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LEGISLATIVE EDUCATION STUDY COMMITTEE
BILL ANALYSIS
55th Legislature, 1st Session, 2021

Bill Number	<u>HB83/aHSEIC</u>	Sponsor	<u>Romero, GA</u>
Tracking Number	<u>.218750.2</u>	Committee Referrals	<u>HEC/HSEIC</u>
Short Title	<u>Change Graduation Requirements</u>		
Analyst	<u>Hathaway</u>	Original Date	<u>1/28/2021</u>
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BILL SUMMARY

Synopsis of HSEIC Amendment

The House State Government, Elections and Indian Affairs Committee (HSEIC) amendments to House Bill 83 (HB83/aHSEIC) adjust credits required to graduate. In this amendment:

- English credits are adjusted so that one of the four required English units must be English 9 and one of the four required English units must be English 10;
- Mathematics credits are restored to four units required to graduate and one of the four required units must be Algebra 1;
- Financial literacy is added as an option for one-half of a social science unit. Students may take one-half unit of economics *or* financial literacy to meet social science requirements with this amendment;
- Fine arts are added to a list of allowed courses that must be taken; and
- Elective credits are reduced from seven and one-half units to six and one-half units.

Synopsis of Bill

House Bill 83 (HB83) amends Section 22-13-1.1 NMSA 1978 to create new high school graduation requirements for students entering ninth grade beginning in the 2022-2023 school year and subsequent school years. New requirements would reduce the number of credits needed to graduate from 24 to 23; would eliminate the requirement that all students earn one credit of Algebra II; and would alter social studies requirements, eliminating the requirement of one half credit of New Mexico history.

Further, the bill would allow students to substitute a variety of courses for core courses, eliminate the requirement students take a dual-credit, Advanced Placement (AP), or distance-learning course to graduate, and establish that a capstone courses may substitute for core courses and electives, depending on student grade level.

For a comparison of the proposed 23 credits compared to current statute, as provided in the Public Education Department (PED) analysis of HB83/aHSEIC, see **Attachment A (pages 6-8)**.

FISCAL IMPACT

HB83/aHSEIC does not include an appropriation.

The analysis of HB83 by the Council of University Presidents (CUP) notes the fiscal implications of HB83/aHSEIC are unknown. CUP states the reduction of total unit requirements could result in more students being eligible to graduate and attend a postsecondary school, but it could also adversely affect college readiness – particularly a reduction in math requirements – and result in an increased need for remediation, which could create additional costs for institutions and students.

The PED analysis of HB83 does not note fiscal impacts to the department. Agency analysis from the Higher Education Department (HED) had not been received at the time of bill analysis.

SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES

New Mexico last changed graduation requirements for students entering ninth grade in the 2009-2010 school year. There has not been a comprehensive study of graduation requirements or high school redesign principles best suited to prepare students to complete high school for college and career readiness since that time.

New Mexico Graduation and Dropout Rates. While a high school diploma on its own can improve job opportunities and earning potential, it is also a prerequisite for a wide range of postsecondary education. New Mexico has gradually improved its graduation rate since FY10, but still lags behind national averages. In the 2019 school year, 74.9 percent of high school students graduated, up from 73.9 percent in 2018. The national four-year graduation rate is 85.3 percent, meaning New Mexico students lag nearly 10 percentage points behind peers nationally. The dropout rate for high school students in 2019 was 11.5 percent, marking the lowest percentage of high school dropouts in over a decade.

As the effect of the Covid-19 pandemic on graduation rates continues to be studied, it will be important to understand if the public health crisis impacted the number of students graduating and dropping out in 2020. Data for this cohort will be available in late 2021.

Research on High School Graduation Requirements. High school graduation requirements can set students up for either success or failure in college or career after high school. Ideally, a high school education should ensure students are prepared for any chosen pathway after completing school: either postsecondary education or career, as well as civic life.

A 2018 [audit and study](#) of nationwide high school graduation requirements by the Center for American Progress (CAP) found most state high school graduation requirements are so poorly designed they often trap students in a “preparation gap,” where they don’t qualify for admission to public universities and are also inadequately prepared for other job and postsecondary prospects. Since New Mexico has open admission to its universities, this may impact New Mexico students less than other geographical areas.

The CAP study notes rigorous expectations for a high school diploma are a critical first step to prepare students for success no matter if a student wishes to pursue admission to a university, further study in a career and technical education (CTE) field, or direct entry into a career or the military. CAP also notes these rigorous expectations must be matched with systems of support –

excellent teachers, effective curricula and instructional materials, guidance in planning for goals after high school, and access to challenging coursework.

New Mexico utilizes “next step plans,” which are statutorily required plans developed by all New Mexico students to identify a student’s postsecondary interests and align their high school education to these goals. There is some guidance provided to students as these are developed with input from parents and a guidance counselor or similar professional. While required by law and administrative rule (See 6.29.1.9 NMAC, Subsection J), it is unknown if these plans have contributed to increased success of New Mexico students. HB83/aHSEIC would not amend existing statute on next step plans, continuing to utilize these plans to guide high school students.

Recent research cited in the CAP study suggests a core 15-credit “college-ready curriculum” can be of high value to students, whether they intend to go to college or not. This includes four years of English; three years in math up to Algebra II; three years of laboratory science, including biology and chemistry or physics; three years of social studies, including U.S. or World History; and two years of the same foreign language study. CAP notes there is evidence that even without a college credential, students taking the 15-credit course sequence have better life outcomes.

Among its recommendations for states, CAP includes:

- Ensuring clear alignment of the requirements for high school graduation with the admission requirements for the state’s public university system,
- Requiring completion of the 15-credit college-ready coursework required by most public university systems to receive a standard high school diploma,
- Offering an additional “career-readiness” diploma for students that choose not to attend a four-year university,
- Publishing disaggregated graduation rates with info on student group and diploma type,
- Ensuring all school districts have the resources and educator workforce to offer the courses and preparation needed for students to meet the requirements for both standard and career-readiness diplomas, especially in math, science, and foreign language,
- Developing and maintain systems to monitor school districts on appropriate methods to collect and analyze graduation requirement completion.

Math Requirements in High School. Of note, HB83/aHSEIC would reduce the number of math credits needed for graduation from four credits to three credits, in which Algebra II is no longer required. The research on the effect of taking math up to Algebra II as it relates to student achievement following high school is mixed. The PED analysis of HB83/aHSEIC cites a [2014 working paper from ACT](#) that found an unintended side effect of increasing high school graduation requirements is that students may complete more watered-down courses to meet the requirement. ACT notes as schools must expand course offerings, there may be “course-credit inflation” where the level of content becomes lessened to accommodate the various skill levels of incoming students.

In contrast, a [2016 report by the Center for Public Education](#) (CPE) assessed the outcomes of high school graduates that don’t go to college and found that for students to graduate college and career ready, high schools must ensure students complete a rigorous curriculum that includes math at least through Algebra II, or its equivalent, and high-level lab sciences. CPE also recommends students have access to modern CTE programs focused on building knowledge and skills in a specific labor market field and that guidance counselors play an essential role in communicating varied options to students. CPE also notes high-level math and science courses, as well as vocational courses, are not just for college goers. CPE writes “life doesn’t always go to plan,” even

for students intending to go on to college, and rigorous curriculum is important to give students options after high school. The recommendations from CPE align with those previously mentioned in the CAP study.

STEM Workforce Preparation. Under the proposed HB83/aHSEIC graduation requirements, high school students could avoid taking math classes that would prepare them for critical college courses like calculus, which students must take in their first or second semester to complete most science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) degrees in four years. In its analysis of HB83/aHSEIC, CUP notes this could impact the state’s economic development goals of building New Mexico’s STEM workforce. In the University of New Mexico’s (UNM) analysis of HB83, it reports that currently only 7.8 percent of students entering UNM are prepared for calculus, down from 11.3 percent in 2015. Further, UNM reports only 2.3 percent of Hispanic women were prepared for calculus in fall 2019, noting this further reinforces the assertion that minority students are disproportionately underprepared in math.

Student Flexibility Under HB83/aHSEIC. HB83/aHSEIC would allow students to have more choice to substitute a variety of core courses with a list of additional courses. This includes courses such as computer science and construction or other applied mathematics for math credits and technical writing or communication skills for required literature courses. This may allow students to design a high school curriculum that best meets their individual career and postsecondary goals, depending on course availability at their high school.

Capstone Courses as Substitutes for Core Courses. HB83/aHSEIC defines a capstone course as “a multifaceted academic and intellectual experience that may take a wide variety of forms and that culminates in a final product or performance and includes a presentation on the final product or performance to a panel convened by the public school to evaluate the quality of the final product or performance.” HB83 allows for capstone courses to be used as a substitute for both core and elective courses, depending on student grade level. Notably, under the provisions of HB83/aHSEIC, students beginning 12th grade in the 2022-2023 school year, or 11th grade in the 2023-2024 school year, may substitute a capstone course for any core course. The capstone course must be guided by a highly qualified teacher and meet academic content and performance standards. Beginning in the 2022-2023 school year, HB83/aHSEIC would allow any student in the ninth through 12th grade to complete a capstone course as an elective, provided that elective capstone courses are guided by a teacher, who may use outside experts or mentors.

Research on high school capstone projects is limited. One [study](#), produced by Hanover Research for a school district in 2013, notes capstone projects are typically implemented to support students’ transition from high school to college and that capstone projects are typically used in a student’s senior year or as part of a graduation requirement.

HB83/aHSEIC does not appear to place any limit on the number of capstone courses that may be used to substitute core courses for 11th- and 12th-grade students. For capstone courses substituted in place of electives – an option available to students across all high school grades – the provisions of HB83/aHSEIC seem to indicate a capstone course may be taken as an elective. It is unclear what criteria would be used to evaluate capstone projects or how students would receive approval to replace a core course or elective with a capstone course. While HB83/aHSEIC does specify capstones must be guided by “highly qualified teachers” and meet “academic content and performance standards,” implementation may still require additional development of protocol and standards for capstone courses. It is also unclear who determines and approves capstone courses for students. This will need to be defined at the school district or school level.

ADMINISTRATIVE IMPLICATIONS

PED's analysis reports the department would need to update administrative code related to graduation requirements and school districts and charter schools may also need to adjust course offerings to meet requirements. PED also notes it is possible student choice may be limited by the availability of certified educators.

Institutions of higher education may need to adjust admissions requirements. The analysis of HB83/aHSEIC from the New Mexico Independent Community College reports modifications to college curriculum to align with new high school graduation requirements would likely be handled by faculty through provisions of their existing contracts, possibly creating a cost for institutions of higher education.

OTHER SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

Reducing the number of required math credits from four to three could result in fewer high school students taking math throughout all four years of high school. PED's analysis of HB83/aHSEIC notes it is unclear what effect this might have on college readiness or student achievement on standardized assessments or college admissions exams.

HB83/aHSEIC also eliminates the requirement for students to take one-half credit of New Mexico history, added in 2005. Further, HB83/aHSEIC eliminates the requirement for students to take at least one credit of an Advanced Placement (AP), dual-credit, or distance learning course. The analysis of HB83/aHSEIC by NMICC notes many community colleges have developed courses specifically to partner with high schools to address the dual credit graduation requirement. NMICC notes it is estimated that families in New Mexico save more than \$10 million each year because, per PED rules, colleges and universities do not charge tuition to students for dual credit. The removal of the dual-credit requirement has raised concerns, particularly among community colleges, several of which stated these concerns in agency analyses of HB83/aHSEIC.

RELATED BILLS

Relates to HB163, School Financial Management Classes, which would allow financial management to count as an elective in sixth through eighth grades and amend graduation requirements to require one-half unit of financial management prior to graduation.

Relates to SB170, which amends Section 22-13-1 NMSA 1978 to require high school students to complete one-half credit of financial literacy to graduate, beginning with ninth graders in school year 2022-2023. SB170 also increases required mathematics credits from four credits to four and one-half credits and reduces electives for high school students beginning ninth grade in the same year, from seven and one-half credits to seven credits.

Relates to HB227 and SB210, duplicate bills, which would amend Section 22-13-1 NMSA 1978 to change high school graduation requirements so students beginning ninth grade in the 2023-2024 school year, and subsequent years, must complete four units in social science with one-half unit in ethnic studies to graduate.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- LESC Files
- Public Education Department (PED)

- Council of University Presidents (CUP)
- New Mexico Independent Community Colleges (NMICC)
- University of New Mexico (UNM)
- Santa Fe Community College (SFCC)
- San Juan College (SJC)

JKH/mb

Attachment A: New Mexico Graduation Requirements: Current Statute Compared to HB83	
Current Statute	HB83 Proposed Graduation Requirements
<p>Four (4) units in English, with major emphasis on grammar, nonfiction writing, and literature</p>	<p>Four (4) units of English, with balanced emphasis on grammar, literature*, and nonfiction writing</p> <p>Any required literature course may be substituted with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • technical writing; • communication skills; • Public Education Department-approved (PED) work-based training or career and technical education (CTE); • advanced placement (AP); • international baccalaureate (IB); or • other English courses that meet credit requirements and state English academic content and performance standards
<p>Four (4) units in mathematics; Algebra 2 requirement; financial literacy eligible for core credit</p>	<p>Three (3) units in mathematics*; no Algebra 2 requirement</p> <p>May be satisfied by mathematics courses that meet credit requirements and state mathematics academic or applied content and performance standards, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • pre-Algebra, Algebra 1, or Algebra 2; • geometry or trigonometry; • probability and statistics; • construction or other applied mathematics; • computer-assisted architecture and design; • scientific technologies; • computer science; • computer science principles; • data analysis; • mathematical modeling; • fractal mathematics; • any AP or IB mathematics course; and • PED-approved work-based training or CTE
<p>Three (3) units in science, two of which shall have a laboratory component</p>	<p>Three (3) units in science*, two of which shall have a laboratory component</p> <p>May choose any three science courses that meet credit requirements and state science academic content and performance standards, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • biology; • agriculture; • astronomy; • geology; • chemistry; • botany; • computer science;

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • environmental science; • environmental engineering; • physics; • culinary arts; • wildlife management; • any AP or IB science course; and • PED-approved work-based training or CTE
<p>Three and one-half (3.5) units in social science, which shall include: U.S. history & geography (1); world history and geography (1); government (0.5); economics (0.5); and New Mexico history (0.5)</p>	<p>Three and one-half units (3.5) in social science, which shall include: U.S. history & geography (1); world history and geography (1); government and civics (1); and economics (0.5)</p>
<p>One (1) unit in physical education, as determined by each school district, which may include a physical education program that meets state content and performance standards or participation in marching band, junior reserve officers' training corps or interscholastic sports sanctioned by the New Mexico activities association or any other co-curricular physical activity</p>	<p>One (1) unit in physical education as determined by each school district; may be substituted by participation in marching band, junior reserve officers' training corps or interscholastic sports sanctioned by the New Mexico activities association or any other co-curricular physical activity</p>
<p>One (1) unit in one of the following: a career cluster course, workplace readiness or a language other than English</p>	<p>One (1) unit in one of the following: (a) a career cluster course; (b) workplace readiness; or (c) a language other than English</p>
<p>Seven and one-half (7.5) elective units that meet department content and performance standards. Career and technical education courses shall be offered as an elective. Student service learning shall be offered as an elective. Financial literacy shall be offered as an elective. Pre-apprenticeship programs may be offered as electives. Media literacy may be offered as an elective</p>	<p>Seven and one-half (7.5) elective units that meet department content and performance standards, unless the school district requires health education to be taken in high school, in which case elective units for high school students in that school district shall be reduced accordingly</p> <p>May include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • student service learning; • pre-apprenticeship; • media literacy; • core subject courses not taken as requirements; and • other courses offered at the public school the students attends <p>Beginning with the SY22-23, any student in ninth through twelfth grade may undertake a capstone course as an elective; provided that elective capstone courses are required to be guided by a teacher, who may use outside experts or mentors</p>
<p>N/A</p>	<p>Beginning with the SY22-23, any student in twelfth grade may substitute a capstone course for any core subject requirement if the course is guided by a highly qualified teacher and meets academic content and performance standards</p>

	<p>Beginning with the SY23-24, any student in eleventh grade may substitute a capstone course for any core subject requirement if the course is guided by a highly qualified teacher and meets academic content and performance standards</p> <p>"Capstone course" means a multifaceted academic and intellectual experience that may take a wide variety of forms and that culminates in a final product or performance and includes a presentation on the final product or performance to a panel convened by the public school to evaluate the quality of the final product or performance</p>
<p>At least one of the units required for graduation shall be earned as an AP or honors course, a dual-credit course offered in cooperation with an institution of higher education, or a distance learning course</p>	<p>N/A</p>

* Beginning in SY22-23, delineation of required courses/substitutions may be made if the public school the student is attending and the student meet any of the required prerequisites.