

1                   A bill to be entitled  
 2           An act relating to high school graduation; creating s.  
 3           1003.4295, F.S.; creating the general educational  
 4           development (GED) exit option as an alternative route to  
 5           receipt of a standard high school diploma; specifying  
 6           eligibility requirements for student participation;  
 7           authorizing participation in extracurricular activities;  
 8           providing certain exemptions and requirements for  
 9           successful completion of the GED exit option; providing  
 10          transcript information; providing for inclusion in the  
 11          calculation of the graduation rate; providing an effective  
 12          date.

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 14   Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

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 16          Section 1.   Section 1003.4295, Florida statutes, is created  
 17          to read:

18          1003.4295   General educational development exit option.--

19          (1)   GED EXIT OPTION.--The general educational development  
 20          (GED) exit option is a graduation strategy that permits  
 21          currently enrolled high school students who are at risk of not  
 22          graduating with their cohort group to earn a standard high  
 23          school diploma through an alternative route. For purposes of  
 24          this section, "cohort group" means the group of students with  
 25          whom a student entered kindergarten.

26          (a)   Eligibility.--To be eligible to participate in the GED  
 27          exit option, a student must meet the following criteria:

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28 | 1. Be currently enrolled in a public school program and be  
29 | at least 16 years old.

30 | 2. Be enrolled in courses that meet high school graduation  
31 | requirements.

32 | 3. Be overage for his or her grade, have a credit  
33 | deficiency, or have a low grade point average which places the  
34 | student in jeopardy of not graduating with his or her cohort  
35 | group.

36 | 4. Have a documented minimum reading level of at least  
37 | seventh grade.

38 | 5. Have earned acceptable scores on the official GED  
39 | practice test administered under school district approved  
40 | student testing conditions.

41 | 6. Have been recommended for participation by a teacher,  
42 | an administrator, or a guidance counselor employed by the school  
43 | in which the student is enrolled.

44 | 7. Have a student cumulative record that indicates that  
45 | the GED exit option is the most appropriate educational program  
46 | for the student.

47 |  
48 | Participation in the GED exit option is voluntary and requires  
49 | precounseling and student and parental consent.

50 | (b) Extracurricular activities.--A student who  
51 | participates in the GED exit option may participate in all high  
52 | school extracurricular activities for which he or she meets the  
53 | age and eligibility requirements, including graduation  
54 | ceremonies.

55 | (c) Exemption and requirements.--

56 1. A student who participates in the GED exit option shall  
57 be exempt from the minimum graduation requirements prescribed  
58 for the standard high school diploma, including the grade point  
59 average and credit requirements. For exceptional education  
60 students, this exemption shall be included in the individual  
61 education plan.

62 2. A student who participates in the GED exit option who  
63 has not previously met the requirements for promotion to grade  
64 10 shall be promoted to grade 10 or to the grade assignment of  
65 his or her cohort group upon entry into the program to enable  
66 the student to take the grade 10 FCAT.

67 3. A student who participates in the GED exit option shall  
68 not be permitted to take the GED test until he or she has passed  
69 the grade 10 FCAT and has earned at least a score of 500 on the  
70 official GED practice test.

71 4. A student who does not meet the requirements for high  
72 school graduation in grade 12 and who chooses to return for a  
73 thirteenth year of school in order to participate in the GED  
74 exit option is not required to continue classes upon meeting the  
75 GED exit option requirements for graduation. Upon completion of  
76 the requirements of the GED exit option, a student shall be  
77 considered a high school graduate. If the school district or  
78 school to which the student returns for a thirteenth year has  
79 implemented a program that requires a vocational component for  
80 graduation, the student may be required to complete this  
81 requirement in addition to the GED exit option requirements to  
82 be considered a high school graduate.

83 (d) Successful completion.--

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84 1. To successfully complete the GED exit option and  
85 receive a standard high school diploma, a student must pass the  
86 GED test and all sections of the grade 10 FCAT. A student must  
87 also complete any vocational components included in an approved  
88 school program.

89 2. A student who participates in the GED exit option may  
90 not graduate before his or her cohort group.

91 (e) Transcripts.--

92 1. The student and his or her parent shall be informed  
93 that the student's transcript will indicate an alternative high  
94 school graduation route.

95 2. The transcript shall identify only the actual credits  
96 earned, the successful completion of FCAT requirements, and the  
97 date of the diploma award.

98 (2) GRADUATION RATE.--A student who successfully completes  
99 the GED exit option and receives a standard high school diploma  
100 shall be included in the graduation rate calculated by the  
101 Department of Education.

102 Section 2. This act shall take effect July 1, 2009.