247 An Act Implementing Provisions of the State Budget.

P.A. 15-237 An Act Concerning High School Graduation.

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*Version B.*

## **Instruction**

### **Graduation Requirements**

Graduation from our public schools implies (1) that students have satisfactorily completed the prescribed courses of study for the several grade levels in accordance with their respective abilities to achieve, (2) that they have satisfactorily passed any examinations and satisfactorily demonstrated the district's performance standards, assessed in part by the statewide mastery examinations, established by the faculty and approved by the Board of Education, and (3) that they have fulfilled the legally mandated number and distribution of credits. Graduation shall not be held until 180 days and 900 hours of actual school work are completed. The adopted school calendar shall indicate a graduation date which is no earlier than the 185th day. This may be modified after April 1 in any school year in conformity with applicable statute.

The Board of Education conforms with state regulations and statute regarding credits for graduation from high school.

The following twenty (20) credits, for classes graduating from 2004 to 2019, inclusive, are necessary:

|                      |  |
|----------------------|--|
| English              | 4 credits  |
| Mathematics          | 3 credits  |
| Science              | 2 credits  |
| Physical Education   | 1 credit   |
| Social Studies       | 3 credits (including one-half credit in<br>Civics and American Government) |
| Vocational/Fine Arts | 1 credit   |
| Electives            | <u>6 credits</u>   |
| <b>Total:</b>        | <b>20 credits</b>  |

Commencing with the graduating class of 2021, in order to graduate and be granted a diploma students must satisfactorily complete (1) a minimum of twenty-five (25) credits, including not fewer than: (A) Nine credits in the humanities, including not fewer than (i) four credits in English, including Composition; (ii) three credits in Social Studies, including at least one credit in American History and at least one-half credit in Civics and American Government; (iii) one credit in Fine Arts; and (iv) one credit in a Humanities elective; (B) eight credits in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics, including not fewer than (i) four credits in Mathematics, including Algebra I, Geometry and Algebra II or Probability and Statistics; (ii) three credits in Science, including at least one credit in Life Science and at least one credit in Physical Science; and (iii) one credit in a Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics elective; (C) three and one-half credits in Career and Life Skills, including not fewer than (i) one credit in Physical Education; (ii) one-half credit in Health and Safety Education and (iii) two credits in 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; (D) two credits in World Languages, (E) a one credit senior demonstration project or its equivalent, as approved by the State Board of Education; and (2) end of the school year examinations for the following courses: (A) Algebra I, (B) Geometry, (C) Biology, (D) American History, and (E) grade ten English.



## Instruction

### Graduation Requirements (continued)

In addition, also beginning with the graduating class of 2021, the Board of Education will provide adequate student support and remedial services for students beginning in grade seven (2014-2015 school year). Such student support and remedial services shall provide alternate means for a student to complete any of the high school graduation requirements, previously listed, or end of the school year examinations, if such student is unable to satisfactorily complete any of the required courses or exams. Such student support and remedial services shall include, but not be limited to, (1) allowing students to retake courses in summer school or through an on-line course; (2) allowing students to enroll in a class offered at a constituent unit of the state system of higher education, allowing students who received a failing score, as determined by the Commissioner of Education, on an end of the school year exam to take an alternate form of the exam; and (4) allowing those students whose individualized education plans state that such students are eligible for an alternate assessment to demonstrate competency on any of the five core courses through success on such alternate assessment.

### Credits

A credit defined as the equivalent of one forty minute class period for each day of a school year. One-half credit is given for courses that compile work in one semester. If physical education is not taken because of medical excuse, another subject may be substituted.

Only courses taken in grades nine through twelve, inclusive, shall satisfy this graduation requirement except that a student may be granted credit for the successful completion of coursework at an institution accredited by the Department of Higher Education or regionally accredited. One three-credit semester course, or its equivalent shall equal one-half high school credit. A student may also be granted credit toward meeting a specified course requirement in grades six, seven or eight of any course, the primary focus of which corresponds directly to the subject matter of a specified course requirement in grades nine to twelve, inclusive.

A credit shall consist of not less than the equivalent of a forty-minute class period for each school day of a school year except for a credit or part of a credit toward high school graduation earned (1) at an institution accredited by the Board of Regents for Higher Education or State Board of Education or regionally accredited, (2) through on-line course work, or (3) through a demonstration of mastery based on competency and performance standards, in accordance with guidelines adopted by the State Board of Education.

**(optional)** The Board of Education shall grant a student credit towards meeting high school graduation requirements for (1) completing a world-language course provided by a non-profit organization and (2) passing a subject area proficiency test identified and approved by the Commissioner of Education. Up to four credits for a private non-profit world language course shall be granted if the student achieves a passing grade on a test prescribed by the Commissioner of Education. In other subject areas, credit shall be granted, based upon successful passage of the subject area proficiency tests prescribed or identified and approved by the Commissioner of Education,\* regardless of the number of hours spent by the student in a public school classroom learning the subject matter.

*\*The Commissioner, per statute, must prescribe or identify and approve the examinations within available appropriations.*

## Instruction

### Graduation Requirements

#### Credits (continued)

The fulfillment of the mandated two credit foreign language requirement, beginning with the class of 2021 can include the successful completion of a world language course in grades six seven or eight or an online course successfully completed or successful completion of a course offered privately through a nonprofit provider.

All credits earned toward meeting any of the graduation requirements through the successful completion of online courses must fulfill the requirements established in policy #6172.6, “Virtual/On-line Courses.”

The Board shall create a student success plan for each enrolled student, beginning in grade six. Such student success plan shall include a students’ career and academic choices in grades six to twelve, inclusive.

The above exceptions to earning credits, at other than grades 9 through 12, is discretionary, not mandated. A board of education may allow, as above an unlimited number of credits to be earned prior to high school or at a higher institution of learning. A board could also place limits on the number to be so earned or, as at present, require all credits needed for high school graduation to be earned in grades 9-12 inclusive.

In addition, the earning of credits, as described in world language and in other subject areas, through passage of tests prescribed, identified and approved by the Commissioner is discretionary, not mandated.

### Awards of High School Diplomas

Students who complete all graduation requirements shall receive a diploma at the June commencement. Individuals also may satisfy graduation requirements by the satisfactory completion of the following:

1. Successful completion of a summer course or summer courses comparable (as determined by the Principal) to the subject(s) in which the student was deficient.
2. Honorable discharge from the United States Armed Forces after a minimum of ninety days of active service during World War II for individuals who withdrew from school to join the Armed Forces and for veterans of the Korean Hostilities and for veterans of the Vietnam Era. *(optional)*
3. Honorable discharge from the United States Armed Forces for individuals who left high school prior to graduation and did not receive a diploma as a consequence of such service. *(optional)*

## Instruction

### Graduation Requirements (continued)

4. Withdrawal from high school prior to graduation to work on a job that assisted the war effort during World War II, December 7, 1941 through December 31, 1946, not receiving a diploma as a consequence of such work and has been a resident of Connecticut for at least fifty (50) consecutive years. *(optional)*

### 5. Academic Advancement Program

The Board of Education permits students in grades eleven and twelve to substitute (1) achievement of a passing score on an existing national examination, as determined by the State Department of Education, or series of examinations approved by the State Board of Education, (2) a cumulative grade point average determined by the State Board of Education and (3) at least three letters of recommendation from school professionals (defined in 10-66dd), for the required high school graduation requirement. The State Board of Education will issue an Academic Advancement Program Certificate to any student successfully completing such program. The Academic Advancement Program Certificate shall be considered in the same manner as a high school diploma for purposes of determining eligibility of a student for enrollment at a Connecticut public institution of higher education.

The Board of Education shall permit a student to graduate from high school upon the successful completion of the above described academic advancement program.

**Note:** On or after July 1, 2014, the SDE shall commence development or approval of the end of the school year examinations.

### *Alternative Language:*

The Board of Education shall award a high school diploma to any World War II veteran or veteran of the Korean hostilities or veteran of the Vietnam era requesting such diploma who left high school for military service as defined in the statutes. *(optional)*

- (cf. 5121 - Examination/Grading/Rating)
- (cf. 5123 - Promotion/Acceleration/Retention)
- (cf. 6111 - School Calendar)
- (cf. 6145.6 - Travel and Exchange Programs)
- (cf. 6146.2 - Statewide Proficiency/Mastery Examinations)
- (cf. 6172.6 - Virtual/On-line Courses)

## Instruction

### Graduation Requirements (continued)

Legal Reference: Connecticut General Statutes

10-5c Board examination series pilot program. Issuance of certificate (as amended by P.A. 13-247)

10-14n State-wide mastery examination. Conditions for reexamination. Limitation on use of test results. (as amended by Section 115 of PA 14-217)

10-16(l) Graduation exercises. (as amended by P.A. 96-26 An Act Concerning Graduation Requirements and Readmission and Placement of Older Students)

10-221a High school graduation requirements. (as amended by P.A. 00-124, An Act Concerning High School Diplomas and Veterans of World War II, P.A. 00-156, An Act Requiring A Civics Course for High School Graduation and P.A. 08-138, An Act Concerning High School Credit for Private World Language Courses Other Subject Areas), P.A. 10-111, An Act Concerning Education Reform in Connecticut, P.A. 135, An Act Concerning Implementation Dates for Secondary School Reform, P.A.13-57, An Act Concerning Honorary Diplomas for Vietnam Veterans, P.A. 13-122, An Act Concerning Minor Revisions to the Education Statutes, P.A. 13-247, Budget Implementer Bill and P.A. 15-237 An Act Concerning High School Graduation.)

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