

SENATE, No. 4653

STATE OF NEW JERSEY
222nd LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED OCTOBER 1, 2026

Sponsored by:
Senator SHIRLEY K. TURNER
District 15 (Hunterdon and Mercer)

SYNOPSIS

Directs Commissioner of Education to develop and implement Statewide framework for high school graduation.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As introduced.



1 AN ACT concerning high school graduation and amending and
2 supplementing P.L.1979, c.241.

3
4 **BE IT ENACTED** *by the Senate and General Assembly of the State*
5 *of New Jersey:*

6
7 1. (New section) a. The Commissioner of Education shall
8 develop and implement a Statewide framework to be used by school
9 districts to track the progress of each high school student toward the
10 completion of State and local high school graduation requirements.
11 The framework shall include multiple measures to evaluate if a
12 student is eligible for a State-endorsed diploma pursuant to section
13 4 of P.L.1979, c.241 (C.18A:7C-4). The commissioner shall ensure
14 that the graduation framework evaluates whether the student:

15 (1) successfully completed, as determined by the commissioner,
16 high school courses aligned to the New Jersey Student Learning
17 Standards and the State graduation requirements established
18 pursuant to State Board of Education regulations;

19 (2) participated in an annual postsecondary planning conference
20 with school personnel as part of the development of an
21 individualized career and academic plan for the student. A school
22 district shall provide notification to the student's parent or guardian
23 of the scheduled postsecondary planning conference, which
24 notification shall provide the parent or guardian with an opportunity
25 to participate in the conference; and

26 (3) (a) completed, in grade 11 or 12, one demonstration of
27 readiness for high school graduation. A demonstration of readiness
28 shall include:

29 (i) completion of a capstone project, including the completion
30 of a career and technical education capstone project;

31 (ii) completion of a dual enrollment program;

32 (iii) completion of a performance-based assessment;

33 (iv) completion of an apprenticeship readiness assessment; or

34 (v) achievement of a qualifying score, as determined by the
35 commissioner, on the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT), the ACT,
36 Advanced Placement or International Baccalaureate exams, or the
37 Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery-Armed Forces
38 Qualifying Test (ASVAB-AFQT).

39 (b) A school district shall offer students a no-cost option to
40 complete a capstone project or a performance-based assessment on
41 school grounds during the school day.

42 b. The commissioner shall develop a standardized crosswalk
43 that outlines the approved pathways to graduation, including criteria
44 and alignment of allowable accommodations for students with an
45 individualized education program under the federal "Individuals

EXPLANATION – Matter enclosed in bold-faced brackets **[thus]** in the above bill is
not enacted and is intended to be omitted in the law.

Matter underlined thus is new matter.

1 with Disabilities Education Act,” 20 U.S.C. s. 1400 et seq., students
2 with an educational plan established pursuant to section 504 of the
3 federal “Rehabilitation Act of 1973,” 29 U.S.C. s.794, and
4 multilingual learners.

5 c. The framework and crosswalk shall be used by each school
6 district to ensure consistency, comparability, and equitable access
7 across graduation pathways. The commissioner shall disseminate
8 information and guidance on the effective implementation of the
9 framework and crosswalk.

10 d. The commissioner shall also:

11 (1) establish a standardized rubric specifying proficiency
12 standards that a student is required to demonstrate. Student work
13 will be assessed locally using the State-developed rubric;

14 (2) establish procedures for the training of school district staff in
15 scoring the rubric and for the random external review of district
16 scoring; and

17 (3) provide a State-designed readiness project bank that includes
18 model capstone projects and assessment options embedded within
19 existing course requirements. The bank shall ensure consistency
20 across school districts.

21 e. The commissioner shall periodically review and update the
22 elements of the graduation framework, standardized crosswalk, and
23 each pathway established under the standardized crosswalk to
24 identify inconsistencies in student graduation readiness and
25 postsecondary options.

26 f. In developing the framework, crosswalk, and rubric pursuant
27 to this section, the commissioner shall consult with representatives
28 of the business and education community, including but not limited
29 to: the New Jersey School Boards Association; the New Jersey
30 Principals and Supervisors Association; the New Jersey Education
31 Association; the New Jersey School Counselors Association; the
32 New Jersey Association for College Admission Counseling; the
33 New Jersey Association of School Administrators; and the New
34 Jersey Business and Industry Association.

35 g. The commissioner shall develop and adopt the graduation
36 framework within one year of the enactment of P.L. , c. (C.
37) (pending before the Legislature as this bill), and shall implement a
38 pilot program in school districts selected by the commissioner
39 during the first full school year following the adoption of the
40 framework by the commissioner. At the conclusion of the one-year
41 pilot program, the commissioner shall implement the graduation
42 framework Statewide.

43
44 2. (New section) a. The commissioner shall develop and
45 implement a Statewide system to track the progress of each student
46 toward meeting the requirements of the graduation framework and
47 standardized crosswalk developed pursuant to section 1 of
48 P.L. , c. (C.) (pending before the Legislature as this bill).

1 The student tracking system shall ensure consistency and
2 transparency among school districts in implementing the framework
3 and crosswalk, reduce the administrative burden on districts through
4 a centralized tracking system, and document each student's progress
5 towards graduation.

6 b. The commissioner shall annually issue a report on the
7 tracking system and postsecondary outcomes of students who
8 receive a State-endorsed diploma. This report shall include:

9 (1) the progress of each student pursuant to subsection a. of this
10 section;

11 (2) the number of students who were denied a diploma as
12 reported by the school district pursuant to section 7 of P.L.1979,
13 c.241 (C.18A:7C-7) and the graduation pathways of those students;
14 and

15 (3) the number of students who received a diploma as reported
16 by the school district pursuant to section 7 of P.L.1979, c.241
17 (C.18A:7C-7), the graduation pathways of those students, and any
18 available information concerning the postsecondary outcomes of
19 those students. The commissioner may review the data contained in
20 the Statewide Longitudinal Data System for Education and
21 Workforce Development established pursuant to P.L.2025, c.388
22 (C.18A:4-2.1 et al.) in the preparation of the report, and the report
23 shall include data, as available, on:

24 (a) college enrollment, college persistence, and college
25 completion; and

26 (b) participation in apprenticeship programs, the attainment of
27 industry-recognized credentials, and employment outcomes.

28 c. Any data included in the report required pursuant to
29 subsection b. of this section shall be disaggregated by race, gender,
30 disability, and eligibility for free or reduced-price lunch under the
31 National School Lunch Program.

32
33 3. Section 7 of P.L.1979, c.241 (C.18A:7C-7) is amended to read
34 as follows:

35 7. The local chief school administrators shall report annually to
36 their local boards of education and to the Commissioner of
37 Education the number of students who:

38 a. completed the [twelfth] grade 12 course requirements and
39 the elements of the high school graduation framework pursuant to
40 section 1 of P.L. , c. (C.) (pending before the Legislature
41 as this bill) and were denied a diploma [and the number of students
42 who];

43 b. did not complete the elements of the high school graduation
44 framework pursuant to section 1 of P.L. , c. (C.) (pending
45 before the Legislature as this bill) and were denied a diploma; and

46 c. completed the grade 12 course requirements and the
47 elements of the high school graduation framework pursuant to

1 section 1 of P.L. , c. (C.) (pending before the Legislature
2 as this bill) and received State endorsed diplomas];

3 a. By successfully completing the Statewide assessment tests
4 and local requirements;

5 b. By using the comprehensive assessment techniques and
6 meeting local requirements, and were not classified pursuant to
7 chapter 46 of Title 18A of the New Jersey Statutes; and

8 c. By using the comprehensive assessment techniques, meeting
9 local requirements, and were classified pursuant to chapter 46 of
10 Title 18A of the New Jersey Statutes].

11 This report to the commissioner shall be included as a portion of
12 the district annual report required under section 11 of P.L.1975,
13 c.212 (C. 18A:7A-11).
14 (cf: P.L.1979, c.241, s.7)

15
16 4. This act shall take effect immediately.

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19 STATEMENT

20

21 This bill establishes a comprehensive high school graduation
22 framework to ensure that students are prepared for college, careers,
23 and civic life.

24 This bill directs the Commissioner of Education to develop and
25 implement a Statewide framework to be used by school districts to
26 track the progress of each high school student toward the
27 completion of State and local graduation requirements and the
28 receipt of a State-endorsed high school diploma. The graduation
29 framework would include the following elements:

30 1) successful completion of high school courses aligned to the
31 New Jersey Student Learning Standards and the State graduation
32 requirements established pursuant to State Board of Education
33 regulations:

34 2) participation in an annual post-secondary planning
35 conference with school personnel as part of the development of an
36 individual career and academic plan; and

37 3) one demonstration of readiness for high school graduation
38 completed in grade 11 or 12, such as successful completion of a
39 capstone project, a college dual enrollment program, or a
40 performance-based assessment.

41 The bill requires a school district to offer students a no-cost
42 option to complete a capstone project or a performance-based
43 assessment on school grounds during the school day.

44 The commissioner is also directed under the bill to develop a
45 standardized crosswalk that outlines all approved pathways to
46 graduation, including criteria and alignment for students with
47 disabilities and multilingual learners.

1 The framework and standardized crosswalk are required to be
2 developed within one year of the bill's effective date, and a pilot
3 program will be implemented by the commissioner in selected
4 school districts in the first full school year following the adoption
5 of the framework. Upon the conclusion of the one-year pilot
6 program, the graduation framework and standardized crosswalk will
7 be implemented Statewide.

8 The commissioner is directed to develop and implement a
9 Statewide system to track the progress of each student towards
10 meeting the graduation requirements under the framework and
11 crosswalk. The bill requires the commissioner to annually issue a
12 report on the tracking system and postsecondary outcomes of
13 students who received a State-endorsed diploma as specified in the
14 bill.

15 Finally, under current law, the local chief school administrator is
16 required to report annually to the local board of education and the
17 Commissioner of Education on the number of students who
18 completed the 12th grade course requirements and were denied a
19 diploma and the number of students who received a State endorsed
20 diploma. Current law details the information that is included in this
21 annual report. This bill modifies the information that will be in this
22 annual report, to include those students who completed the grade 12
23 course requirements and the elements of the high school graduation
24 framework established under the bill and were either denied a
25 diploma or granted a State-endorsed diploma, as well as the
26 students who did not complete the elements of the high school
27 graduation framework established under the bill and were denied a
28 diploma.