

# MEMO

**Date:** Dec. 20, 2017

**RE:** Ohio Curriculum Choice Findings and Recommendations

Ohio Revised Code 3313.603 required the Ohio Department of Education (the Department) to conduct an analysis of the performance data related to the Ohio Curriculum Choice legislation. This option permits students in the classes of 2014 through 2017 to meet the 2013 curriculum requirements and the classes of 2018 and 2019 to meet a modified set of curriculum requirements. Specifically, the Department was directed to do the following:

*The department, in collaboration with the chancellor, shall analyze student performance data to determine if there are mitigating factors that warrant extending the exception permitted by division (D) of this section to high school classes beyond those entering ninth grade before July 1, 2016. The department shall submit its findings and any recommendations not later than December 1, 2015, to the speaker and minority leader of the house of representatives, the president and minority leader of the senate, the chairpersons and ranking minority members of the standing committees of the house of representatives and the senate that consider education legislation, the state board of education, and the superintendent of public instruction. Ohio Revised Code, Section 3313.603(D)*

Department staff used graduation and course data from the first three cohorts (graduating classes 2014, 2015 and 2016) of students permitted to use this option. **A copy of the report is attached.**

The Department drew conclusions based on the data collected. While the number of students electing to utilize this option is small, less than 1 percent of the graduating class, the number of students remained consistent over the three cohorts of students. The Department has concluded that there is evidence to support extending this option for two additional years, during which time additional trend data will be collected and analyzed as requirements shift for the classes of 2018 and 2019. The Department will provide an additional study of the graduation and course data in a follow-up report by Dec. 15, 2019.

## Ohio Curriculum Choice

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House Bill 119 from the 127<sup>th</sup> General Assembly established new criteria for students graduating in 2014, which included changes to the number of units required and/or the courses required:

- Mathematics – 4 units (including Algebra II or its equivalent);
- Science – 3 units (must include a lab experience and an advanced science);
- Fine Arts – 2 semesters completed in grades 7-12; and
- Economics and Financial Literacy instruction in grades 9-12.

Lawmakers developed a provision, called Curriculum Choice, which allows any student to choose not to meet the full curriculum requirements. Instead they would follow a Student Success Plan written in collaboration with the district. Lawmakers also understood that students who do not meet the full requirements and enroll in most Ohio four-year colleges would need remedial courses in these subjects.

The Curriculum Choice option also extends to students with disabilities on individualized education programs (IEPs). Many students with disabilities will complete the new, full curriculum requirements for graduation. If a student has an IEP that includes Curriculum Choice, the Student Success Plan becomes part of the IEP. These students with IEPs are exempt from the college consequence in the law.

A Student Success Plan identifies the student's career goals after high school graduation and describes what he or she will do to achieve those goals. The plan must lead to at least one of the following:

- A two-year degree program;
- A business industry credential; or
- An apprenticeship.

The plan also outlines the student's interests, skills and knowledge that support his or her career goals. It includes the high school courses and programs that support the student's career goals, out-of-school activities, the results of [OhioMeansJobs K-12](#) planning (or work through another, similar career information planning system) and a record of assessments, both current and planned. See examples of Student Success Plans [here](#).

As part of the Curriculum Choice provision, students in the graduating classes of 2014 through 2017 may minimally meet the 2013 Ohio graduation requirements. Students in the graduating classes of 2018 and 2019 also may meet modified state minimal graduation requirements outlined in Ohio Revised Code 3313.603(D). Below are key points of this statute:

- Mathematics: 4 units (1 unit shall be one of the following: probability and statistics; computer programming; applied mathematics; quantitative reasoning; and any other course approved by the Ohio Department of Education using standards identified [here](#));
- Science: 3 units (3 units with inquiry-based laboratory experience that engages students in asking valid scientific questions and gathering and analyzing information, which shall include the following or their equivalents: 1 unit of physical sciences; 1 unit of life sciences; 1 or more units of advanced sciences study); and
- Electives: 5 units in any area not already required for graduation.

Students also must meet the assessment requirement for their graduating class, based on when they entered high school for the first time.

For students and families that are considering this choice for meeting the curriculum graduation requirement the family, including the student, must:

- Be enrolled in the third year of high school:
  - One exception is for the class of 2015, whose students were allowed to create a plan during the 2014-2015 school year;
  - Another exception is for a student who transfers or enrolls in an Ohio high school after the third year—that student also may select Curriculum Choice as part of the placement process;
- Meet with school officials to receive a full explanation of the Curriculum Choice provision;
- Understand any added requirements the school district has for this option;
- Develop and complete a Student Success Plan in the third year of high school; and
- Sign a written consent saying that Curriculum Choice, its consequences and added district requirements are understood by all. The school will keep the consent in the student’s file.

Schools will encourage students to continue striving to complete the full graduation requirements, then use their Student Success Plans as a safeguard in case they do not meet the full requirements.

Analysis of the data collected on Ohio students who selected Curriculum Choice is shown below.

	School year 2014		School year 2015		School year 2016	
Graduate Count	118,429		118,617		N/A	
Students opting out of CORE requirements (3313.603(D))	892	.75%	857	.72%	924	N/A
Students receiving diploma by meeting IEP goals instead of CORE	445	.38%	547	.46%	511	N/A
Students with a concentration in a CTE program	394	.33%	444	.37%	332	N/A
Students who did not earn credit for algebra II or its equivalent	959	.81%	970	.82%	983	N/A

	School year 2014		School year 2015		School year 2016	
Students who did not earn at least the required 4-credits in mathematics	851	.72%	991	.84%	1024	N/A

The data show that less than 1 percent of each graduating class took advantage of Curriculum Choice. The number of students accessing this option through opting out of the CORE requirements or by receiving a diploma by meeting IEP goals has remained fairly consistent over the three years of data collection.

Although some students may participate in Curriculum Choice to forego the graduation requirements for science, fine arts, and economics and financial literacy, the greatest concern was for students meeting the additional mathematics unit and/or the Algebra II or its equivalent requirement.

Starting with the graduating class of 2018, students in a career-technical education pathway have another option for the Algebra II requirement. These students can meet the requirement through a career-based mathematics course.

The number of students who are using Curriculum Choice has remained fairly consistent. We are not seeing any significant reduction in the number of students using this option. Also, the percent of students who are using this option for their mathematics requirement has stayed consistent. The Office of Curriculum and Assessment recommends that this provision be extended two more years and to continue monitoring the data for the classes of 2017, 2018 and 2019. After reviewing the data an updated report and recommendation will be provided.