

Existing law requires the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) to develop and adopt requirements for high school career major programs offered by school boards and to issue a career diploma to students who successfully complete such requirements. Provides that a career diploma is considered a regular, standard diploma. New law adds that a career diploma shall be recognized by all La. public postsecondary education institutions and that except for test purposes as specified in new law, a career diploma shall be given the same status and recognition for purposes of calculations of the school and district accountability system as is given a regular, standard diploma. New law prohibits a school or school system from being penalized in any manner for students who are issued a career diploma.

Prior law required public school systems to develop and offer at least one career major program, subject to BESE approval, and provided that any such system may be granted a waiver by BESE for good cause. New law instead requires such programs to be aligned to state and regional workforce demands and developed and offered by school boards pursuant to BESE policy and deletes the waiver allowance.

Prior law required a student seeking to pursue a career major curriculum to have either met all state and local requirements for promotion to 9th grade or to have been at least 15 years old and scored at least approaching basic on certain LEAP tests. Required BESE to certify that the pupil progression plan of each local school system that promotes a student who did not meet 8th grade LEAP standards contained specified requirements. Further required a student to have written permission of his parent or legal guardian after consultation with a guidance counselor or school administrator and a determination that participation in a career major curriculum and pursuit of a career diploma was appropriate and in the student's best interest.

New law instead requires that a student shall either meet all state and local requirements for high school promotion, have fulfilled or be on track to fulfill all of the course requirements as specified in existing law and new law, or meet the entry or admission requirements set forth in the chosen career major program. New law deletes requirements that BESE certify pupil progression plans and that a student have written permission from a parent or guardian.

Existing law requires students in a career major program to complete an academic core of courses and a career and technical sequence of courses and specifies course requirements. New law provides for various changes to and retention of the career major course requirements and additionally requires the completion of a regionally designed series of Career and Technical Education Jump Start coursework and workplace-based learning experiences leading to a statewide or regional Jump Start credential. New law requires students pursuing a career diploma to take the ACT and allows them to take the WorkKeys test. Requires BESE to develop a system of equivalent scores for the ACT and the WorkKeys test and count a student's highest score for purposes of the school and district accountability system.

Existing law relative to Individual Graduation Plans, requires students in the 8th grade to develop a plan to explore educational and career possibilities and to make appropriate decisions as part of an overall career plan. Permits students to 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 and be reviewed annually and updated as needed. Requires that a student's plan be signed by the student and his parent or other legal guardian. New law adds that the plan list the required courses to be taken through 10th grade; identify the courses to be taken in the first year of high school; include any necessary remedial courses if the student fails to meet the standard for promotion to the 9th grade; and by the end of the 10th grade, outline high school graduation requirements relevant to the student's postsecondary goals.

Effective Aug. 1, 2014.

(Amends R.S. 17:183.1(A) and (C)(2), 183.2, 183.3(A)(2), (B), (C), and (D), and 2925; Adds R.S. 17:183.1(D))