

New law provides for the Louisiana Student College and Career Readiness Act as follows:

Requires the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) in collaboration with the postsecondary education management boards through the Board of Regents (BOR) to establish strategic initiatives to improve high school graduation rates and ensure student readiness for postsecondary education and career opportunities.

Requires BESE to develop middle and high school curricula that are aligned with state content standards, embed 21st century work skills, and provide students with the opportunity to enroll in rigorous career-focused programs of study in high-demand, high-wage, high-skill career fields aligned with workforce demands, employment opportunities, and regional and state economic development priorities.

Requires BESE to align the middle school curriculum high school readiness standards and redesign the 8th and 9th grade curriculum to ensure that students unprepared for high school study can successfully complete high school graduation requirements. Further requires strategies and targeted support to reduce the number of students leaving 8th grade unprepared for high school.

Requires BESE, in collaboration with the BOR, local school boards, and teacher organizations to develop applied, hybrid, and career and technical courses that combine rigorous academic content with relevant career education that creates links between what a student does in school to what he wants to do in life. Provides that such courses may result in a credit in both an academic and a career technical course and transfer to a postsecondary educational institution. Allows local school boards to develop applied and hybrid courses, subject to BESE approval.

Provides for individual graduation plans for students in accordance with the High School Career Option law as follows:

- (1) Requires that by the end of the 8th grade, every student, with the assistance of his parent or other legal guardian and school guidance personnel, to develop an individual graduation plan to assist them in exploring educational and career possibilities and to make appropriate decisions as part of an overall career plan.
- (2) Students, with parental and school guidance personnel assistance, may choose the high school curriculum framework and related graduation requirements that best meet their postsecondary goals. Provides that each student's plan shall include the recommended sequence of courses needed for successful completion of his chosen career major and shall be reviewed annually and updated as needed.
- (3) Requires that individual graduation plans must be flexible enough to allow a student to change his program of study yet be sufficiently structured to ensure high school graduation requirements will be met and a student meets postsecondary entrance qualifications.
- (4) Requires that individual graduation plans must be signed by the student and his parent or other legal guardian.
- (5) Requires schools to provide career awareness and exploration activities in grades 6-8 to lay the foundation for the development of individual graduation plans. Provides that such activities shall provide linkages between what a student does in school and what he wants to achieve in life. Further requires that such activities must include career interest inventories.

Requires BESE to develop a guidance and advisement policy that local school districts can use to equip school guidance personnel with the information and skills needed to help students identify their goals and assist students and parents to develop individual graduation plans. Further requires the Dept. of Education (DOE) to provide professional development and training to school guidance personnel regarding development of individual graduation plans, workforce and training needs and opportunities.

Requires BESE to seek to establish a culture in all schools and school systems whereby student failure is not an option and all students are supported to meet or exceed grade-level standards. Requires schools to take steps to implement teaching strategies designed to provide students with engaging, challenging assignments based upon real-world tasks.

Requires BESE to develop criteria to identify students, as early as 6th grade, who are at-risk of being underprepared for the next level of study and provide strategies for meeting their specific needs and the opportunity to graduate from high school and develop skills necessary to enter the workforce.

Requires DOE to provide professional development and support to principals and teachers to allow them to learn and implement new planning and instructional strategies that engage more students intellectually, emotionally, socially, and behaviorally in the learning process and that create learning environments in which students can see the value of the information and skills they are required to learn and are thus motivated to achieve.

Requires BESE to allow schools and school districts flexibility in scheduling and length of the school day and year to provide students with the range of programs deemed necessary to ensure that more graduate from high school and are prepared for postsecondary education and careers.

Requires BESE to require local school boards to implement programs that provide academic support, dual enrollment, industry-based skills training, soft skills training, work-based learning opportunities, and adult mentoring to students, as funding is available. Requires local school boards to identify any available funds that could be utilized to support immediate implementation of such programs, including funding provided through the minimum foundation program and other sources of local, state, federal, or private funding.

Requires BESE to establish improved high school graduation rates as a top educational priority and charges BESE and the state superintendent of education with responsibility to achieve a high school graduation rate of eighty percent by the end of the 2013-2014 school year, while maintaining the integrity of the required curriculum for each major.

Requires that progress toward achieving the high school graduation goal be made part of the state superintendent of education's annual performance evaluation.

Requires BESE to submit a report to the Senate and House committees on education and the governor by October 1st of each year regarding school, district, and statewide graduation rates for the prior school year, including trend data.

Provides that if Senate and House committees on education determine that satisfactory progress toward meeting the established graduation rate goal is not being made, they shall jointly make recommendations to the legislature regarding additional actions they deem necessary to facilitate achievement of the stated goal.

Requires BESE to revise the state educational accountability system to recognize schools and school districts that improve their graduation rates and for the number of students who successfully complete advanced coursework.

Requires local school boards to develop articulation and transfer agreements with postsecondary educational institutions in accordance with BOR and BESE policy.

Requires BESE, DOE, BOR, and the postsecondary education management boards to work with a designated representative from the La. Workforce Commission to identify regional and state workforce needs and ensure coordination in the delivery of career and technical education across all educational agencies and institutions. Requires the executive director of the commission to appoint an existing member of his staff to serve as liaison to educational agencies and institutions.

Requires local school boards to convene biannual public meetings with career and technical advisory committees, local workforce investment boards, and colleges and universities in their region to discuss regional workforce needs and how to meet them.

Requires BESE to expand existing programs that recruit and train individuals with business and industry experience and skills, but no prior teaching experience, to teach in the public schools, provided use of such personnel does not prevent the articulation and transfer of credit for students taking such courses.

Requires BESE, in coordination with the BOR and the La. Workforce Commission, to adopt the rules necessary to implement new law in accordance with the Administrative Procedure Act.

Provides that the provisions of new law shall be implemented as expeditiously and to the maximum extent possible utilizing any and all available funding sources as annually appropriated by the legislature. Additionally requires BESE to diligently pursue funding necessary for full implementation and to develop a prioritized timeline for phased-in implementation if needed.

Prior law (R.S. 17:183.1-183.9) provided for the High School Career Option program, components, requirements, and implementation guidelines and timelines. New law repeals provisions of prior law that are no longer applicable.

New law provides that implementation of Act is subject to the annual appropriation of state funds for this purpose.

Effective upon signature of the governor or lapse of time for gubernatorial action.

(Adds R.S. 17:2921-2932 and R.S. 23:6(15); repeals R.S. 17:183.4 and 183.6 through 183.9)