

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2008 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
Revised

Senate Bill 967

(Senator Rosapepe)

Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Ways and Means

Education - Study Group on Expanding Enrollment Options for High School Students

This bill establishes a Study Group on Expanding Enrollment Options for High School Students to review, evaluate, and make findings and recommendations relating to enrollment options for the senior year of high school for Maryland students. The study group's finding and recommendations must include short-term strategies for reconfiguring high school programs for nontraditional students, a plan that recognizes multiple pathways to a high school diploma, and fiscal considerations for nontraditional high school models. The Maryland Higher Education Commission, Maryland State Department of Education, and University System of Maryland must provide staff support for the study group, and a final report is due by December 1, 2008.

The bill takes effect June 1, 2008 and terminates June 30, 2009.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: Any travel reimbursements and staffing expenses associated with the study group are assumed to be minimal and absorbable within existing budgeted resources.

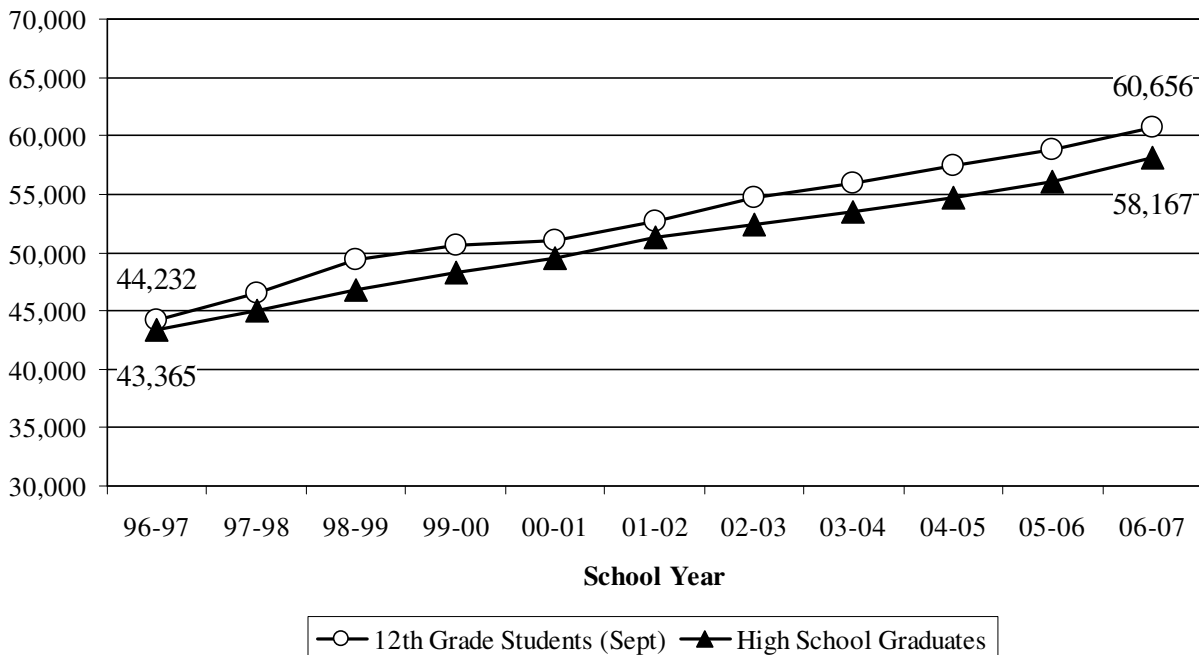
Local Effect: Local officials appointed to the study group could participate without affecting local budgets.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law/Background: Policies, rules, and regulations for the graduation of students from Maryland public schools are established by local boards of education and the State Board of Education. By regulation, a student must complete the credit requirements established by the State Board of Education, a student service requirement, and any local school system requirements to qualify for graduation from a public high school in Maryland. Beginning with the cohort of students who entered grade 9 in the 2005-2006 school year, each student will also be required to pass each of four Maryland High School Assessments (HSAs) or achieve a combined total score on the HSAs in order to qualify for a high school diploma. Qualified students who have taken but have not passed the HSAs may instead complete a subject-based senior project in order to earn a high school diploma. The number of public high school graduates from the last 11 school years are shown in **Exhibit 1** with the number of twelfth grade students who started the year.

Exhibit 1
Number of Twelfth Grade Students and High School Graduates
Maryland Public Schools
1996-1997 to 2006-2007



Sources: Maryland Department of Planning; Maryland State Department of Education

A Maryland resident may also obtain a high school diploma by examination through the general educational development (GED) program. To qualify, an individual must be at least age 16 and may not have already obtained a high school certificate or diploma. The individual must also have officially withdrawn from a regular public or private school at least three months prior to the date of GED testing. The External Diploma Program is another program offered by the State that allows adults to earn high school diplomas.

Chapters 296 and 297 of 2007 established a Dual Enrollment Grant Program that is in its first year in fiscal 2008 and provides financial assistance to students who are simultaneously enrolled in high school and an institution of higher education. The Maryland Higher Education Commission surveyed institutions of higher education in the State in spring 2007 in order to estimate how many dually-enrolled students would be eligible for awards under the new program. The State's community colleges estimated that 3,330 students at the colleges were dually enrolled, and collectively, the public and private four-year institutions estimated that 110 students at the institutions would be eligible for grants. MHEC has awarded approximately \$120,000 to 330 dually-enrolled students in fiscal 2008. The proposed fiscal 2009 State budget includes no funding for the Dual Enrollment Grant Program, although MHEC has the authority to use funds carried forward from other student financial assistance programs to support dual enrollment grants.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Maryland State Department of Education, Maryland Higher Education Commission, Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - March 24, 2008
ncs/rhh Revised - Senate Third Reader - April 5, 2008

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