

Senate Education Committee

HB 166 Joint Testimony Biennial Operating Budget 2020-2021 Graduation Requirements

Wednesday, May 22, 2019

Chair Lehner, Vice Chair Terhar, Ranking Member Fedor, and Members of the Senate Education Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide joint testimony on House Bill 166. My name is Lisa Gray, and I am the President of Ohio Excels. I am pleased to be joined today by Tony Podojil, the Executive Director of the Alliance for High Quality Education and Chad Aldis, Vice President for Ohio Policy and Advocacy for the Thomas B. Fordham Institute. The three of us are happy to share our joint graduation requirement proposal. For your reference, a summary of the proposal is attached.

The Alliance and Ohio Excels originally developed independent proposals for graduation requirements. The Alliance developed its proposal in collaboration with and through consultation with its members over the last year. It emphasized competency in math and English language arts, alternative ways to demonstrate competency, reductions in student testing and diploma seals to allow students to show they are well-rounded and ready for college or a career.

Ohio Excels worked with its board of business leaders to develop a proposal that provided multiple options for students to demonstrate they are ready for graduation. It emphasized early identification and supports for students, robust ways for students to demonstrate career experience and technical expertise, minimal proficiency in math and English language arts, and non-test options that are externally verified and consistent throughout the state.

The two plans shared many of the underlying principles and options for students. Seeing this, the Alliance and Ohio Excels, along with the Fordham Institute, took the best parts of each plan to create an even stronger joint proposal that we're presenting today. This plan has the support of our three groups, which includes educators in 74 school districts and the major statewide business groups like the Ohio Chamber of Commerce, The Ohio Farm Bureau, The Ohio Council of Retail Merchants, the NFIB, the Ohio Business Roundtable and Ohio Manufacturers' Association. In addition to our groups, the Ohio Association for Gifted Children and the Buckeye Institute have expressed support for this joint proposal.

Our proposal calls for high school students to earn a high school diploma by (1) completing their required coursework, (2) demonstrating competency in mathematics and English language arts, and (3) preparing for college or career.

Course Completion + Competency + Preparation for College or Career = High School Diploma

1. Course Completion

The proposal keeps intact Ohio's current law requiring students to take and pass a minimum of 20 credit hours.

2. Competency

In addition to course completion, students must demonstrate competency in math and English language arts by scoring “competent” or higher on the Algebra I and ELA II end-of-course exams.

In the event a student does not score “competent” or higher on the Algebra I and/or ELA II end-of-course exam(s), the student must be offered locally-determined remedial support and must retake the respective end-of-course exam at least once. If a student fails to score “competent” or higher after the retake, the student may demonstrate competency through one of the following options:

- i. *College Credit Plus*: Earn credit for one math and/or one English course through College Credit Plus, depending on which state tests the student has not reached a competent level.
- ii. *Career Experience & Technical Skill*: Complete two demonstrations, at least one of which must be foundational:
 1. Foundational: Proficient on four WebXams, approved industry credential (12 points), pre-apprenticeship or acceptance into an apprenticeship program
 2. Supporting: Workplace experience with positive evaluations, WorkKeys or the OhioMeansJobs Readiness Seal
- iii. *Military Readiness*: Meet the requirements to enlist in the military, including AFQT requirements, as demonstrated by a contract with the military to enlist upon graduation.

3. Preparation for College or Career

The final component of the proposal provides students the opportunity to show what they know and are able to do and to shift the high school experience away from the one-size-fits-all checklist of courses and overall reliance on state tests.

Students must earn **two** “diploma seals” from a menu of approved seals. At least one of the seals must be state defined. The menu of diploma seals is as follows:

State Defined:

- OhioMeansJobs Readiness Seal
- Industry-Recognized Credential Seal
- College-Ready Seal
- Military Enlistment Seal
- Citizenship Seal
- Science Seal
- Honors Diploma Seal
- Seal of Biliteracy
- Technology Seal

Locally Defined:

- Certified Community Service Seal
- Certified Fine and Performing Arts Seal
- Certified Student Engagement Seal

The joint proposal recommends the state only use Algebra I and English language arts II for the purposes of graduation. The Alliance feels strongly that the legislature should also reduce the number of end-of-course exams students take for other federal and state purposes, such as the report card. Consequently, the joint proposal also recommends that the General Assembly reduce the number of state-required end-of-course exams from seven to five by eliminating the end-of-course exams in English language arts I and Geometry.

Identification & Supports

One unique part of this proposal is its emphasis on identifying students who need extra help and giving them support. This plan recommends the state require districts develop a policy to:

- Identify students at risk of not graduating on time no later than the ninth grade through an early warning system and require notification to families that connects current performance to graduation; and
- Provide additional supports or educational options, like project-based learning or career-technical programming, to help identified students get on track in accordance with their graduation plan.

Additionally, the proposal calls for a workgroup to develop recommendations for what thirteenth year might look like for students. A thirteenth year could be a new option for students who are not prepared to graduate at the end of twelfth grade that allows them to continue learning in a way that reduces the stigma of not graduating on time. This could include continuing high school coursework in a co-requisite course at a local community college or an Ohio technical center, for example.

Timing

We propose that this plan apply to all students beginning with the Class of 2023, this year's eighth graders. For the Classes of 2021 and 2022, this plan should be an option that students can choose to pursue. However, students in those classes may choose to stick with one of the three pathways in permanent law when they entered high school.

Conclusion

I know I speak for all of the partners when I say thank you for the opportunity to present this proposal today. We believe that this plan will give students the supports they need, offer testing relief and non-test-based avenues to earn a diploma, and ensure students receiving a diploma are better prepared to succeed in life after high school. We would be happy to answer any questions you may have at this time.

Graduation Requirements Proposal

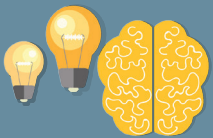
High School Diploma =



Course Completion +



Competency +



Preparation for College or Career



Course Completion

Students earn the minimum high school course credits set by the state and district.

Competency

Students must earn a competent score on the state's Algebra I and English II tests.

Students *not scoring competent* on a test must receive remedial supports and retake the exams at least once. If a student still does not score competent, they may use an alternate demonstration:

1. *College Credit Plus*: Earn credit for one math and one English course through College Credit Plus.
2. *Career Experience & Technical Skill*: Complete two demonstrations, at least one of which must be foundational:
 - i. Foundational: Proficient on four WebXams, approved industry credential (12 points), pre-apprenticeship or acceptance into an apprenticeship program
 - ii. Supporting: Workplace experience, WorkKeys or the OhioMeansJobs Readiness Seal
3. *Military Readiness*: Meet the requirements to enlist in the military, including AFQT requirements, as demonstrated by a contract with the military to enlist upon graduation.

Preparation for College or Career

Students must earn two diploma seals, one of which must be state defined:

1. *OhioMeansJobs Readiness Seal (State)* - Demonstrate professional skills.
2. *Industry-Recognized Credential Seal (State)* - Earn 12 points worth of approved credentials.
3. *College-Ready Seal (State)* - Score remediation-free on the ACT or SAT in math and English.
4. *Military Enlistment Seal (State)* - Participate in JROTC and/or enroll in the military.
5. *Citizenship Seal (State)* - Score proficient on the American History and American Government tests.
6. *Science Seal (State)* - Score proficient on the Biology test.
7. *Honors Diploma Seal (State)* - Meet the requirements set by the State Board of Education.
8. *Seal of Biliteracy (State)* - Demonstrate levels of proficiency in at least one other language.
9. *Community Service Seal (Local)* - Complete community service using locally-developed guidelines.
10. *Fine and Performing Arts Seal (Local)* - Demonstrate skills using locally-developed guidelines.
11. *Certified Student Engagement Seal (Local)* - Participate in meaningful activities such as athletics, clubs and student government as defined by locally-developed guidelines.

Graduation Requirements Proposal



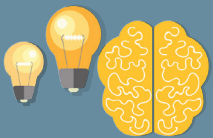
High School Diploma =



Course Completion +



Competency +



Preparation for College or Career



Identification & Supports

- **Identify & Notify:** Identify students at risk of not graduating on time no later than the ninth grade through an early warning system and require notification to families that connects current performance to graduation.
- **New Supports:** Provide additional supports or educational options, like project-based learning or career-technical programming, to help identified students get on track. Provide educators supports for implementation.
- **A New 13th Year:** Develop options for students who are not prepared to graduate at the end of 12th grade that allow them to continue learning during a 13th year and that reduce the stigma of not graduating on time.

Testing Changes

- Reduce the number of high school tests from seven to five by *eliminating the English I and Geometry* tests.
- Restrict the testing that students must use for graduation requirement purposes to *only Algebra I and English II*.
- Require the Governor's Executive Workforce Board, in consultation with higher education, K-12 and career tech to identify the essential knowledge and skills required for students to be successful after high school and *identify a new score - competent -* for the Algebra I and English II tests that align with the essential skills and knowledge no later than March 2020.

Transition Timeline

- **Classes of 2021 and 2022:** Complete one of the original three options or this new proposal, as available.
- **Classes of 2023 and Beyond:** Meet the requirements of this new proposal.