

MICHIGAN MERIT CURRICULUM REQUIREMENTS

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<http://www.house.mi.gov/hfa>

House Bill 4269 (H-1) as referred to second committee
Sponsor: Rep. Beth Griffin

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

House Bill 4271 (H-3) as referred to second committee
Sponsor: Rep. Gary Howell

House Bill 4282 (H-2) as referred to second committee
Sponsor: Rep. Roger Hauck

1st Committee: Education
2nd Committee: Ways and Means
Revised 1-22-20

BRIEF SUMMARY: House Bills 4269, 4271, and 4282 would amend the Michigan Merit Curriculum (MMC) requirements in the Revised School Code.

FISCAL IMPACT: The bills would have no fiscal impact for the state or for school districts, public school academies (PSAs), or intermediate school districts (ISDs).

THE CONTENT OF THE BILLS:

Statistics or Financial Literacy to meet Algebra II requirement

As described in greater detail in **Background**, below, in order to be awarded a high school diploma, high school students currently must complete four credits in mathematics. This must include at least algebra I, geometry, and algebra II (or an integrated three-credit sequence of that content), as well as a credit from a list of subjects including statistics and financial literacy.

The bills would retain the four-credit math requirement, but would allow a student to fulfill the algebra II requirement by completing a statistics course or the financial literacy course described in section 1165 of the School Code, as long as that course aligned with the subject area content expectations for math developed by the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) and approved by the State Board of Education. The bills would also incorporate the option of taking statistics or financial literacy as an alternative to algebra II into the mathematics options under a personal curriculum under the same circumstances.

Currently, section 1165 requires MDE to develop—and encourages districts to adopt—a model program on financial literacy incorporating financial education throughout the curriculum for grades K to 12, which must be based on the concept of achieving financial literacy through the teaching of personal management skills and the basic principles involved with earning, spending, saving, borrowing, and investing.

OSHA safety training to meet physical education graduation requirements

House Bill 4282 would also amend the Revised School Code to allow a student to fulfill the physical education graduation requirement by completing at least 30 hours of qualifying training provided by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA).

Currently, as part of the Michigan merit graduation requirements (described in greater detail in **Background**, below), a student must complete at least one credit in subject matter that includes both health and physical education or at least one half credit in health and one half credit awarded by the school district or public school academy (PSA) for approved participation in extracurricular athletics or other extracurricular activities involving physical activity.

The bill would allow a student enrolled in a state-approved career and technical education (CTE) program¹ to fulfill the physical education requirement (accounting for half of the health and physical education graduation requirement, or one half credit) by completing at least 30 hours of educational training provided by OSHA relating to occupational health and safety standards applicable to general industry or construction.

As noted below, a student may already utilize an MDE-approved CTE program to fulfill the algebra II component of the math graduation requirements, the third science credit, and one credit in the world languages requirement.

Additionally, the bill would replace the one-credit requirement in visual arts, performing arts, or applied arts with a three-credit requirement in “21st century skills,” with courses providing those skills described in House Bill 4269, below.

Finally, the bill would reduce the world languages requirement from two credits to one credit (which may be completed at any time during grades K to 12).

[Of note, while House Bill 4269² includes the one-credit foreign language option as one alternative to complete the three-credit 21st century skills requirement, House Bill 4282 would retain it as a requirement for a high school diploma.]

¹ Under the Michigan Administrative Code (R 395.241, Rule 11), an MDE-approved formal CTE program or curriculum consists of:

- (a) A coherent sequence of courses so that students gain academic, technical, and work behavior skills.
- (b) Instruction that includes classroom, laboratory, work based learning, and leadership opportunities.
- (c) Instruction that is supervised, directed, or coordinated by an appropriately certificated career and technical education teacher.
- (d) Consists of standards approved by the state board (R 395.243, Rule 13).
- (e) Must receive approval from MDE/Office of Career and Technical Education through an application process (R 395.244, Rule 14).

https://dtmb.state.mi.us/ORRDocs/AdminCode/603_10574_AdminCode.pdf

² House Fiscal Agency summary of House Bills 4269 and 4270: <http://www.legislature.mi.gov/documents/2019-2020/billanalysis/House/pdf/2019-HLA-4269-4ED13966.pdf>

21st century skills

House Bill 4269 would state that the 21st century skills requirement could be met by completing any combination of three credits in any of the following:

- A grade-appropriate language other than English any time between kindergarten and twelfth grade, or coursework or other learning experiences that are substantially equivalent to credits in a language other than English, based on MDE guidelines.
- Visual, performing, or applied arts, as defined by MDE.
- Computer science, computer coding, or a combination of the two.
- An MDE-approved formal career and technical education CTE program.

Now and under the bills, American Sign Language (ASL) counts as a language other than English; the foreign language requirement may be satisfied with online coursework; and a district or PSA is strongly encouraged to offer visual arts and performing arts courses.

Each bill would take effect 90 days after enactment.

House Bill 4269: Proposed MCL 380.1278f

House Bill 4271: MCL 380.1278b

House Bill 4282: MCL 380.1278a

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Michigan high school students must complete the Merit Standard Curriculum, or an alternative personal curriculum (developed by faculty with the student, parents, and the school superintendent), in order to earn a high school diploma. The Merit Curriculum, described in sections 1278a and 1278b of the Code, entails the following course of study:

- 4 credits in English language arts.
- 3 credits in science, including at least biology and either chemistry, physics, anatomy, or agricultural science, or a program providing the same content (with a fourth science credit strongly encouraged). A student may fulfill the requirement for the third science credit by completing an MDE-approved computer science program or curriculum or ***formal (CTE) program or curriculum***.
- 4 credits in mathematics, including at least algebra I, geometry, and algebra II (or an integrated 3-credit sequence of this content), plus an additional math credit in trigonometry, statistics, precalculus, calculus, applied math, accounting, business math, a retake of algebra II, ***or a course in financial literacy***. A student may also fulfill the algebra II requirements by completing an MDE-approved ***formal CTE program or curriculum*** that has appropriately embedded mathematics content as described in the law. Each student must take a math course during the final year of high school enrollment.
- 3 credits in social science, including at least 1 credit in United States history and geography, 1 credit in world history and geography, 1/2 credit in economics, and a civics course. The 1/2-credit economics requirement may be satisfied by completion of at least a 1/2-credit ***course in personal economics that includes a financial literacy component*** as long as that course meets certain requirements.

- 1 credit in health and physical education.
- 1 credit in visual, performing, or applied arts.
- 2 credits that are grade-appropriate in a language other than English between kindergarten and twelfth grade, beginning with the class of 2016. For students graduating high school in 2016 to 2024 only, 1 credit of that requirement may be met in whole or in part by completing an MDE-approved *formal CTE program or curriculum* or by completing visual or performing arts instruction that is in addition to the 1 credit of visual arts, performing arts, or applied arts that is also required to receive a high school diploma.

ARGUMENTS:

For:

Proponents advanced the option of a financial literacy course and an OSHA course as alternatives to existing requirements as a way for high school students to receive valuable training in real-world skills while completing their graduation requirements. After all, they argued, the skills learned in Algebra II are rarely used beyond high school; should students not be able to learn skills like spending, saving, and borrowing, which they could use after high school on a daily basis?

Against:

In response, critics argued that, while seeking to achieve flexibility for students, the increased options diminish the rigor of the current merit curriculum.

POSITIONS:

The following organizations testified in support for House Bill 4269:

- West Michigan Talent Triangle (4-30-19)
- Grand Rapids Chamber (4-30-19)
- Michigan Association of Secondary School Principals (4-30-19)
- Van Buren ISD (4-30-19)

The following organizations indicated support for the bills:

- Michigan Association of Superintendents and Administrators (5-7-19)
- Michigan Association of Intermediate School Administrators (4-30-19)
- Home Builders Association of Michigan (4-30-19)
- Michigan Chemistry Council (4-30-19)
- Associated General Contractors of Michigan (5-7-19)
- National Federation of Independent Business (4-30-19)

The following organizations indicated support for House Bills 4269 and 4282:

- Small Business Association of Michigan (4-30-19)
- Associated Builders and Contractors (4-30-19)
- Michigan Manufacturers Association (4-30-19)
- Michigan Farm Bureau (5-7-19)

The Michigan Association of School Boards indicated support for House Bills 4269 and 4271. (4-30-19)

The following organizations indicated support for House Bill 4269:

Barry, Branch, Calhoun, Jackson, Lenawee, and Monroe ISD (4-30-19)

Michigan Chamber (4-30-19)

The following organizations indicated support for House Bill 4271:

Oakland Schools (5-7-19)

AFT Michigan (4-30-19)

The American Industrial Hygiene Association indicated support for House Bill 4282. (5-7-19)

A representative of the Michigan Association of Secondary School Principals testified in opposition to House Bills 4271 and 4282. (4-30-19)

A representative of the Michigan Music Education Association testified in opposition to House Bill 4269. (5-7-19)

A representative of the Great Lakes Education Project testified in opposition to House Bill 4271. (4-30-19)

AFT Michigan indicated opposition to House Bills 4269 and 4282. (4-30-19)

The Detroit Regional Chamber indicated opposition to House Bills 4271 and 4282. (4-30-19)

The Michigan Association of Public School Academies indicated opposition to House Bill 4271. (4-30-19)

The following organizations indicated opposition to House Bill 4282:

Michigan Council for Maternal and Child Health (4-30-19)

Healthy Kids, Healthy Michigan (5-7-19)

American Cancer Society—Cancer Action Network (5-7-19)

Oakland Schools (5-7-19)

Michigan Association of School Boards (4-30-19)

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■ 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.