

Legislative Analysis



MICHIGAN MERIT CURRICULUM: ELIMINATE FOREIGN LANGUAGE

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House Bill 5534

Sponsor: Rep. Phil Potvin

Committee: Education

Complete to 6-5-12

A SUMMARY OF HOUSE BILL 5534 AS INTRODUCED 4-17-12

House Bill 5534 would amend the Revised School Code (MCL 380.1278a & 380.1278b) to eliminate the foreign language requirement under the Michigan high school Merit Curriculum, and also modify the mathematics requirement. A more detailed description of the bill follows.

Now under the law, a student entering Grade 3 in 2006 (that is, students who will enter Grade 9 in 2012) must successfully complete at least two credits in a language other than English in order to be awarded a high school diploma. The student may complete this requirement at any time during Grades K to 12, and the requirement can be met with online classes. Further, American Sign Language is considered to be a language other than English. House Bill 5534 would eliminate this requirement in its entirety.

Further, the law now specifies that a student may partially or fully fulfill the algebra II mathematics requirement by completing a Michigan Department of Education-approved formal career and technical education curriculum that has appropriate embedded mathematics content, such as a program or curriculum in electronics, machining, construction, welding, engineering, or renewable energy. House Bill 5534 would retain this provision, and extend it to include embedded mathematics content such as computer science, or other appropriate concentration, as determined by the department.

The bill also would require the department to post on its website, and submit to the Senate and House standing committees on education, guidelines for implementation of this amendment, no later than 30 days after the effective date of this bill, if it is enacted into law.

Finally, the law now allows a student to design a personal curriculum, under certain circumstances. For example, the law says the social science credit requirements, the health and physical education requirements, and the arts requirements of the Merit Curriculum may be modified as part of a personal curriculum if a student has successfully completed certain of those credits, and if the student, having earned one of the two required foreign language credits, has yet to complete one *additional* credit in a foreign language. House Bill 5534 would eliminate the word "additional."

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Now under the law, a Michigan high school student must successfully complete the Michigan Merit Curriculum to earn a diploma. The required curriculum includes:

- ❖ 4 credits of English language arts
- ❖ 4 credits of mathematics (including algebra, geometry, algebra II, and a math class in the final high school year)
- ❖ 3 credits in social science (including US history and geography, world history and geography, and civics)
- ❖ 3 credits in science (including biology and either chemistry or physics)
- ❖ 1 credit in visual, performing, or applied arts
- ❖ 1 credit in health and physical education
- ❖ an online learning experience
- ❖ 2 credits of foreign language (taken at some time over the K-12 experience).

The Michigan Merit Curriculum can be modified in a *personal curriculum plan*, allowing a student to design an individual learning plan. In doing so, a student may substitute an array of arithmetic and mathematics courses for those required (for example, statistics or functions, data analysis, trigonometry, pre-calculus, calculus, applied math, accounting, business math, a retake of algebra II, a course in financial literacy); and, a student may enroll in a formal career and technical education program (such as electronics, machining, construction, welding, engineering, or renewable energy), among other things.

FISCAL IMPACT:

The bill would impose some additional costs and responsibilities on the Department of Education relative to the implementation of the revised high school graduation requirements (informing districts and the public of the revised requirements) and developing guidelines for use by districts. The bill would also impact local course offerings as students are provided additional options in meeting the high school graduation requirements, potentially impacting local staffing and classroom needs.

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