

SENATE STAFF ANALYSIS AND ECONOMIC IMPACT STATEMENT

(This document is based on the provisions contained in the legislation as of the latest date listed below.)

Prepared By: Education Appropriations Committee

BILL: SB 464

INTRODUCER: Senator Constantine

SUBJECT: Accelerated High School Graduation

DATE: February 22, 2006

REVISED: _____

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	<u>Carrouth</u>	<u>Matthews</u>	<u>ED</u>	<u>Favorable</u>
2.	<u>Armstrong</u>	<u>Newman</u>	<u>EA</u>	<u>Pre-meeting</u>
3.	_____	_____	_____	_____
4.	_____	_____	_____	_____
5.	_____	_____	_____	_____
6.	_____	_____	_____	_____

I. Summary:

This bill revises current law relating to the 3-year accelerated graduation programs. The bill requires schools to provide additional information to students and parents regarding high school graduation options and requires students and parents to meet with school personnel prior to selecting an accelerated 3-year high school graduation program.

The bill raises the grade point average and other requirements for students choosing the accelerated 3-year high school college preparation program and repeals the 3-year high school career preparation program.

The bill requires students to select the 3-year accelerated graduation program by the end of 9th grade and provides exceptions to this requirement for certain students. The bill provides that students may change to the 4-year program at any time and requires students to change to the 4-year program under certain circumstances. It requires students who seek academic graduation honors to complete the requirements of the standard 4-year graduation program.

This bill substantially amends section 1003.429 of the Florida Statutes.

The bill will take effect July 1, 2006, for students entering grade 9 in the 2006-2007 school year and thereafter.

II. Present Situation:

Section 1003.429, F.S., permits high school students to choose to complete an 18-credit, 3-year high school graduation program in lieu of the standard 24-credit, 4-year program set forth in s. 1003.43, F.S.

Senate Education Committee staff conducted a survey in July, 2004, requesting information from school districts regarding student participation in the accelerated high school programs. District responses at that time suggested that participation levels were low and the overwhelming majority of districts responding (26) reported student enrollment at one percent or less. Subsequent data collected by the Department of Education substantiates these initial findings and further reflects a decrease each year in student participation.

2003-2004			2004-2005			2005-2006
College Prep 18 Credit Option	Career Prep. 18 Credit Option	Total 18 Credit Option	College Prep 18 Credit Option	Career Prep. 18 Credit Option	Total 18 Credit Option	Declared an intention for 18 Credit Option (Grade 12 in 05-06)
1,372	347	1,719	503	142	645	458

Prior to the adoption of these statutory 3-year programs, some school districts had already adopted optional accelerated graduation programs for high school students. Under these programs, students were still required to complete 24 credits for graduation, but they completed the course load on an accelerated 3-year schedule. These programs still exist in some school districts.

Accelerated program options currently available under state law

Under s. 1003.429, F.S., beginning in the 2003-2004 school year, any student scheduled to graduate in 2004 and thereafter was permitted to select one of three high school graduation program options: completion of the general requirements for high school graduation pursuant to s. 1003.43, F.S., (a 4-year program); completion of a 3-year college preparatory program; or completion of a 3-year career preparatory program. A student meeting all statutory requirements for his or her chosen program is awarded a standard high school diploma.

Under the law, districts are required to provide each student in grades 6 through 9 and their parents with the various graduation options and their respective curricula, so that students and parents may select the postsecondary education or career plan that best fits their needs. This information must include a timeframe for achieving each graduation option. If a student fails to select a graduation option, the student is considered to have selected the 4-year, 24-credit general requirements for high school graduation set forth in s. 1003.43, F.S.

The 3-year standard college preparatory program requires successful completion of 18 credits in grades 9 through 12, as follows:

- 4 credits in English, with a major concentration in composition and literature;
- 3 credits in mathematics at the Algebra I level or higher from a list of courses that qualify for state university admission;
- 3 credits in natural science, two of which must have a laboratory component;
- 3 credits in social sciences, including one credit each in American history and world history, and one-half credit each of American Government and economics;

- 2 credits in the same foreign language, unless the student can demonstrate competency in a language other than English; and
- 3 credits in electives.

At least 6 of the 18 credits must be received in classes that are honors, dual enrollment, advanced placement, International Baccalaureate, Advanced International Certificate of Education, listed by the Florida Department of Education as rigorous, or weighted by the school district for class ranking purposes.

The 3-year career preparatory program also requires successful completion of 18 credits in grades 9 through 12, as follows:

- 4 credits in English, with a major concentration in composition and literature;
- 3 credits in mathematics, one of which must be Algebra I;
- 3 credits in natural science, two of which must have a laboratory component;
- 3 credits in social sciences including one credit each in American history and world history, and one-half credit each of American Government and economics;
- 3 or 5 credits in vocational or career education courses, depending on courses chosen; and
- 2 credits in electives, unless 5 credits are earned in vocational or career education courses.

District school boards are not permitted to establish course requirements for the accelerated 3-year high school graduation options in excess of the requirements provided by law.

In order to remain in the accelerated programs, students are required to:

- earn passing scores on the FCAT;
- maintain a cumulative grade point average of 3.0 in the courses required for the accelerated programs; and
- receive a grade that earns at least 3.0 points in each course required for the college preparatory program or receive a grade that earns at least 2.0 points in each course required for the career preparatory program.

Additionally, students are automatically transferred to the 4-year program if they:

- fail to earn 5 credits by the end of grade 9 or 11 credits by the end of grade 10;
- fail to achieve scores of 3 or higher on the grade 10 FCAT writing assessment; or
- fail to meet all accelerated program requirements by the end of grade 11.

III. Effect of Proposed Changes:

The bill would amend the 3-year accelerated high school graduation options to increase certain program requirements.

The bill repeals the existing 3-year accelerated career preparation program and raises certain requirements for participation in the 3-year college preparation program. The bill requires that at least 6 of the 18 credits required for the program be earned in either Advanced Placement or International Baccalaureate classes.

The bill deletes the requirement that the student shall have achieved at least an FCAT reading achievement level of 3, an FCAT mathematics achievement level of 3, and an FCAT Writing score of 3 on the most recent assessments taken by the student. The bill maintains the requirement, however, that a student pursuing the accelerated 3-year high school graduation option must earn passing scores on the FCAT as defined in s. 1008.22(3)(c), F.S., or scores on a standardized test that are concordant with passing scores on the FCAT as defined in s. 1008.22(9), F.S. This provision in the bill lowers the required FCAT scores for students participating in the accelerated 3-year college preparation program.

In order to remain in the 3-year accelerated college preparation program, students will have to maintain a GPA of 3.5 overall in the program and receive at least a "B" in every one of the 18 required courses. Students who are not on track to meet all statutory requirements at the end of their 10th grade year will be required to change to the standard 4-year graduation option. Additionally, students who receive lower than a "B" in any required course at any time will automatically be required to change to the standard 4-year graduation option.

The bill requires students to get the written consent of their school principal, school guidance counselor, and parent before choosing the 3-year program.

The bill would require students who want to compete for academic graduation honors such as valedictorian or salutatorian of their graduating class to complete the standard 4-year graduation program.

The bill will take effect July 1, 2006, for students entering grade 9 in the 2006-2007 school year and thereafter.

IV. Constitutional Issues:

A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:

None.

B. Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:

None.

C. Trust Funds Restrictions:

None.

V. Economic Impact and Fiscal Note:**A. Tax/Fee Issues:**

None.

B. Private Sector Impact:

None.

C. Government Sector Impact:

Students who complete accelerated graduation options reduce overall funding requirements for the Florida Education Finance Program (FEFP). Based on 2005-2006 fiscal year FEFP funding for basic program students, including funding for the Class Size Reduction program, the revenue generated for one high school student is roughly \$4,737. Assuming that all 645 students identified by the Senate Education Committee's July 2004 survey successfully complete the accelerated graduation option in which they are enrolled, the FEFP and Class Size Reduction savings resulting from this cohort of students graduating a year early would be \$3,055,365. The revisions in this bill which eliminate the three year career preparatory acceleration option and make more rigorous the college preparatory option will likely reduce the number of students who graduate in less than four years and will correspondingly reduce the savings. The number of students who might not participate in an accelerated graduation option because of the changes in this legislation is not known. However, since the number of student-participants based on current law has been relatively small, the fiscal impact of the bill should not be significant.

VI. Technical Deficiencies:

None.

VII. Related Issues:

None.

VIII. Summary of Amendments:

None.

This Senate staff analysis does not reflect the intent or official position of the bill's introducer or the Florida Senate.
