

**The Florida Senate**  
**BILL ANALYSIS AND FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT**

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

Prepared By: The Professional Staff of the Education Pre-K - 12 Committee

BILL: CS/SB 2654

INTRODUCER: Education Pre-K - 12 Committee and Senator Altman

SUBJECT: High School Graduation Requirements

DATE: April 16, 2009                      REVISED: \_\_\_\_\_

|    | ANALYST  | STAFF DIRECTOR | REFERENCE | ACTION        |
|----|----------|----------------|-----------|---------------|
| 1. | Carrouth | Matthews       | ED        | <b>Fav/CS</b> |
| 2. |          |                | EA        |               |
| 3. |          |                | WPSC      |               |
| 4. |          |                |           |               |
| 5. |          |                |           |               |
| 6. |          |                |           |               |

**Please see Section VIII. for Additional Information:**

- |                              |                                     |   |
|------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---|
| A. COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE..... | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Statement of Substantial Changes        |
| B. AMENDMENTS.....           | <input type="checkbox"/>            | Technical amendments were recommended   |
|                              | <input type="checkbox"/>            | Amendments were recommended             |
|                              | <input type="checkbox"/>            | Significant amendments were recommended |

**I. Summary:**

The bill is a high school graduation initiative that:

- Establishes new graduation requirements beginning with students entering high school in 2010-2011, including geometry and Biology, and additional requirements beginning with students entering high school in 2012-13, including Algebra II and chemistry or physics;
- Raises the minimum passing scores for the grade 10 Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) be set at grade-level proficiency, beginning with the 2011-2012 school year; and
- Authorizes the Commissioner of Education to award a standard high school diploma to honorably discharged veterans of the Vietnam Era who did not complete their graduation requirements.

This bill substantially amends sections 1003.428, 1003.429, 1003.43, 1007.263, 1008.22, and 1009.531, and creates sections 1003.4282 and 1003.4287 of the Florida Statutes.

## II. Present Situation:

### High School Graduation Requirements

Current high school graduation requirements are established for a 24-credit standard diploma, an accelerated 18-credit college preparatory program standard diploma, and an accelerated 18-credit career preparatory program standard diploma. Sixteen core curriculum credits are currently required for the 24-credit standard diploma. Current graduation requirements include four credits in English, four credits in mathematics, including Algebra I, a series of courses equivalent to Algebra I, or a higher-level mathematics course; three credits in science, two of which must have a laboratory component; and three credits in social studies.

### Passing Scores for the Grade 10 FCAT

FCAT Achievement Levels are based on both scale scores and developmental scale scores and range from Level 1 (lowest) to Level 5 (highest). The passing scores for the Grade 10 FCAT Reading and Mathematics and retake tests are determined by the SBE. For FCAT Reading, the passing score is a developmental scale score (DSS) of 1926 (scale score of 300) or above and is within the Level 2 FCAT achievement level. For FCAT Mathematics, the passing score is a developmental scale score of 1889 (scale score of 300) or above, which is also within the Level 2 FCAT achievement level.<sup>1</sup> Both of these minimum scores reflect a below-grade level performance.

### Honorary High School Diplomas

Section 1003.43, F.S., establishes the general requirements for receiving a standard high school diploma; however, this provision allows the commissioner to award a standard high school diploma to certain veterans who served in World War II and the Korean War, respectively, and were unable to complete their diploma requirements due to their service. To date, the Department of Education has issued 523 diplomas to Korean War veterans.<sup>2</sup>

## III. Effect of Proposed Changes:

### Requirements for High School Graduation

The bill revises the requirements for high school graduation as follows:

#### *Students Entering High School in 2010-2011*

Beginning with students entering high school in the 2010-11 school year, graduation from high school with a standard diploma would require, in part:

- Four credits in mathematics to include one credit in Algebra I or in a series of courses equivalent to Algebra I, and one credit in geometry or a series of courses equivalent to geometry; and

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.fcatt.fldoe.org/pdf/fcAchievementLevels.pdf>, Florida Department of Education, FCAT Achievement Levels, July 2008.

<sup>2</sup> Florida Department of Education, January 26, 2009.

- Three credits in science to include one credit in Biology I or in a series of courses equivalent to Biology I, one credit in physical science or a series of courses equivalent to physical sciences, and one credit in a higher-level science course.<sup>3</sup>

#### *Students Entering High School in 2012-2013*

Beginning with students entering high school in the 2012-13 school year, graduation from high school with a standard diploma would require, in part:

- Four credits in mathematics to include one credit in Algebra I or in a series of courses equivalent to Algebra I, and one credit in geometry or a series of courses equivalent to geometry, and one credit in Algebra II or in a series of courses equivalent to Algebra II; and
- Three credits in science to include one credit in Biology I or in a series of courses equivalent to Biology I, one credit in chemistry or physics or a series of courses equivalent to chemistry or physics, and one credit in a higher-level science course.<sup>4</sup>

The addition of required mathematics credits higher than Algebra I would align Florida's high school graduation requirements in mathematics with the recommendations of the American Diploma Project.<sup>5</sup> The American Diploma Project is a joint effort of Achieve<sup>6</sup> (a partnership between government and business executives), the Thomas B. Fordham Foundation,<sup>7</sup> and the Education Trust.<sup>8</sup>

The increased level of rigor in required science courses would increase foundational science content in all three branches of the natural sciences for Florida's high school graduates.

#### **Passing Scores for the Grade 10 FCAT**

The bill would require the SBE, beginning with the 2011-2012 school year, to specify passing scores for the grade 10 FCAT that meet grade-level proficiency. These provisions would raise the threshold for passing both the math and reading sections of the grade 10 FCAT and could result, in the short term, an increased number of students retaking the FCAT.<sup>9</sup> In the short term, the graduation rate may also decline.

#### **Honorary High School Diplomas for Vietnam Veterans**

This bill authorizes the Commissioner of Education to award a standard high school diploma to honorably discharged veterans who were inducted into the United States Armed Forces during the Vietnam Era before completing their high school graduation requirements. This bill would afford Vietnam Era servicemembers the same opportunity for a high school diploma as their brethren who served in World War II and the Korean War.

<sup>3</sup> These would include rigorous level 3 and 4 courses, but not necessarily at a level higher than Biology and physical science – Email correspondence, Department of Education, April 3, 2009.

<sup>4</sup> These would include rigorous level 3 and 4 courses, but not necessarily at a level higher than Chemistry or Physics – Email correspondence, Department of Education, April 3, 2009.

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.achieve.org/ADPNetwork>

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.achieve.org>

<sup>7</sup> [www.fordhamfoundation.org/](http://www.fordhamfoundation.org/)

<sup>8</sup> <http://www2.edtrust.org/edtrust/about+the+ed+trust>

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.fcatt.fldoe.org/pdf/fcAchievementLevels.pdf>, Florida Department of Education, FCAT Achievement Levels, July 2008.

**IV. Constitutional Issues:**

## A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:

None.

## B. Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:

None.

## C. Trust Funds Restrictions:

None.

**V. Fiscal Impact Statement:**

## A. Tax/Fee Issues:

None.

## B. Private Sector Impact:

None.

## C. Government Sector Impact:

**Assessment Costs**

According to the Department of Education, with the application of the new FCAT cut score to the 2011-2012 freshman cohort, the first year of the fiscal impact would be in 2013-2014, the junior year of those students in the 2011-2012 cohort.

FY 2013-14 - and each subsequent fiscal year:

According to the DOE, there would be a recurring fiscal of approximately \$1 million. Funding for the standard setting meetings is included in the new FCAT contract; therefore, the increased cost is based on the increased number of students to be tested in fall and spring retake administrations.

In 2008, of the 63,790 grade 10 students failing to pass the Grade 10 FCAT on the first attempt, 37,156 did not pass FCAT Reading, 2,590 did not pass FCAT Mathematics, and 24,044 did not pass both. If the passing score were to be raised to proficiency, 111,868 would have failed to pass on the first attempt; 57,294 would have failed FCAT Reading, 3,790 would have failed FCAT Mathematics, and 50,784 would have failed both.

With regard to fiscal impact, the retake costs could surpass \$1 million dollars in FY 13-14. The CTB/McGraw-Hill cost credit statement for the 2009 Summer Retake was \$1,089,935. This credit was based on their quote to process up to 110,940 test books (reading and mathematics combined), and results in approximately \$10 per book. Raising

the passing score to proficiency, at this time Level 3, could require approximately 75,000 more “books” in fall and approximately 37,000 more “books” in spring at \$10 per book.

**Additional Coursework for High School Graduation<sup>10</sup>**

In order to implement the increased high school graduation course requirements, school districts would have to reassign a significant number of teachers or hire additional teachers. If the school districts reassign teachers to meet the additional course offerings, there may be an operational cost to districts in that the courses currently taught by those teachers would likely close. Additionally, even with the reassignment, school districts, in the aggregate may have to hire an additional 270 chemistry-certified teachers to meet the requirements. Those teachers would cost school districts, in the aggregate, \$12.7 million if the teachers were hired at the average beginning teacher salary and benefits of \$47,201, and \$16.2 million if the teachers were hired at the average teacher salary and benefits of \$60,102. These costs may be mitigated by an indeterminate amount if school districts and students choose physics in lieu of chemistry to meet the science requirement. The amount of the mitigation is indeterminate at this time.

If school districts do not reassign teachers to meet the new requirements, the additional coursework of Biology, Algebra II, and chemistry or physics would require the following additional teachers to be hired:

| Subject                            | No. of Teachers to be Hired | Average Beginning Teacher Salary and benefits of \$47,201 | Average Teacher Salary and benefits of \$60,162 |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------------|---|---|
| Biology                            | 645                         | \$30.4 million  | \$38.8 million                                  |
| Algebra II                         | 1483                        | \$70 million  | \$89.2 million                                  |
| Geometry                           | 630                         | \$29.7 million  | \$37.9 million                                  |
| Chemistry or Physics <sup>11</sup> | 1401                        | \$66.1 million  | \$84.3 million                                  |

In summary, if teachers are reassigned to teach the specified course requirements, there would be a negative fiscal impact on the school districts with respect to hiring 270 additional chemistry-certified teachers at a cost of between \$12.7 million and \$16.2 million using average beginning teacher and average teacher salary and benefits data. If teachers are not reassigned to meet the additional teacher demand, and districts hired the additional certified teachers to meet the requirements, the salary and benefits cost of hiring the additional 4,159 teachers would range from approximately \$196.3 million and \$250.2 million.

**VI. Technical Deficiencies:**

None.

<sup>10</sup> The fiscal analysis is based upon the 2007-2008 graduation cohort of 193,546.

<sup>11</sup> The need for certified chemistry teachers may be mitigated by students choosing to take physics; however staffing needs for both physics and chemistry is indeterminate at this time.

**VII. Related Issues:**

None.

**VIII. Additional Information:****A. Committee Substitute – Statement of Substantial Changes:**

(Summarizing differences between the Committee Substitute and the prior version of the bill.)

**CS by Education Pre-K-12 on April 16, 2009:**

The committee substitute:

- Establishes graduation requirements for a standard diploma to include Algebra I, geometry, Biology, and physical science, beginning with students entering the ninth grade in the 2010-11 school year;
- Establishes additional graduation requirements for a standard diploma to include Algebra II and chemistry or physics for students entering high school in the 2012-13 school year;
- Raises the minimum passing scores for the grade 10 Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) be set at grade-level proficiency, beginning with the 2011-2012 school year;
- Requires school districts to notify students participating in accelerated high school graduation options of the availability of career academy coursework leading to national industry certification; and
- Authorizes the Commissioner of Education to award a standard high school diploma to honorably discharged veterans of the Vietnam Era who did not complete their graduation requirements.

**B. Amendments:**

None.