
Graduation Requirements Rule 0520-01-03-.06

The Background:

Tennessee State Board of Education Graduation Requirements Rule 0520-01-03-.06 outlines the graduation requirements for students in Tennessee. The rule outlines diploma options for high school students (e.g., traditional, special education, occupational, and alternate academic high school diploma), and specific credit requirements needed to earn each diploma type.

Chapter 979 of the Public Acts of 2022 (PC 979) expanded access to computer science education to ensure elementary, middle, and high school students are prepared for evolving workforce needs. In addition to requiring computer science coursework, Department provided professional development, and a new computer science endorsement pathway for educators, PC 979 requires students to complete at least one (1) credit of computer science to receive a traditional high school diploma. This item adds this requirement to the Graduation Requirements Rule, specifying that students may fulfill the computer science requirement either through their fourth credit of math, third credit of science, or elective focus credit. This graduation requirement applies to students who enroll in 9th grade in the 2024-25 school year and each school year thereafter.

Additionally, Chapter 946 of the Public Acts of 2022 (PC 946) requires the State Board of Education to establish requirements for students to receive an Industry 4.0 diploma distinction beginning in the 2022-23 school year. The Industry 4.0 diploma distinction is ideal for students interested in pursuing a career in high-need and high-skilled industry. For a student to receive the distinction, the student must participate in monthly career counseling and enroll in work-based learning or dual enrollment coursework in their 11th and 12th grade year. This item adds the Industry 4.0 diploma distinction requirements to the rule.

This item also moves all other requirements for local and state graduation distinctions to the rule from the State Board's High School Policy 2.103 in order to ensure compliance with T.C.A. § 4-5-102 regarding what must be contained in an agency rule rather than policy.

State Board staff conducted a rulemaking hearing on September 15, 2022 to collect public feedback. No comments were received. State Board staff also solicited feedback regarding the Industry 4.0 diploma distinction from the Tennessee Board of Regents.

Between first and final reading, revisions were made to add a limited medical exemption for the ACT graduation requirement for a traditional high school diploma. Revisions were also made to clarify work-based learning course substitutions may only fulfill a student's third (3rd) credit of science or fourth (4th) credit of math, and that pursuant to State Board Rule 0520-01-03-.03, high schools shall accept postsecondary credits as a substitution for an aligned graduation requirement course. Edits were also made to require that the Industry 4.0 diploma distinction be indicated on a student's transcript.

The Fiscal Analysis Impact:

T.C.A. § 49-1-212 requires that the Department prepare a fiscal analysis of any policy, rule, or regulation proposed to the State Board of Education. This item has no financial impact on an LEA.

The Recommendation:

The Department of Education recommends approval of this item on final reading. The SBE staff concurs with this recommendation.