

FLORIDA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

BILL ANALYSIS

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BILL #: [CS/HB 453](#)

TITLE: Requirements for a Standard High School Diploma

SPONSOR(S): Gossett-Seidman

Committee References

[Student Academic Success](#)

16 Y, 0 N, As CS

[Education & Employment](#)

19 Y, 0 N

SUMMARY

Effect of the Bill:

The bill authorizes a student with a disability to substitute one school year of participation in the Special Olympics for the physical education requirement for a standard high school diploma, as determined appropriate by the student's Individual Education Plan team.

The bill revises high school graduation requirements to specify that completion of two years of marching band satisfies both the one credit requirement in physical education and the one credit requirement in performing arts.

Fiscal or Economic Impact:

None

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ANALYSIS

EFFECT OF THE BILL:

The bill authorizes a [student with a disability](#) to participate in the [Special Olympics](#) as a course substitution for the [physical education requirement](#) for a standard high school diploma. A student who chooses this option is required to participate for one school year, as determined by the student's Individual Education Plan team (IEP).

The bill also revises high school graduation requirements by providing that [completion of two years of marching band](#) satisfies both the one credit requirement in physical education and the one credit requirement in performing arts. (Section 1).

The effective date of the bill is July 1, 2026. (Section 2).

RELEVANT INFORMATION

SUBJECT OVERVIEW:

[Florida Special Olympics](#)

Special Olympics is an international program that provides individuals with intellectual disabilities who are eight years or older with access to year-round sports training and athletic competition in over 20 summer and winter Olympic-type sports.¹ The program's mission is to promote inclusion, physical fitness, and personal growth

¹ Sportsability Alliance, *A Comprehensive and In-Depth Understanding of Special Olympics*,

https://www.sportsability.org/index.php?option=com_dailyplanetblog&view=entry&year=2023&month=02&day=06&id=28:a-comprehensive-and-in-depth-understanding-of-special-olympics (last visited Jan. 22, 2026).

through participation in sports. In addition to athletic development, the program fosters social skills, teamwork, and self-confidence, helping participants engage more fully in their communities.²

In Florida, the Special Olympics program offers training and sports competition across the state, with county and regional competitions culminating in the State Games.³ In 2024, Special Olympics Florida had 76,976 athletes participating in 176 competitions across 26 sports.⁴

Physical Education Requirement

To earn a standard high school diploma, students must complete coursework in multiple areas, including English language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, fine or performing arts, electives, and physical education (PE), and earn a cumulative GPA of 2.0 on a 4.0 scale.⁵

To meet the PE requirement, students must earn one credit in physical education, which must include the integration of health.⁶ Students are also required to earn one credit in fine or performing arts.⁷

Options that may be used to satisfy the PE requirement include:⁸

- Participation in interscholastic sports at the junior varsity or varsity level for two full seasons.
- Completion of two years of marching band, which may satisfy either the one credit requirement in physical education or the one credit requirement in fine or performing arts.
- Completion of two years in an R.O.T.C. program, with a significant drill component, which satisfies both the one credit requirement in physical education and the one credit requirement in fine or performing arts.

Students may also satisfy one-half credit in physical education or one-half credit in performing arts with the completion of one semester with a grade of "C" or better in marching band or in a dance class.⁹

Students with Disabilities

State law provides additional options for students with disabilities entering grade 9 beginning in the 2014-2015 school year to meet standard high school diploma requirements, as specified in the student's IEP. Students may satisfy diploma requirements through options that the IEP team has determined most appropriate for demonstrating the student's skills, including:¹⁰

- Students assessed through the Florida Alternate Assessment: Course substitutions, assessments, certifications, or portfolios that demonstrate mastery of academic standards.¹¹
- Students whose IEP emphasizes mastery of academic and employment competencies: Completion of prescribed courses, achievement of transition plan goals, demonstration of employment skills, and earning industry certifications, verified by the IEP team, employer, and teacher.¹²

² Special Olympics (Florida), *Mission*, <https://www.specialolympicsflorida.org/our-mission> (last visited Jan. 22, 2026). There is no charge to participate in Special Olympics.

³ Florida Special Olympics, *Fact Sheet*, available at <https://s3.dualstack.us-east-1.amazonaws.com/busites/www/specialolympicsflorida/pages/SOFLFactSheet.pdf>. Florida Special Olympics is organized into 8 regions, each with lists of available sports and training schedule. See Florida Special Olympics, *Our Programs – Regions*, <https://www.specialolympicsflorida.org/map> (last visited Jan. 22, 2026).

⁴ Florida Special Olympics, *2024 Research Report*, available at https://s3.dualstack.us-east-1.amazonaws.com/busites/www/specialolympicsflorida/pages/2024_SOFL_Reach_Report.pdf. Of the athletes, 37 percent were ages 8-15 and 15 percent were ages 16-21.

⁵ Section [1003.4282\(3\).F.S.](#)

⁶ Section [1003.4282\(3\)f. F.S.](#)

⁷ Section 1003.4282(3)e, F.S. In Florida, the one credit requirement in fine or performing arts may also be satisfied by completing a course in speech and debate or a career and technical education course.

⁸ Section 1003.4282(3)f, F.S.

⁹ *Id.*

¹⁰ Section [1003.4282\(8\)\(b\). F.S.](#)

¹¹ Section [1003.4282\(8\)\(b\)1., F.S.](#); see also r. 6A-1.09963, F.A.C.

¹² Section [1003.4282\(8\)\(b\)2., F.S.](#); see also r. 6A-1.09963, F.A.C.

- Changes to IEP Graduation Options: Any change must be parent-approved and verified for appropriateness by an independent reviewer.¹³

RECENT LEGISLATION:

YEAR	BILL #/SUBJECT	HOUSE/SENATE SPONSOR(S)	OTHER INFORMATION
2025	CS/CS/CS/HB 1105 - Education	Kincart Jonsson/ Burgess	Became law on July 1, 2025.

OTHER RESOURCES:

[CDC and Special Olympics: Disability and Health](#)

BILL HISTORY

COMMITTEE REFERENCE	ACTION	DATE	STAFF DIRECTOR/ POLICY CHIEF	ANALYSIS PREPARED BY
Student Academic Success Subcommittee	16 Y, 0 N, As CS	1/13/2026	Sanchez	Dixon
THE CHANGES ADOPTED BY THE COMMITTEE:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revised graduation requirements to provide that completion of two years of marching band satisfies both the physical education and performing arts credit requirements, rather than either requirement. 			
Education & Employment Committee	19 Y, 0 N	1/22/2026	Hassell	Dixon

THIS BILL ANALYSIS HAS BEEN UPDATED TO INCORPORATE ALL OF THE CHANGES DESCRIBED ABOVE.

¹³ Section [1003.4282\(8\)\(b\)3., F.S.](#); see also [s. 1003.572, F.S.](#)