

Instruction

Exhibit - State Law Graduation Requirements

*This exhibit is intended as a reference, but it may not reflect recent legislative updates. Before relying on it, check the Ill. General Assembly website, www.ilga.gov, for the current statute. **Note:** There is a lag between when a bill becomes law and when the law is updated at www.ilga.gov.*

The School Code, 105 ILCS 5/27-605, amended by P.A. 104-387 and amended and renumbered by P.A. 104-391, and 105 ILCS 5/22-87, amended by P.A.s 104-13 and 104-14, contains the following course requirements and financial aid application requirement for a student in Illinois to receive a high school diploma. Other graduation requirements, including additional course requirements, if any, are contained in School Board policy 6:300, *Graduation Requirements*. For guidance in offering the coursework necessary to meet the State graduation requirements, see the Ill. State Board of Education, *State Graduation Requirements, Guidance Document* (2025), available at: www.isbe.net/Documents/grad_require.pdf.

State Law Graduation Requirements

105 ILCS 5/27-605, amended by P.A. 104-387 and amended and renumbered by P.A. 104-391

SEDOL students follow the home district's graduation requirements.

Required high school courses.

(a) - (d) are not listed because they are blank in the statute.

(e) **Through the 2023-2024 school year**, as a prerequisite to receiving a high school diploma, each pupil entering the 9th grade must, in addition to other course requirements, successfully complete all of the following courses:

- (1) Four years of language arts.
- (2) Two years of writing intensive courses, one of which must be English and the other of which may be English or any other subject. When applicable, writing-intensive courses may be counted towards the fulfillment of other graduation requirements.
- (3) Three years of mathematics, one of which must be Algebra I and one of which must include geometry content, and one of which may be an Advanced Placement computer science course. A mathematics course that includes geometry content may be offered as an integrated, applied, interdisciplinary, or career and technical education course that prepares a student for a career readiness path.
- (3.5) For pupils entering the 9th grade in the 2022-2023 school year and 2023-2024 school year, one year of a course that includes intensive instruction in computer literacy, which may be English, social studies, or any other subject and which may be counted toward the fulfillment of other graduation requirements.
- (4) Two years of science.
- (5) Two years of social studies, of which at least one year must be history of the United States or a combination of history of the United States and American government and, beginning with pupils entering the 9th grade in the 2016-2017 school year and each school year thereafter, at least one semester must be civics, which shall help young people acquire and learn to use the skills, knowledge, and attitudes that will prepare them to be competent and responsible citizens throughout their lives. Civics course content shall focus on government institutions,

the discussion of current and controversial issues, service learning, and simulations of the democratic process. School districts may utilize private funding available for purposes of offering civics education. Beginning with pupils entering the 9th grade in the 2021-2022 school year and each school year thereafter, one semester, or part of one semester, may include a financial literacy course.

- (6) One year chosen from (A) music, (B) art, (C) foreign language, which shall be deemed to include American Sign Language, (D) vocational education, or (E) forensic speech (speech and debate). A forensic speech course used to satisfy the course requirement under subdivision (1) may not be used to satisfy the course requirement under this subdivision (6).
 - (f) The State Board of Education shall develop and inform school districts of standards for writing-intensive coursework.
- (e-5) **Beginning with the 2024-2025 school year**, as a prerequisite to receiving a high school diploma, each pupil entering the 9th grade must, in addition to other course requirements, successfully complete all of the following courses:
- (1) Four years of language arts.
 - (2) Two years of writing intensive courses, one of which must be English and the other of which may be English or any other subject. If applicable, writing-intensive courses may be counted toward the fulfillment of other graduation requirements.
 - (3) Three years of mathematics, one of which must be Algebra I, one of which must include geometry content, and one of which may be an Advanced Placement computer science course. A mathematics course that includes geometry content may be offered as an integrated, applied, interdisciplinary, or career and technical education course that prepares a student for a career readiness path.
 - (3.5) One year of a course that includes intensive instruction in computer literacy, which may be English, social studies, or any other subject and which may be counted toward the fulfillment of other graduation requirements.
 - (4) Two years of laboratory science.
 - (5) Two years of social studies, of which at least one year must be history of the United States or a combination of history of the United States and American government and at least one semester must be civics, which shall help young people acquire and learn to use the skills, knowledge, and attitudes that will prepare them to be competent and responsible citizens throughout their lives. Civics course content shall focus on government institutions, the discussion of current and controversial issues, service learning, and simulations of the democratic process. School districts may utilize private funding available for the purposes of offering civics education. One semester, or part of one semester, may include a financial literacy course.
 - (6) One year chosen from (A) music, (B) art, (C) foreign language, which shall be deemed to include American Sign Language, (D) career and technical education, or (E) forensic speech (speech and debate). A forensic speech course used to satisfy the course requirement under subdivision (1) may not be used to satisfy the course requirement under this subdivision (6).
- (e-10) Beginning with the 2028-2029 school year, as a prerequisite to receiving a high school diploma, each pupil entering the 9th grade must, in addition to other course requirements, successfully complete 2 years of foreign language courses, which may include American Sign Language. A pupil may choose a third year of foreign language to satisfy the requirement under paragraph (6) of subsection (e-5).
- (f) The State Board of Education shall develop and inform school districts of standards for writing-intensive coursework.

(f-5) If a school district offers an Advanced Placement computer science course to high school students, then the school board must designate that course as equivalent to a high school mathematics course and must denote on the student's transcript that the Advanced Placement computer science course qualifies as a mathematics-based, quantitative course for students in accordance with subdivision (3) of subsection (e) of this Section.

(g) The amendatory Acts of 1983 and of the 94th General Assembly do not apply to students with disabilities whose course of study is determined by an Individualized Education Program.

Subdivision (3.5) of subsection (e) does not apply to pupils entering the 9th grade in the 2021-2022 school year or a prior school year or to students with disabilities whose course of study is determined by an individualized education program.

Subsection (e-5) does not apply to pupils entering the 9th grade in the 2023-2024 school year or a prior school year or to students with disabilities whose course of study is determined by an individualized education program. Subsection (e-10) does not apply to pupils entering the 9th grade in the 2027-2028 school year or a prior school year or to students with disabilities whose course of study is determined by an individualized education program.

(h) The provisions of this Section are subject to the provisions of Section 27-610 [substitutions for required courses].

(i) The State Board of Education may adopt rules to modify the requirements of this Section for any students enrolled in grades 9 through 12 if the Governor has declared a disaster due to a public health emergency pursuant to Section 7 of the Illinois Management Agency Act.

105 ILCS 5/22-87, amended by P.A.s 104-13 and 104-14.

Graduation requirements: Free Application for Federal Student Aid.

(a) Beginning with the 2020-2021 school year, in addition to any other requirements under this Code, as a prerequisite to receiving a high school diploma from a public high school, the parent or guardian of each student or, if a student is at least 18 years of age or legally emancipated, the student must comply with either of the following:

(1) File a Free Application for Federal Student Aid with the United States Department of Education or, if applicable, an application for State financial aid.

(2) On a form created by the State Board of Education, file a waiver with the student's school district indicating that the parent or guardian or, if applicable, the student understands what the Free Application for Federal Student Aid and application for State financial aid are and has chosen not to file an application under paragraph (1).

(b) Each school district with a high school must require each high school student to comply with this Section and must provide to each high school student and, if applicable, his or her parent or guardian any support or assistance necessary to comply with this Section. A school district must award a high school diploma to a student who is unable to meet the requirements of subsection (a) due to extenuating circumstances, as determined by the school district, if (i) the student has met all other graduation requirements under this Code and (ii) the principal attests that the school district has made a good faith effort to assist the student or, if applicable, his or her parent or guardian in filing an application or a waiver under subsection (a).

Beginning with the 2025-2026 school year, each high school must designate at least one member of its staff as a contact for matters related to this Section, annually provide the individual's name and contact information to the State Board of Education and Illinois Student Assistance Commission in a form and manner that these agencies prescribe, and inform high school seniors

that this individual is available to answer questions about this Section or to refer them to an appropriate resource, which may include, but is not limited to, the Illinois Student Assistance Commission. The contact shall serve as a designated point of contact for information from the State Board of Education and Illinois Student Assistance Commission related to this Section, including the free resources available to their students and schools to help them comply with this Section. A person designated as a point of contact under this Section shall, upon designation, be required to complete an initial orientation and, thereafter, shall be encouraged to participate in annual briefings. The individual shall be eligible to receive professional development hours for both the initial orientation and subsequent annual briefings, as applicable. Beginning with the 2025-2026 school year, the school district shall provide appropriate support to each high school student to assist with education about and the completion of a financial aid application as described in subsection (a). This support may be offered in a variety of formats, times, and settings and shall include an opportunity for the student to request and receive help during the school day in completing the student's portion of the financial aid application. The high school may request assistance from the Illinois Student Assistance Commission to support the completion of financial aid applications, including application completion events and individual assistance, at no cost to the high school. A high school student may choose whether to use the support or assistance provided under this Section.

A school district must award a high school diploma to a student who is unable to meet the requirements of subsection (a) due to extenuating circumstances, as determined by the school district, if (i) the student has met all other graduation requirements under this Code and (ii) the principal attests that the school district has made a good faith effort to assist the student or, if applicable, his or her parent or guardian in filing an application or a waiver under subsection (a).

- (c) The State Board of Education may adopt rules to implement this Section.

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