

MICHIGAN HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

Phone: (517) 373-8080
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House Bill 4156 as introduced
Sponsor: Rep. Jaime Greene
Committee: Education and Workforce
Revised 4-21-25

Analysis available at
<http://www.legislature.mi.gov>

SUMMARY:

House Bill 4156 would amend the Revised School Code to change the credit requirements within the Michigan Merit Curriculum. The curriculum includes required credit areas that students must complete to graduate high school. While the curriculum lists courses that, if successfully completed, constitute fulfillment of a required content area, students can also take courses that integrate content from multiple content standards to meet credit requirements as long as the courses are aligned with the subject area content expectations set by the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) and approved by the State Board of Education.

Mathematics

The bill would retain the currently required four credits of math but would modify how the credits can be earned. One credit of math would still have to be completed during the student's final year of high school. House Bill 4156 would retain the requirement for algebra I and geometry and specify that one credit must be completed of each.

The remaining two credits could be completed by completing any of the following:

- One credit of:
 - Trigonometry
 - Algebra II (no longer a required credit)
 - Precalculus
 - Calculus
 - Applied mathematics
 - Statistics
 - Computer science, though a course in computer science used to meet the math credit requirement could not also be used to meet the science credit requirements contained in section 1278b
- A half credit to be completed in:
 - Accounting
 - Business mathematics
 - Algebra-based physics
 - Algebra-based chemistry
 - Economics with a focus on mathematics
- Up to two credits from:
 - A career and technical education (CTE) program approved by MDE
 - Mathematics courses developed by the board of a school district, intermediate school district (ISD) or a public school academy (PSA, commonly referred to as a charter school)

Language referencing alternates to satisfying the mathematics credits relating to completion of Algebra II would be removed, as Algebra II would become an optional course to complete towards the required math credits under the bill.

Visual, Performing, and Applied Arts

House Bill 4156 would retain the one credit requirement in the arts but would specify courses that would satisfy the requirement. The following could be completed for one credit:

- General music
- Marching band
- Concert band
- Orchestra
- Choral music
- Strings
- Music theory
- Keyboard
- Jazz ensemble
- Wind ensemble
- Choir
- Art
- Visual arts
- Visual studies
- Drawing
- Painting
- Ceramics and pottery
- Design
- Art appreciation
- Illustration
- Computer graphics and design
- Video
- Photography and film
- Art history
- Art criticism
- Fiber arts
- Jewelry
- Yearbook
- Theater
- Graphic design
- Shop
- Culinary studies
- Computer science, though a course in computer science used to meet the math credit requirement could not also be used to meet the science credit requirements contained in section 1278b
- A CTE program approved by MDE
- A visual arts course developed by the board of a school district, ISD, or PSA

English Language Arts

The bill would retain the total of four credits in English Language Arts needed for graduation, and specify that the following may be taken for one credit towards this requirement:

- English
- Language arts
- Grammar
- Writing
- Poetry
- Literature
- Great books
- Shakespeare
- Dramatic literature
- Business writing
- School newspaper
- Public speaking
- Debate
- A CTE program approved by MDE

A student could also earn up to four credits from English language arts courses developed by the board of their school district, ISD, or PSA.

Science

For students who entered high school prior to the 2029-2030 academic year, the bill would still require three credits of science for graduation. For students entering high school after the start of the 2029-2030 academic year, the requirement would change to four credits. The revised science credits requirements would consist of completing at least one credit each in biology and then another credit in either chemistry, earth science, agricultural science, or physics.

The final two credits could be earned by taking one credit in one of the following areas:

- Physics
- Chemistry
- Anatomy
- Biology
- Microbiology
- Environmental science
- Geology
- Computer science (with a course in computer science only counting towards one of the content area credit requirements).

Students could also earn up to two credits through completion of an MDE-approved formal CTE program.

Future Skills

Beginning with students who enter high school in the 2029-2030 school year, at least two credits in future skills that are aligned with subject area content expectations developed by MDE and approved by the State Board of Education must be successfully completed for high school graduation.

These credits would be earned by completing a half credit each in personal finance and workplace development. The remaining credit could be earned by completing:

- One of the listed, optional courses that can be taken to meet credit requirements for math, English language arts, or science. The course taken to earn the second future skills credit cannot also count towards fulfilling another required credit area.
- An MDE-approved formal CTE program.
- Courses developed by the board of the student's school district, ISD, or PSA.

Presently, the half credit in personal finance must fulfill a half credit of either the required math, arts, or foreign language credit, as determined by the board of the school district, ISD, or PSA. The bill would reclassify the personal finance course under the future skills content area.

Foreign Language

The bill would increase, from one credit to two credits, the number of credits required. It would also allow computer coding to be considered as a language other than English for purposes of meeting the credit requirement.

Workforce Development Skills

Beginning with students entering grade 8 in 2029, a half credit must be earned in a workforce development course that counts towards the future skills credit requirement. This course must include instruction on at least the following:

- Resume building
- Career pathway exploration
- General workplace development components

MDE would also be responsible for developing subject area content expectations for the workplace development course.

Finally, the bill would establish a June 30, 2028, deadline for MDE to develop or adopt model programs of instruction for all courses described in sections 1278a and 1278b as being part of the credit requirements. These model programs would have to align with the respective subject area content expectations and guidelines developed by MDE and approved by the State Board of Education. These model programs would then be provided to schools, though schools would not be required to adopt or implement these model programs.

Proposed MCL 380.1278e

FISCAL IMPACT:

The bill would create new costs for the state and would have an indeterminate fiscal impact on local school districts, PSAs, and ISDs.

Under the bill, MDE would be required to develop or adopt model programs of instruction for all courses required for high school graduation. MDE has noted that they would require additional staff over multiple years to meet the requirements.

Certain districts, PSAs, and ISDs could realize increased costs if they do not currently offer all of the classes the bill would require for the revised graduation requirements, including a fourth science credit and two future skills credits. Some districts, PSAs, and ISDs may absorb these costs using existing staff time, but others may be required to hire additional staff to offer all of the requisite classes.

However, districts, PSAs, and ISDs could also realize cost savings due to the new flexibility for courses developed by the board of their district, PSA, or ISD to count towards graduation requirements.

Legislative Analyst: Josh Roesner
Fiscal Analysts: Jacqueline Mullen
Noel Benson

■ This analysis was prepared by nonpartisan House Fiscal Agency staff for use by House members in their deliberations and does not constitute an official statement of legislative intent.