

Legislative Analysis



21ST CENTURY SKILLS ADDED TO GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

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**House Bill 4315 (reported from committee w/o amendment)
Sponsor: Rep. Beth Griffin**

Analysis available at
<http://www.legislature.mi.gov>

**House Bill 4316 (reported from committee as H-1)
Sponsor: Rep. Curt VanderWall**

**Committee: Workforce and Talent Development
Complete to 3-29-17**

SUMMARY:

House Bills 4315 and 4316 would amend the Michigan Merit Curriculum requirements under the Revised School Code (MCL 380.1278a and 1278d) by reorganizing and expanding certain categories.

Currently, as part of the requirements for a high school diploma, students must complete at least one credit in the visual, performing, or applied arts and at least two credits in a language other than English (described in greater detail in **BACKGROUND**, below).

Instead, HB 4316 would replace those two requirements, comprising three credits, with three credits of "21st century skills," and HB 4315 would state that the 21st century skills requirement could be met by completing any combination of three credits of the following:

- A grade-appropriate language other than English any time between kindergarten and 12th grade, or coursework or other learning experiences that are substantially equivalent to credits in a language other than English, based on Michigan Department of Education (MDE) guidelines;
- Visual, performing, or applied arts, as defined by the MDE;
- Computer science or computer coding, or a combination of the two; or
- An MDE-approved formal career and technical education program.

Now and under the bills, American Sign Language counts as a language other than English; the foreign language requirement may be satisfied with online coursework; and a district or public school academy (PSA) is strongly encouraged to offer visual arts and performing arts courses.

The bill would take effect 90 days after it is enacted into law.

FISCAL IMPACT:

The bills would have no fiscal impact for the state or for school districts, public school academies (PSAs), or intermediate school districts (ISDs).

BACKGROUND:

Michigan high school students must complete the Merit Standard Curriculum, or an alternative Personal Curriculum (developed by faculty with the student, parents, and the school superintendent) in order to earn a high school diploma. The Merit Curriculum entails the following course of study:

- 4 credits in English language arts.
- 3 credits in science, including at least biology and either chemistry, physics, anatomy, or agricultural science, or a program providing the same content (with a fourth science credit strongly encouraged). A student may fulfill the requirement for the third science credit by completing a department-approved computer science program or curriculum or formal career and technical education program or curriculum.
- 4 credits in mathematics, including at least algebra I, geometry, and algebra II, (or an integrated 3-credit sequence of this content) plus an additional math credit in trigonometry, statistics, pre-calculus, calculus, applied math, accounting, business math, a retake of algebra II, or a course in financial literacy. A student may also fulfill the algebra II requirements by completing a MDE-approved formal career and technical education program or curriculum that has appropriately embedded mathematics content as described in the law. In addition, a student can complete algebra II over a 2-year period; and each student must take a math course during the final year of high school enrollment.
- 3 credits in social science, including at least 1 credit in United States history and geography, 1 credit in world history and geography, one-half credit in economics, and a civics course.
- 1 credit in health and physical education.
- 1 credit in visual, performing, or applied arts.
- 2 credits that are grade-appropriate in a language other than English between kindergarten and 12th grade, beginning with the class of 2016. For students graduating high school in 2016 to 2021 only, one credit of that requirement may be met in whole or in part by completing a department-approved formal technical education program or curriculum, or by completing visual or performing arts instruction that is in addition to the one credit of visual arts, performing arts, or applied arts that is also required to receive a high school diploma.

ARGUMENTS:

For:

Those in favor of the bills argued that they would provide flexibility to students to determine their own areas of interest and the skills needed for their future educational or career goals. The Michigan Merit curriculum is intended to be rigorous, but with 18 credits prescribed as to subject matter, students are left with little freedom to explore different areas of study or take CTE courses.

Additionally, because CTE courses may be offered a half-hour away from the school, students are best served when they are able to fulfill multiple requirements at a time—taking back to back courses at the location, rather than spending much of their school day on the road.

Against:

Opponents advanced some of the following arguments for retaining a stand-alone credit in world languages:

- World languages courses represent one of the main ways in which students are exposed to different cultures, by studying the countries where the language is spoken. They lead to a more informed multicultural and multilingual citizenry.
- Students benefit from exposure to a language other than their own—even a single credit can teach them vocabulary and basic language skills that can help them in business or when travelling later in life.
- Knowledge of another language can help in understanding the origins of various English words.

POSITIONS:

Representative of the following organizations testified in support of the bills.

- MAG Insulation (3-21-17)
- Van Buren ISD (3-21-17)
- Grand Rapids Area Chamber of Commerce (3-21-17)
- Creative Many Michigan (3-21-17)
- ABC of Michigan (3-21-17)
- Michigan Manufacturers Association (3-21-17)
- Michigan Apprenticeship Steering Committee (3-28-17)
- Bricklayers and Allied Craftworkers (3-28-17)
- Owosso Public Schools (3-28-17)

The following organizations support the bills:

- Oakland Schools (3-21-17)
- Michigan Chamber of Commerce (3-21-17)
- ESA Legislative Group (3-21-17)
- West Michigan Talent Triangle (3-21-17)
- Wayne RESA (3-21-17)
- Home Builders Association of Michigan (3-21-17)
- Open Systems Technologies (3-28-17)

Michigan Association of Secondary School Principals is neutral on the bills. (3-28-17)

A representative of the Michigan Council of Teachers of Mathematics testified in opposition to the bills. (3-28-17)

The following organizations oppose the bills:

- Wharton Center for Performing Arts (3-28-17)
- Education Trust Midwest (3-28-17)

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