

Illinois State Board of Education

STATE GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

(105 ILCS 5/27-22, 27-22.05, 27-22.10)

February 2016 Guidance Document

This document is intended to provide non-regulatory guidance on the subject matter listed above. For specific questions, please contact the division identified in the document.

Illinois State Board of Education

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Graduation Requirements: 105 ILCS 5/27-22, 27-22.05, 27-22.10

The following information will help your school district offer the coursework necessary to meet the state graduation requirements. This document amends the September 2015 guidance to provide general updates resulting from recently enacted legislation and updates to agency rules. Below is a summary of issues, presented in a question-and-answer format, that pertain to graduation requirements that may be of interest to school districts.

1. What are the state-imposed graduation requirements?

As you can see from the chart in Appendix A, the law has phased in the new graduation requirements over four years so that any student entering high school as a ninth-grader starting in the 2008-09 school year *and beyond* will have taken the following minimum number of courses during high school:

- 4 years of language arts;
- 2 years of writing-intensive courses, one year of which must be offered as an English language arts course and may be counted toward meeting one year of the four-year English language arts requirement. The writing courses may be counted toward the fulfillment of other state graduation requirements, when applicable, if writing-intensive content is provided in a subject area other than English language arts;
- 3 years of mathematics, one of which must be Algebra 1 and one of which must include geometry content;
- 2 years of science;
- 2 years of social studies, of which at least one year must be the history of the United States or a combination of the history of the United States and American government; and
- 1 year chosen from any of the following:
 - art;
 - music;
 - foreign language, which shall include American Sign Language; and
 - vocational education.

Additionally, starting with students entering grade 9 in the 2016-17 school year and thereafter, at least one semester of civics coursework will be required.

2. What is the impact of Section 27-22.10 of the School Code on the state graduation requirements listed above?

Since 2005 when the new graduation requirements went into effect, the State Board of Education has heard concerns from parents and school officials about whether accelerated coursework completed by students in middle or junior high school – particularly in the area of mathematics – would need to be repeated in high school in order for it to count as meeting the state-imposed high school graduation requirements. Section 27-22.10 to the School Code addresses these concerns by allowing school boards of high school or unit districts the option of adopting a policy to accept such courses under certain conditions specified in the law.

- A student wishing to take the course must be enrolled in seventh or eighth grade.
- Either the student must take the course at the high school he or she would attend, and the elementary student's enrollment must not prevent a student enrolled in the high school from being able to take the course; or the student must take the course at the school the student attends provided that the course is taught by a teacher who holds a professional educator license under Article 21B of this Code that is endorsed for the grade level and content area of the course.
- The high school must grant academic credit, satisfying the state-imposed graduation requirements for that particular course, to an elementary student who successfully completes the course.
- The student's grade in the course must be included in his or her grade-point average in accordance with the board's policy for making that calculation.

A school board must award high school course credit and apply that credit towards meeting the state-imposed graduation requirements for any course a student transferring into the district has taken at another district, if the course was successfully completed in accordance with the requirements of Section 27-22.10 of the School Code. The district may choose not to accept the course, however, if evidence of the course's rigor and content indicates it did not address the relevant Illinois Learning Standards at the level appropriate for the high school grade during which the course is usually taken.

3. The rules now distinguish between four-year high schools and three-year high schools. How do the graduation requirements affect three-year high schools?

There only a few high schools in the state that serve only grades 10 through 12. In order to receive a diploma, students in these schools will need to successfully complete the state-required coursework, whether at the three-year high school or during their ninth-grade experience in their middle schools.

In schools with only grades 10 through 12, sufficient courses must be offered to ensure that all students can meet the state graduation requirements. The middle school that feeds into the high school must at least require all students in ninth grade to take an English language arts course to ensure that the four-year requirement is met by the end of students' senior year. Only courses taken at the ninth-grade level in the middle schools that feed into a high school with grades 10 through 12 will be counted towards meeting state graduation requirements, although students in grades 7 or 8 may enroll in a high school course and have it count towards the state graduation requirements in accordance with the policy the district's school board has adopted under Section 27-22.10 of the School Code (see Question 2).

4. How does a district meet the writing-intensive requirement? What is a "writing-intensive" course?

The writing-intensive requirement must be met through at least one, year-long English language arts course; the second year of writing intensive may be an English language arts course or may be included as part of another subject area. School districts need not count the writing-intensive course separately when determining if students meet the state graduation requirements. Rather, an English language arts course whose content primarily focuses on writing may be counted as meeting one of the four years of English required for graduation. When offered as part of another course required for graduation, such as science, social science or an elective, the course may be counted as both meeting the graduation requirement for writing and for meeting the specific requirement in that subject area.

In order to determine when a course other than English contains sufficient writing content to meet the writing-intensive graduation requirement, school districts should review administrative rules at 23 Ill. Adm. Code 1.440(d). These rules specify that the course description for a "writing-intensive" course will be accepted for purposes of Section 27-22 of the School Code if:

- a goal of the course is to use the writing that students do relative to the subject matter being presented as a vehicle for improving their writing skills;
- writing assignments will be an integral part of the course's content across the time span covered by the course;
- the written products students are required to prepare in order to receive credit for the course and the feedback students receive are such that:
 - students' writing proficiency is evaluated against expectations that are appropriate to early or late high school and encompass all of the standards applicable to writing as set forth in the Illinois Learning Standards for English Language Arts incorporating the Common Core State Standards (see http://www.isbe.net/common_core/default.htm); and
 - students receive information from the evaluation of their written products that will permit them to improve their writing skills in terms of correct usage; well-organized composition; communication of ideas for a variety of purposes; and locating, organizing, evaluating, and using information.

- The writing-intensive study provided in at least one writing-intensive course must be designed to address and integrate the elements of the writing process and to refine or apply research skills.

Generally, a writing-intensive course is one in which students are engaged for a significant portion of their class time in tasks focused on developing skills needed for them to become proficient and competent writers. For instance, the use of correct grammar, spelling, punctuation, capitalization and structure must be emphasized. Students should be required to compose well-organized and coherent written products to be used for specific purposes and audiences. In addition, students should develop the ability to communicate ideas in a written format to accomplish a variety of purposes.

Additionally, writing-intensive courses may be used to teach students how to use a wide variety of information sources, including written products, to frame questions for inquiry, identify and organize relevant information, and communicate that information effectively in a variety of written formats.

5. Are there other regulatory criteria for mathematic courses? For instance, can the Algebra I course be offered over a period of two years? What percentage of the concepts of a math course that includes geometry must be included in the course in order for it to meet the graduation requirement of one year of geometry?

In determining the content of Algebra I or geometry courses, districts should refer to standards specific to these two areas set forth in the Illinois Learning Standards for Mathematics incorporating the Common Core State Standards found at http://www.isbe.net/common_core/default.htm. The State Board of Education determined that it did not need to develop additional standards to regulate the content of mathematics courses. The intent of the legislation is for students to complete three years of mathematics during their high school experience (i.e., grades 9 through 12). The courses a student completes during those four years must include at least a year-long course with content equivalent to an Algebra I course and another year-long course that contains content that addresses geometry. The district may schedule the courses required in a format that best meets the needs of its students (e.g., Algebra I presented over two years).

Since many middle schools are offering Algebra I, a school district may count a middle school course that is equivalent to high school Algebra I as fulfilling the *content requirement* that students complete Algebra I. In dual districts, the high school district has the authority to determine whether it will recognize the algebra courses taken at its feeder elementary districts as meeting the Algebra I content requirement, based upon whether the Algebra I content offered in middle school is consistent with the content offered in the high school course. The determination of high school course content is a local decision.

As already discussed in Question 2, a local board of education may adopt a policy under Section 27-22.10 of the School Code to accept for high school credit an Algebra I course taken by a seventh- or eighth-grade student and to count that course as meeting one of the three years of mathematics that high school students must complete in order to receive a high school diploma. Conversely, a school district may give high school credit for locally determined graduation requirements for courses taken before ninth grade. For instance, a district that requires students to take four years of mathematics (three years required under state law and one year required locally) may choose to count the middle school Algebra I course as meeting both the state-imposed *content* requirement and the locally determined requirement of a fourth year of mathematics.

Additionally, Section 27-22 requires a school district to count toward the state-imposed graduation requirement of three years of mathematics any credit earned by a student who has successfully completed an Advanced Placement computer science course. The law also requires a school district to denote on the student's transcript that the Advanced Placement computer science course "qualifies as a mathematics-based, quantitative course" for the purposes of state-imposed graduation requirements.

6. Must science courses include a laboratory component?

For students entering ninth grade in the 2007-08 school year and later, the law requires one additional year of science to graduate; however, it does not specify the type of science courses that may be counted towards meeting graduation requirements. While the admission policies of many state universities and other postsecondary institutions require that students complete science courses that contain a laboratory component, the School Code does not require laboratory sciences for graduation purposes.

In determining course offerings, school districts should provide the type of courses that will best meet the needs of their students as they pursue various work and study options after leaving high school.

7. Do schools have to offer a separate civics course or may they incorporate civics into existing social studies courses?

Under Section 27-22 of the School Code, civics education must "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"; address government institutions; discuss current and controversial issues; and include service learning and simulations of the democratic process. Civics instruction should also align to the Illinois Learning Standards for Social Science, which are currently being expanded to enumerate the knowledge and skills that students should acquire in civics during the high school experience. The course of study must be a minimum of one semester. School districts are free to determine how to incorporate civics education into their current curricula in a way that best meets the needs of their students.

8. How will the new requirements affect students' ability to take elective courses, particularly as some schools are moving to a five-clock hour instructional day due to financial constraints?

As noted above, students will need to successfully complete 12 units of state-required coursework (i.e., with a unit being equivalent to one year) as a condition of receiving a high school diploma once the requirements are fully phased-in, with writing-intensive being counted toward the requirements for at least one year of English language arts and any other required subject area and the semester of civics coursework counting toward the required two years of social science. Those 12 units are considered as part of the 16 units of credit required under agency rules found at 23 Ill. Adm. Code 1.440(c) to receive a diploma from a four-year high school (12 units, if a three-year high school). In addition, the School Code and agency rules require that all students must participate in physical education on a daily basis in each year of high school and have the equivalent of 18 weeks of health education and nine weeks of consumer education during high school. Over the four-year high school experience, these requirements add another 4.75 units of state-imposed study, which a school district may or may not count toward meeting its local graduation requirements. (See Appendix C for a list of other instructional requirements that apply to high schools.) The total number of units of state-required coursework to be taken during high school, therefore, is 16.75 units.

The flexibility that a student is afforded in choosing elective courses depends on several factors, most notably the length of the district's instructional day, the impact of locally determined graduation requirements, and how the district assigns "credit" to the courses taken. For example, assuming that all Illinois high school students have the option of taking five year-long courses each school year and they receive a unit of credit for each course that is successfully completed, they may accumulate up to 20 units by graduation time. Other students may be enrolled in six or seven courses each year, acquiring anywhere from 24 to 28 units by the time they graduate.

Additional flexibility is provided for the student if a school district meets the curricular requirements mentioned above in courses that the state requires for graduation. For instance, health education may be offered in conjunction with another course on a "block of time" basis, provided that the total time devoted to health education is the equivalent of one full semester's work. Likewise, consumer education could be incorporated into a related course rather than offered as a stand-alone course, provided the content and time requirements are met.

9. What about students enrolled in career and technical education (CTE) courses? How will the new requirements affect them?

The 2005 changes in the law did not change the flexibility provided in the School Code for students enrolled in vocational and technical education courses. Section 27-22.05 allows these students to “substitute” a related vocational and technical education course for a graduation requirement if that course addresses “at least 50 percent of the content of the required course or graduation requirement for which it is substituted.” The law also requires that the board of education adopt a policy allowing such substitutions, and that a student’s parent or guardian request the substitution and approve it in writing, using forms developed by the district.

Agency rules found at 23 Ill. Adm. Code 1.445 further provide that a “course will be accepted as meeting the graduation requirements set forth, provided that its description shows that its principal instructional activity is the development and application of knowledge and skills related to the applicable requirement.”

The State Board of Education in May 2005 adopted a resolution recognizing the importance of school districts’ providing rigorous CTE courses that incorporate the Illinois Learning Standards. The Board and State Superintendent are committed to working with districts to increase the number of CTE courses that may be used to satisfy graduation requirements, particularly in the mathematics and sciences. A CTE curriculum initiative, funded by the State Board, is already under way to modernize CTE curricula, particularly integrating CTE content with core academic areas. More information about the CTE Curriculum Revitalization Initiative can be found at <http://ilcte.org/>.

10. What is the purpose for making the state graduation requirements more rigorous, particularly since many students are already taking college preparatory classes?

Research suggests that students do better in school when they take more challenging courses. A USDE analysis found that high school students who score low on standardized tests improve more by taking college-prep courses than they do by taking other general or vocational courses.

ACT Inc. reports that students who have more rigorous high school curricula generally have higher scores. This is reflected in the ACT scores of Illinois’ 2014 graduating class. The average ACT composite score of students who had “core-or-more” curricula was 22.7 compared to 18.9 for students who had less than core curricula. Of the 157,047 students from this graduating class, 52 percent indicated “core-or-more” curricula. A “core-or-more” curriculum includes at least four years of English and at least three years each of mathematics, social studies, and natural sciences. Research from the *American Diploma Project: Workplace Study* found that geometry was a “benchmark course for students intending to work in well-paid blue collar jobs or low-paid, low-skilled jobs” and that four years of English was a benchmark requirement for a majority of jobs. A study conducted in 2001 found that a majority of U.S. jobs require some form of higher education. Even those that do not require a college degree require some form of advanced math, writing and science skills.

Additionally, the Illinois Learning Standards define what students are expected to know as a result of their schooling. But the courses that students were required by law to have in order to receive a high school diploma fell short of giving them the skills and knowledge articulated in the standards for students in late high school. But most importantly, the last 20 years have seen a marked increase in the level of sophistication and expertise needed in the areas of mathematics, science and written communication skills in order for high school students to navigate successfully through postsecondary study and the workplace, yet Illinois’ graduation requirements had remained unchanged from those first put in place in 1983. The enhanced requirements enacted in 2005 removed Illinois’ distinction of having among the lowest graduation expectations in the country.

11. Who can I contact if I need additional information?

Please contact the Division of College and Career Readiness at 217-524-4832.

Appendix A

Revised Graduation Requirements

The chart below outlines the minimum state-required courses for students graduating in the year shown¹. Section 27-22.10 of the School Code allows coursework to count towards meeting the state-imposed graduation requirements listed below in cases where a student in seventh or eighth grade takes the required courses at the high school or his or her middle school, as prescribed under the law, and the local board of education adopts a policy pursuant to Section 27-22.10 (see Question 2).

Graduation Date	Mathematics	Writing²	Language Arts	Science	Social Science	Electives
2009 (i.e., students entering as ninth-graders in school year 2005-06)	3 years ; no content specified.	None required.	3 years ; no content specified.	1 year ; no content specified.	2 years ; must include 1 year of U.S. history or combination of U.S. history and American government.	1 year ; includes art, music, foreign language, or vocational education.
2010 (i.e., students entering as ninth-graders in school year 2006-07)	Of 3 years , 1 year must be Algebra I and 1 year must be a course that includes geometry content.	2 years ; 1 year must be an English course and 1 year may be provided as a part of any course offered.	3 years ; no content specified.	1 year ; no content specified.	2 years ; must include 1 year of U.S. history or combination of U.S. history and American government.	1 year ; includes art, music, foreign language, or vocational education.
2011 (i.e., students entering as ninth-graders in school year 2007-08)	Of 3 years , 1 year must be Algebra I and 1 year must be a course that includes geometry content.	2 years ; 1 year must be an English course and 1 year may be provided as a part of any course offered.	3 years ; no content specified.	2 years ; no content specified.	2 years ; must include 1 year of U.S. history or combination of U.S. history and American government.	1 year ; includes art, music, foreign language, or vocational education.
2012 and beyond (i.e., students entering as ninth-graders starting in school year 2008-09)	Of 3 years , 1 year must be Algebra I and 1 year must be a course that includes geometry content.	2 years ; 1 year must be an English course and 1 year may be provided as a part of any course offered.	4 years ; no content specified.	2 years ; no content specified.	2 years ; must include 1 year of U.S. history or combination of U.S. history and American government.	1 year ; includes art, music, foreign language, or vocational education.
2016 and beyond (i.e., students entering as ninth-graders starting in school year 2012-13)	Of 3 years , 1 year must be Algebra I and 1 year must be a course that includes geometry content.	2 years ; 1 year must be an English course and 1 year may be provided as a part of any course offered.	4 years ; no content specified.	2 years ; no content specified.	2 years ; must include 1 year of U.S. history or combination of U.S. history and American government and 1 semester civics	1 year ; includes art, music, foreign language, or vocational education.
Total³	3 years	2 years	4 years	2 years	2 years	1 year

¹This date assumes a student will graduate in four years.

²The legislative intent of this requirement is not to increase the number of units needed for graduation but rather to have schools incorporate content to meet the two-year writing-intensive requirement into other courses required for graduation, where appropriate.

³This represents the number of units of credit required at full implementation for the graduating class of 2012 **and beyond** (12 units, assuming a unit is equivalent to a year-long course). Additionally, daily physical education, while not a state graduation requirement, is a required course for all students in each of four years of high school (see 105 ILCS 5/27-6). The law and agency rules also require that students during high school take a minimum of 18 weeks (one semester) of health education (see 105 ILCS 110, 105 ILCS 5/27-5 and 23 Ill. Adm. Code 1.440(a)(9)) and one quarter (nine weeks) of consumer education (see 105 ILCS 5/27-12.1 and 23 Ill. Adm. Code 1.440(a)(11)), bringing the total number of state-required courses to 16.75 units. (See Appendix C for current regulatory requirements.)

State Laws

105 ILCS 5/27-22

Sec. 27-22. Required high school courses. (a) As a prerequisite to receiving a high school diploma, each pupil entering the 9th grade in the 1984-1985 school year through the 2004-2005 school year must, in addition to other course requirements, successfully complete the following courses:

- (1) three years of language arts;
- (2) two years of mathematics, one of which may be related to computer technology;
- (3) one year of science;
- (4) 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
- (5) One year chosen from (A) music, (B) art, (C) foreign language, which shall be deemed to include American Sign Language or (D) vocational education.

(b) As a prerequisite to receiving a high school diploma, each pupil entering the 9th grade in the 2005-2006 school year must, in addition to other course requirements, successfully complete all of the following courses: (1) Three years of language arts. (2) Three years of mathematics. (3) One year of science. (4) 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. (5) One year chosen from (A) music, (B) art, (C) foreign language, which shall be deemed to include American Sign Language, or (D) vocational education.

(c) As a prerequisite to receiving a high school diploma, each pupil entering the 9th grade in the 2006-2007 school year must, in addition to other course requirements, successfully complete all of the following courses: (1) Three 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. (4) One year 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. (6) One year chosen from (A) music, (B) art, (C) foreign language, which shall be deemed to include American Sign Language, or (D) vocational education.

(d) As a prerequisite to receiving a high school diploma, each pupil entering the 9th grade in the 2007-2008 school year must, in addition to other course requirements, successfully complete all of the following courses: (1) Three 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. (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. (6) One year chosen from (A) music, (B) art, (C) foreign language, which shall be deemed to include American Sign Language, or (D) vocational education.

(e) As a prerequisite to receiving a high school diploma, each pupil entering the 9th grade in the 2008-2009 school year or a subsequent school year 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.
- (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 the purposes of offering civics education.
- (6) One year chosen from (A) music, (B) art, (C) foreign language, which shall be deemed to include American Sign Language, or (D) vocational education.

(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) This amendatory Act of 1983 does not apply to pupils entering the 9th grade in 1983-1984 school year and prior school years or to students with disabilities whose course of study is determined by an individualized education program. This amendatory Act of the 94th General Assembly does not apply to pupils entering the 9th grade in the 2004-2005 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 27-22.05.

(Source: P.A. 94-676, eff. 8-24-05; P.A. 98-885, eff. 8-15-14; 99-434, eff. 7-1-16 (see P.A. 99-485 for the effective date of changes made by P.A. 99-434); 99-485, eff. 11-20-15.)

105 ILCS 5/27-22.05

Sec. 27-22.05. Required course substitute. Notwithstanding any other provision of this Article or this Code, a school board that maintains any of grades 9 through 12 is authorized to adopt a policy under which a student who is enrolled in any of those grades may satisfy one or more high school course or graduation requirements, including but not limited to any requirements under Section 27-6 and 27-22 by substituting for and successfully completing in place of the high school course or graduation requirement a related vocational or technical education course. A vocational or technical education course shall not qualify as a related vocational or technical education course within the meaning of this Section unless it contains at least 50 percent of the content of the required course or graduation requirement for which it is substituted, as determined by the State Board of Education in accordance with standards that it shall adopt and uniformly apply for purposes of this Section. No vocational or technical education course may be substituted for a required course or graduation requirement under any policy adopted by a school board as authorized in this Section unless the pupil's parent or guardian first requests the substitution and approves it in writing on forms that the school district makes available for purposes of this Section.

(Source: P.A. 88-269)

105 ILCS 5/27-22.10

Sec. 27-22.10. Course credit for high school diploma. (a) Notwithstanding any other provision of this Code, the school board of a school district that maintains any of grades 9 through 12 is authorized to adopt a policy under which a student enrolled in grade 7 or 8 who is enrolled in the unit school district or would be enrolled in the high school district upon completion of elementary school, whichever is applicable, may enroll in a course required under Section 27-22 of this Code, provided that the course is offered by the high school that the student would attend, and (i) the student participates in the course at the location of the high school, and the elementary student's enrollment in the course would not prevent a high school student from being able to enroll, or (ii) the student participates in the course where the student attends school as long as the course is taught by a teacher who holds a professional educator license under Article 21B of this Code and endorsed for the grade level and content area of the course.

(b) A school board that adopts a policy pursuant to subsection (a) of this Section must grant academic credit to an elementary school student who successfully completes the high school course, and that credit shall satisfy the requirements of Section 27-22 of this Code for that course.

(c) A school board must award high school course credit to a student transferring to its school district for any course that the student successfully completed pursuant to subsection (a) of this Section, unless evidence about the course's rigor and content shows that it does not address the relevant Illinois Learning Standard at the level appropriate for the high school grade during which the course is usually taken, and that credit shall satisfy the requirements of Section 27-22 of this Code for that course.

(d) A student's grade in any course successfully completed under this Section must be included in his or her grade point average in accordance with the school board's policy for making that calculation.

(Source: P.A. 95-299, eff. 8-20-07; 96-412, eff. 8-13-09; P.A. 99-189, eff. 7-30-15.)

Section 1.440 Additional Criteria for High Schools

The School Code establishes differing requirements for the coursework that high schools must offer, the courses students must take, and the courses students must pass in order to graduate.

- a) Course Offerings. Each district shall provide a comprehensive curriculum that includes at least the following offerings. The time allotment, unless specified by the School Code or applicable rules, is the option of the local school district.
 - 1) Language Arts
 - 2) Science
 - 3) Mathematics
 - 4) History of the United States
 - 5) Foreign Language
 - 6) Music
 - 7) Art
 - 8) Career and Technical Education – Orientation and Preparation
 - 9) Health Education (see the Critical Health Problems and Comprehensive Health Education Act)
 - 10) Physical Education (see Section 27-6 of the School Code)
 - 11) Consumer Education (see Section 27-12.1 of the School Code)
 - 12) Conservation of Natural Resources (see Section 27-13.1 of the School Code)
 - 13) Driver and Safety Education (see the Driver Education Act [105 ILCS 5/27-24 through 27-24.10] and 23 Ill. Adm. Code 252)

- b) Required Participation
 - 1) Each student shall be required to take one semester or the equivalent, i.e., at least 18 weeks, of health education during the secondary school experience.
 - 2) Each student shall be required to take physical education daily, except as provided in Section 27-6 of the School Code and Section 1.445 of this Part.
 - 3) Each student shall be required to take consumer education for 50 minutes per day for a period of nine weeks in any of grades 9-12.

- 4) Each student shall be required to take a course covering *American patriotism and the principles of representative government, as enunciated in the American Declaration of Independence, the Constitution of the United States of America and the Constitution of the State of Illinois, and the proper use and display of the American flag for not less than one hour per week, or the equivalent.* (Sections 27-3 and 27-4 of the School Code)
- c) Specific Requirements for Graduation. A "unit" is the credit accrued for a year's study or its equivalent. A student may be permitted to retake a course that he or she has already successfully completed (for example, to earn a better grade). However, credit may not be awarded more than once for completion of the same course, and the same course may not be counted more than once toward fulfillment of the State requirements for graduation.
- 1) Each student shall be required to have accrued at least 16 units in grades 9-12 if graduating from a four-year school or 12 units in grades 10-12 if graduating from a three-year high school. In either case, one unit shall be in American History or American History and Government. (Section 27-22 of the School Code) *No student shall receive certification of graduation without passing an examination on the subjects discussed in subsection (b)(4).*
 - 2) Pursuant to Section 27-22 of the School Code, all students, except students with disabilities whose course of study is determined by an individualized education program, must successfully complete certain courses, depending upon the school year in which they enter grade 9 and subject to the exceptions provided in Section 1.445 of this Part, as a prerequisite to receiving a high school diploma.
 - 3) Credits earned by students prior to entry into grade 9 as authorized by Section 27-22.10 of the School Code [105 ILCS 5/27-22.10] may be used to fulfill any of the requirements of subsection (c)(2) of this Section.
- d) School districts shall have on file in the local district office a description of all course offerings that may comply with the requirements of the law. A course will be accepted as meeting the relevant requirement for graduation if its description shows that its principal instructional activity is the development and application of knowledge and skills related to the applicable requirement.
- 1) "Writing-Intensive" Courses

The course description for a "writing-intensive" course will be accepted for purposes of Section 27-22 of the School Code if:

 - A) a goal of the course is to use the writing that students do relative to the subject matter being presented as a vehicle for improving their writing skills;
 - B) writing assignments will be an integral part of the course's content across the time span covered by the course;
 - C) the written products students are required to prepare in order to receive credit for the course and the feedback students receive are such that:

- i) students' writing proficiency is evaluated against expectations that are appropriate to early or late high school and encompass all of the writing standards for those grades enumerated in the Illinois Learning Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies, Sciences, and Technical Subjects (see Appendix D); and
 - ii) students receive information from the evaluation of their written products that will permit them to improve their writing skills in terms of correct usage; well-organized composition; communication of ideas for a variety of purposes; and locating, organizing, evaluating and using information;
 - D) The writing-intensive study provided in at least one writing-intensive course is designed to address and integrate the elements of the writing process and to refine or apply research skills.
- 2) Foreign Language Courses

The description for any foreign language course shall indicate whether the school district will award a State Seal of Biliteracy in accordance with the requirements of Section 1.442 of this Part and Section 2-3.159 of the School Code [105 ILCS 5/2-3.159] and state the qualifications for receipt of the seal.
- 3) Advanced Placement Computer Science Course

The description for an Advanced Placement Computer Science course shall indicate that the course is *equivalent to a high school mathematics course* and *qualifies as a mathematics-based, quantitative course* for purposes of the fulfillment of State graduation requirements in mathematics. (Section 27-22(f-5) of the School Code)
- e) It is the responsibility of the school district's administration to provide parents and guardians timely and periodic information concerning graduation requirements for all students, particularly in cases where a student's eligibility for graduation may be in question.
- f) Additional requirements for graduation may be adopted by local boards of education.

(Source: Amended at 39 Ill. Reg. 13411, effective September 24, 2015)

Appendix D

Other Instructional Requirements for High School

Article 27 of the School Code (105 ILCS 5/Art. 27) and rules governing Public Schools Evaluation, Recognition and Supervision (23 Ill. Adm. Code 1) outline curricular requirements for public school students. These requirements are summarized below around four general parameters:

1. units of instruction or courses that **school districts must offer** but students are not required to take;
2. units of instruction or courses that **students are required to take** but are not state-imposed requirements for graduation;
3. coursework that students **must have in order to receive a high school diploma**; and
4. **optional units of instruction** that if offered must meet certain requirements.

These requirements that apply to high schools are presented under the appropriate heading in alphabetical order by topic. This listing is being provided as a resource for school districts to use in planning curriculum.

1. Units of Instruction/Courses that Must be Offered

- **Abduction** (Section 27-13.2). All public schools must include instruction, study and discussion of effective methods by which pupils may recognize the danger of and avoid abduction.
- **Anabolic Steroids** (Section 27-23.3). School districts shall provide instruction in the prevention of abuse of anabolic steroids in science, health, drug abuse, physical education or other appropriate courses of instruction in grades 7 through 12 and to students who participate in interscholastic athletic programs; particular topics listed.
- **Art** (Section 27-1 and 23 Ill. Adm. Code 1.440(a)(7)). The time allotment is up to the school district to determine.
- **Black History Study** (Section 27-20.4). All public schools must include in their curricula a unit of instruction studying the events of Black history; particular topics are listed, to include the history of the African slave trade, slavery in America and the vestiges of slavery in the United States.
- **Career Education and Technical Education – Orientation and Preparation** (23 Ill. Adm. Code 1.440(a)(8)). The time allotment is up to the school district to determine.
- **Conservation Education** (Section 27-13.1). All public schools must provide instruction, study and discussion of current problems and needs in the conservation of natural resources.
- **Disability History and Awareness** (Section 27-23.8). Each school district shall provide instruction about disability history, people with disabilities and the disability rights movement, to be presented in any course that the district chooses and for a minimum amount of time as determined by the district.
- **Driver's and Safety Education** (Sections 27-24 through 27-24.8, and 23 Ill. Adm. Code 1.440(a)(13) and 252). All school districts with grades 9 through 12 shall provide the approved driver's education course that includes both classroom and behind-the-wheel components. In addition, the course must include classroom instruction on distracted driving as a major traffic safety issue.
- **Foreign Language** (23 Ill. Adm. Code 1.440(a)(5)). The time allotment is up to the school district to determine.

- **History of Women** (Section 27-20.5). All public schools must include in their curricula a unit of instruction studying the events in the history of women; particular topics are listed.
- **History of the United States** (Section 27-21). All public schools must teach the history of the United States; particular topics are specified, to include the study of the events related to the forceful removal and illegal deportation of Mexican-Americans during the Great Depression.
- **Holocaust and Genocide Study** (Section 27-20.3). All public schools must provide a unit of instruction studying the events of the Nazi atrocities from 1933 to 1945 and include lessons studying other acts of genocide to include those in Armenia, Ukraine, Cambodia, Bosnia, Rwanda and the Sudan.
- **Internet Safety** (Section 27-13.3). Each public school must incorporate into the school curriculum instruction about Internet safety, which must be taught at least once each school year to students in grade 3 or above; the scope and the duration of the course is determined locally.
- **Music** (Section 27-1 and 23 Ill. Adm. Code 1.440(a)(6)). The time allotment is up to the school district to determine.
- **Violence Prevention and Conflict Resolution Education** (Section 27-23.4). School districts shall provide instruction in violence prevention and conflict resolution education for kindergarten through grade 12 and may include such instruction in courses of study regularly taught.

2. Units of Instruction/Courses Students Must Take *(other than courses required for graduation)*

- **American Patriotism, Principles of Representative Government, and Proper Use and Display of the Flag** (Section 27-3 and 27-4). Public schools must devote not less than one hour of each school week to the study of these subjects. All students must pass an examination of this content in order to receive a “certificate of graduation.”
- **Congressional Medal of Honor film** (Section 27-3.5). Each student in grade 7 and all high school students enrolled in a course concerning the history of the United States or a combination of U.S. history and American government must view a Congressional Medal of Honor film made by the Congressional Medal of Honor Foundation, provided that there is no fee charged to the school district for the film.
- **Consumer Education** (Section 27-12.1). All students must study certain topics that comprise consumer education. State Board of Education rules at 23 Ill. Adm. Code 1.440(b)(3) require that the course be equivalent to nine weeks, 50 minutes a day, of instruction.
- **Health Education** (105 ILCS 110 and Section 27-5). All students must take the health education curriculum required under the Critical Health Problems and Comprehensive Health Education Act (105 ILCS 110), as further defined under 23 Ill. Adm. Code 1.420(n). Section 27-5 of the School Code allows that curriculum to be offered as part of physical education in grades 5 through 10. Agency rules at 23 Ill. Adm. Code 1.440(b)(1) require that students take the equivalent of one semester of health education (18 weeks) during high school.
- **Physical Education** (Section 27-6). All students must participate in physical education courses on a daily basis; certain exemptions are provided in the law. Agency rules at 23 Ill. Adm. Code 1.420(p)(1) require that the time allotted to physical education “compare favorably with other courses in the curriculum.”

3. Coursework Required for Receipt of a High School Diploma

These requirements are outlined in a narrative format under Question 1 and presented as a chart in Appendix A.

4. Optional Units of Instruction School Districts May Offer

- **Family Life** (Section 27-9.2). School districts may offer a family life course, but if they do, then they must meet the requirements of the law.
- **Gang Resistance Education and Training** (Section 27-23.10). School district may "make suitable provisions" for instruction in all grades pertaining to resisting gangs and include the instruction in courses regularly taught; particular topics listed.
- **Irish Famine Study** (Section 27-20.6). School districts may include a unit of instruction studying the causes and effects of mass starvation in the mid-19th century Ireland.
- **Organ/Tissue and Blood Donor and Transplantation Programs** (Section 27-23.5). School districts may provide one unit of such instruction either in grade 9 or 10.
- **Parenting Education** (Section 27-23.1). School districts may provide instruction in parenting education and include such instruction in courses of study regularly taught; particular topics listed.
- **Recognizing and Avoiding Sexual Abuse** (Section 27-13.2). School districts may offer a course or class for students in kindergarten through grade 8, provided notice is provided to parents and there is no punishment (failing grades, suspension, expulsion, etc.) for a student whose parents object to the child's participation.
- **Safety Education** (Section 27-17). School boards may offer this instruction, which is defined in the law and includes cardio-pulmonary resuscitation for students in grades 9 through 11 and for students in grades 6 through 8, viewing a training video on cardio-pulmonary resuscitation and use of automated external defibrillators.
- **Sex Education** (Section 27-9.1). School districts may offer comprehensive sex education, but if they do, then they must meet the requirements of the law.
- **Volunteer Service Credit Program** (Section 27-22.3). School districts may establish a program that enables secondary students to earn credit towards graduation through performance of community services.

Special Recognition Days

Additionally, Article 27 designates certain "special recognition days" for the following purposes:

- Section 27-18, **Arbor and Bird Day**, last Friday in April, "to be observed" as a day for planting and conducting appropriate exercises to show the value of trees and birds.
- Section 27-19, **Leif Erickson Day**, October 9 or the school date nearest to that day, on which a half hour "may" be devoted to the study of Leif Erickson.
- Section 27-20, **American Indian Day**, fourth Friday in September, "to be observed" in order to hold appropriate exercises in commemoration of the American Indians.
- Section 27-20.1, **Illinois Law Week**, first full school week in May, which school districts "may" devote appropriate time to the study of government and the legal system in Illinois.
- Section 27-20.2, **"Just Say No" Day**, to be designated by official proclamation of the Governor, to be observed by children and teenagers as the day to "declare and reaffirm their commitment to living a life free of drugs and alcohol abuse."

