

CHAPTER 303

(Senate Bill 689)

AN ACT concerning

~~Education – Study Group on Expanding Enrollment Options for High School Students~~

High Schools and High School Students – Options for Accelerated Graduation

FOR the purpose of ~~establishing a Study Group on Expanding Enrollment Options for High School Students; establishing the membership and staffing of the Study Group; providing for the designation of co-chairs of the Study Group; requiring the Study Group to review, evaluate, and make findings and recommendations regarding certain issues; requiring the Study Group to submit a report to the Governor and the General Assembly by a certain date; prohibiting a member of the Study Group from receiving certain compensation; authorizing a member of the Study Group to receive certain reimbursements; providing for the termination of this Act; and generally relating to expanding enrollment options for high school students~~ requiring the State Department of Education to conduct a certain study to identify examinations that allow certain students to earn certain credits in certain courses for a certain purpose; requiring the study to include certain information; requiring the Department to submit a certain report to the Governor and the General Assembly on or before a certain date; requiring the State Superintendent of Schools to implement a certain process on or before a certain school year; requiring the Department to review and evaluate certain programs; requiring the review and evaluation to include certain discussions; requiring the Department to report certain findings to the State Superintendent on or before a certain date; requiring certain programs to be implemented on or before a certain school year under certain circumstances; providing for the termination of this Act; and generally relating to the accelerated graduation of high school students.

Preamble

WHEREAS, Many Maryland students find that the traditional 4-year enrollment plan for high school completion does not serve their personal academic interests and needs and are in search of legitimate approaches to the high school program configuration that permits from 3 to 5 years of enrollment as appropriate to their needs; and

WHEREAS, Some Maryland students are pursuing an accelerated high school course sequence and find that they need specialized academic experiences in lieu of or during their senior year to facilitate attainment of their personal academic goals; and

~~WHEREAS, Some Maryland high school students find that the course offerings available at community colleges, 4-year colleges, and universities better match their personal academic goals; and~~

~~WHEREAS, Maryland high schools typically provide Advanced Placement courses or International Baccalaureate programs that equate to freshman level college or university courses, and that often are accepted by colleges and universities for college credit; and~~

WHEREAS, Some Maryland high school students achieve their academic work their senior year through dual enrollment arrangements that involve courses taught at the student's home high school and other courses that are taught at a community college, 4-year college, or university, with the college or university work accepted by the student's high school toward the awarding of the Maryland high school diploma; and

~~WHEREAS, Dually enrolled students are expected to defray the costs of higher education enrollment while enrolled at both the high school and the college or university, and are ineligible to access financial aid offered through higher education institutions, such as those available through the federal Pell Grant Program; and~~

~~WHEREAS, Financially challenged families frequently need financial assistance in order to support the student's academic work as they transition into higher education; and~~

WHEREAS, Local school systems would be able to serve accelerated students more effectively if they were able to develop cooperative agreements involving the student, parent, and the higher education institution; and

~~WHEREAS, Some students, particularly students with disabilities and English Language Learners, find that it takes more than 4 years to successfully complete their high school programs; and~~

WHEREAS, Schools frequently have difficulty matching the 4-year high school program to the individual needs of students who more appropriately would complete the high school program in more or less time than the standard; now, therefore,

SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND, That:

~~(a) There is a Study Group on Expanding Enrollment Options for High School Students.~~

~~(b) The Study Group consists of the following members:~~

~~(1) One member of the Senate of Maryland, who shall be the cochair of the Study Group, appointed by the President of the Senate;~~

~~(2) One member of the House of Delegates, who shall be the cochair of the Study Group, appointed by the Speaker of the House;~~

~~(3) The State Superintendent of Schools, or an individual designated by the State Superintendent;~~

~~(4) One representative of the Public Schools Superintendents Association, designated by the Association;~~

~~(5) The Secretary of the Maryland Higher Education Commission, or an individual designated by the Secretary;~~

~~(6) Two principals of Maryland comprehensive high schools, one from a large enrollment (1,400 or more students) high school and one from a small enrollment (less than 1,000 students) high school, designated by the Maryland Association of Secondary School Principals;~~

~~(7) One representative of the Maryland Association of Boards of Education, designated by the Association;~~

~~(8) One assistant superintendent for instruction, designated by the State Superintendent of Schools;~~

~~(9) One representative of the Community Colleges Association of Maryland, designated by the Association;~~

~~(10) One representative of Maryland public 4-year colleges and universities, designated by the Chancellor of the University System of Maryland;~~

~~(11) One representative of Maryland's independent 4-year colleges or universities, designated by the Maryland Association of Independent Colleges and Universities; and~~

~~(12) One representative of the Maryland business community designated by the Maryland Chamber of Commerce.~~

~~(e) The State Department of Education, the University System of Maryland, and the Maryland Higher Education Commission jointly shall provide staff support for the Study Group.~~

~~(d) A member of the Study Group:~~

~~(1) May not receive compensation for serving on the Study Group; but~~

~~(2) Is entitled to reimbursement for expenses under the Standard State Travel Regulations, as provided in the State budget.~~

~~(c) (1) The Study Group shall review, evaluate, and make findings and recommendations regarding the following issues relating to enrollment options for the senior year for Maryland high school students:~~

~~(i) Data regarding students over the past three years who have participated in Advanced Placement courses, International Baccalaureate programs, dual enrollment, and early admission to college programs;~~

~~(ii) Data regarding students over the past three years who dropped out of high school and selected alternative routes for completion of their educational goals, including the GED;~~

~~(iii) Benefits and disadvantages of Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate programs, dual enrollment, and early admission to college programs;~~

~~(iv) Benefits and disadvantages of GED and other alternative routes for completion of educational goals for students exiting high school before graduation;~~

~~(v) Evaluation of the quality of academic experiences for high school students taking college or university courses versus Advanced Placement or International Baccalaureate programs;~~

~~(vi) Support and guidance provided and needed for families of students seeking challenging academic experiences in their senior year of high school or in lieu of the senior year of high school;~~

~~(vii) Support and guidance provided and needed for families of struggling students who find that the 4-year high school program is inadequate to meet their needs;~~

~~(viii) Fiscal implications for local school systems, colleges and universities, and families on account of the offering of quality experiences for high school seniors;~~

~~(ix) School accountability issues associated with the implementation of programs for high school students seeking challenging academic experiences and for those needing more than four years to complete a successful high school experience; and~~

~~(x) Successful efforts in other states that are reconfiguring high school experiences to meet student needs with nontraditional schedules.~~

~~(2) The Study Group's findings and recommendations at a minimum shall include:~~

~~(i) Short term strategies for reconfiguring high school programs for nontraditional students;~~

~~(ii) Funding and fiscal considerations that must be considered if high school programs are reconfigured for nontraditional students;~~

~~(iii) Recommendations about the lack of uniformity among Maryland colleges and universities in acceptable minimum Advanced Placement scores for college credit;~~

~~(iv) Examination of the awarding of Advanced Placement credit by colleges and universities;~~

~~(v) Recommendations for State Board action regarding the role of CED programs as alternative graduation routes, revisions in high school graduation requirements, and reexamination of the definition of the high school senior year, as necessary;~~

~~(vi) Recommendations related to appropriate long term funding strategies for students in dual enrollment or senior year placement at colleges or universities;~~

~~(vii) A uniform plan that recognizes and supports the multiple pathways that students take to achieve the Maryland high school diploma in fewer or more than the traditional 4-year time frame; and~~

~~(viii) Requisite record keeping that would need to be initiated to ensure legal sufficiency and compliance with State and federal laws.~~

~~(3) On or before December 1, 2009, the Study Group shall report its findings and recommendations to the Governor and, in accordance with § 2-1246 of the State Government Article, the General Assembly.~~

(a) (1) The State Department of Education shall conduct a study to identify examinations that allow students to earn substitute credits in the State-approved high school courses English 12 and Algebra II in order to accelerate a student's graduation from high school.

(2) The study conducted under paragraph (1) of this subsection shall:

(i) ensure that the content of an examination:

1. assesses a student's mastery of the entire content of the State-approved course; and

2. is aligned with Maryland Content Standards for the State-approved course;

(ii) determine the passing score of an examination that allows a student to receive credit for the State-approved course; and

(iii) establish eligibility criteria for students.

(3) On or before March 1, 2010, the Department shall report on its progress toward identifying examinations and implementing a credit-by-examination process for the State-approved high school courses English 12 and Algebra II to the Governor and, in accordance with § 2-1246 of the State Government Article, the General Assembly.

~~(3)~~ (4) On or before the 2010-2011 school year, the State Superintendent of Schools shall implement a credit-by-examination process for the State-approved high school courses English 12 and Algebra II.

(b) (1) The Department shall review and evaluate the appropriateness of implementing middle college programs for students in high schools in the State.

(2) The review and evaluation conducted under paragraph (1) of this subsection shall:

(i) explore and discuss with institutions of higher education in the State the feasibility of establishing partnerships to implement middle college programs for students in high schools; and

(ii) explore and discuss with local school systems the benefits of and the level of interest in offering middle college programs to students in high schools in their jurisdictions.

(3) On or before February 1, 2010, the Department shall report its findings of the review and evaluation conducted under this subsection to the State Superintendent.

(4) If the State Superintendent determines that there is sufficient interest and capability to implement middle college programs for high school students based on the findings of the report submitted under paragraph (3) of this subsection, the State Superintendent shall implement a middle college program in interested school systems beginning in the 2010-2011 school year.

SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect ~~June~~ July 1, 2009. *It shall remain effective for a period of 3 years and, at the end of June 30, 2012, with no further action required by the General Assembly, this Act shall be abrogated and of no further force and effect.* ~~It shall remain effective for a period of 1 year and 1 month and, at the end of June 30, 2010, with no further action required by the General Assembly, this Act shall be abrogated and of no further force and effect.~~

Approved by the Governor, May 7, 2009.