

**LEGISLATIVE EDUCATION STUDY COMMITTEE
BILL ANALYSIS**

Bill No: HB 19

49th Legislature, 1st Special Session, 2009

Short Title: Reduce Math Required for Excellence Diploma

Sponsor(s): Representative Mary Helen Garcia

Analyst: Pamela Herman

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Bill Summary:

HB 19 changes the requirements for graduation for students who entered 9th grade beginning in school year 2009-2010, as follows:

- permanently reduces mathematics requirements from four units to three, eliminating a required unit at the level of Algebra II or higher; and
- permanently increases the number of elective units from seven-and-one-half to eight-and-one-half units.

Fiscal Impact:

According to the Public Education Department (PED), it is difficult to identify any fiscal impact of reducing the requirement for a fourth unit of mathematics and increasing elective units. PED states that school districts have not likely hired additional math teachers to meet this requirement because the students affected by it will not be taking the additional higher level math course until their senior year, in school year 2012-2013. PED also notes that dual credit and distance learning programs will offer expanded opportunities for students to take higher-level math courses.

Issues:

HB 19 would permanently eliminate one of the high school redesign reforms enacted in 2007.

- In 2006, the Office of Education Accountability (OEA) reported that approximately 50 percent of recent high school graduates who enter public postsecondary institutions must take remedial courses in their first semester of college; approximately 40 percent require remediation in mathematics. National research shows a strong correlation between the need for remediation at the postsecondary level and the likelihood that a student will drop out before earning a certificate or degree.
- At a series of hearings before the Legislative Education Study Committee (LESC) in the 2006 interim, representatives of business and industry also voiced concerns regarding the poor preparation of New Mexico high school graduates for entry-level career-track jobs.
- According to Achieve, a national organization that focuses on improving the competitiveness of U.S. high school graduates with those in the work force from other nations, “today, roughly two-thirds of all new jobs require some form of postsecondary

education,” and “research reveals that the ticket for student success in work or future learning is taking courses in math beyond Algebra II.”

- ACT, Inc., in “Ready for College and Ready for Work: Same or Different?” states that a 2006 study of entry level jobs identified by the US Department of Labor that offer the potential for advancement, a wage sufficient to support a small family, and are projected to increase in the future, high school graduates need comparable levels of readiness to succeed in entry-level college courses and to enter work force training programs ready to learn job specific skills.
- In 2006, New Mexico joined the American Diploma Project (ADP), a 28-state initiative to increase the rigor of high school standards and the value of high school diplomas; one of the goals to which the state committed in joining the ADP was to align high school graduation requirements with college- and career-ready expectations.
- In 2007, the LESC endorsed and the Legislature unanimously passed comprehensive high school redesign legislation that, among other changes, increased high school graduation requirements by adding an additional unit of mathematics, at the level of Algebra II or higher, unless a student has signed written parental permission to take a lower fourth unit of mathematics.
- PED states that, in 2009, only 34 percent of 11th grade students in New Mexico scored “proficient” or “advanced” on the 11th grade standards-based assessment. The OEA *Ready for College 2009* report found a strong correlation between how students perform on that assessment and how many remedial courses they take two years later in college.
- In 2009, Achieve reports that New Mexico and 20 other states require a rigorous college- and career-ready high school curriculum, including four-years of mathematics at the level of Algebra II or higher. Eight other states plan to raise graduation rates to the college- and career-ready level now in place in New Mexico.
- New Mexico is one of 14 states that allows students to opt out of the Algebra II requirement.
- PED states that it is currently drafting a rule for the process by which parents can choose to waive the Algebra II or higher math requirement for their students, and that notice of the public hearing on the rule will be published in mid-November.

Related Bills:

None