



Student Support/Retention and External Diploma
Legislative Education Study Committee
Oct. 23, 2019

Student Support and Retention

The Public Education Department supports school districts in their efforts to retain students in a number of ways. One proactive approach is offering relevant courses and career pathways that give students a head start to college and careers. This school year PED is funding more than 90 career exploration and career-technical education programs throughout the state.

Through our Graduation, Reality and Dual-Role Skills (GRADS) program, the department offers support through a federal grant and legislative funds to 26 sites across the state for expectant and parenting teens. According to department data, the program recruited 98 students back to school during the 2017-2018 school year. It also served 356 young parents and reported an 82 percent graduation rate.

In an effort to create a more balanced assessment system, the department is transitioning from only one primary demonstration of competency as a graduation requirement to a menu of options that could include CTE pathways, other assessment options, and performance-based demonstrations of competency such as portfolios.

Lastly, the department offers support to districts in implementing early warning systems. By using available attendance, behavior, and academic data, schools can identify struggling students and provide appropriate support and resources. PED has partnered with Johns Hopkins University to provide ongoing professional development to school districts. Staff in those districts participate in a virtual community of learners.

High School Equivalency/External Diploma

The department is currently updating the high school equivalency rule to reflect 2014 and 2015 changes made to the high school equivalency statute, which eliminated references to the general educational development certificate. The rule update will also ensure students who have earned a high school equivalency certificate are not allowed to re-enroll in the K-12 system, per state statute 22-1-4.

The department is also exploring additional high school equivalency options for adults. Potential options include credit for work-based experiences, self-paced online course work, or other performance-based credentials. PED is considering accessibility, personnel and financial costs, and whether program(s) fit the needs of appropriate student populations in determining next steps. Other considerations include whether potential options are approved by the U.S. Department of Education.