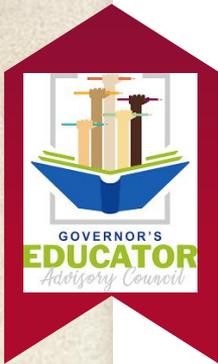


**In response to recently proposed
legislative changes to the
Michigan Merit Curriculum**



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Proposed Laws & Our Process

Senate bills 600 and 601, sponsored by Senator Jon Bumstead (R--34th district), propose altering the Michigan Merit Curriculum for graduation in a number of ways. In our capacity as an Educator Advisory Council, we sought input on these proposed changes to pass on to the Governor's office. Each question in our survey explained the proposed change(s) in that curricular area, and asked for educators' thoughts. All participants were permitted to remain anonymous, but we did ask for their current role in education.



Steps taken:

- ◆ Created a Google Form survey and distributed to over 90 educators around the state
- ◆ Synthesized repeated and important ideas
- ◆ Applied our experience & expertise
- ◆ Narrowed down to key considerations & overall recommendations



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Our primary recommendation:

Keep the Personal Curriculum and work more intentionally to inform stakeholders of its concept and use.

- ❖ **Current requirement:** schools shall provide an annual notice to parents or guardians explaining the PC and that all students are entitled to a PC. This notice shall be sent to a student's home and can take several forms including written letter, newsletter, or handbook. This notice shall also be posted on the school's public website.
- ❖ Issues arise simply because people are not aware of PCs and/or do not know how to apply them



Specific Recommendations Related to the Personal Curriculum:

- ◆ We strongly recommend the State Department of Education provide clear guidance about the use of PC's
- ◆ Require districts to **train all high school staff** about the concept and use of PCs, as well as continue the requirement to provide information to parents and caregivers.
- ◆ We also strongly suggest that PC's be explicitly explained to high school students within the context of their EDP and 4-year plan.



Initiation Process for Personal Curriculums:

- ◆ PCs can be initiated by the parent/legal guardian, emancipated student, or school personnel. If requested by the allowable parties, a PC must be developed. The developed PC still needs to be agreed upon by the parent or legal guardian and the superintendent or school designee before taking effect. An in-person meeting is not required.
- ◆ The PC Team must include—Student; parent/legal guardian; counselor or teacher(s) with content expertise, knowledge of the student, and/or other relevant qualifications, and (if available and where appropriate) school psychologist if a special education student.



Development Process for Personal Curriculums:

In addition to identifying content or credit modifications, the PC must:

- ◆ Align with the EDP, postsecondary goals, and the IEP.
- ◆ Establish measurable goals.
- ◆ Provide a method to evaluate whether the student meets the goals. Alignment with the EDP, postsecondary goals, and the IEP

Modifications Not Allowed*:

There are no modifications to credit requirements allowed in the following areas: English language arts, Civics/Government, Online learning experience, World Language

***Exceptions apply for students with an IEP or transfer students**



Personal Curriculums, in Summary:

The Personal Curriculum is a process to modify specific credit requirements or content expectations based on the individual learning needs of a student.

Allowable modifications for each subject are described on each subject area slide that follows.



Social Studies Considerations:

- ◆ **Current requirement:** 3 credits including World & U.S. History, Civics, & Economics
- ◆ **Summary survey responses:** Keep USH & Gov/Civics; Economics should include personal finance & financial literacy standards
- ◆ **Current PC flexibility:** 1 social studies credit (other than Civics) can be exchanged for an additional English language arts, math, science, or world languages credit, or department- approved formal CTE program completion.



Math Considerations:

- ◆ **Current requirement:** 4 credits including Algebra I, Geometry, Algebra II & a math experience in the final year
- ◆ **Summary survey responses:** A 4th year of math is helpful for all students, including those taking apprenticeship tests
- ◆ **Current PC flexibility:** 1 credit of the state content standards may be modified to $\frac{1}{2}$ credit so long as the modification continues to provide the state content standards.



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Science Considerations:

- ◆ **Current requirement:**

Proficiency in State Content Standards for Science (3 credits) to include 1 cr in Biology and 2 cr in Chemistry, Physics, Anatomy, or Agricultural Science;

Or

Proficiency in some State Content Standards for Science (2 credits) and completion of a department-approved formal CTE program (1 credit)



Science Considerations, continued:

- ◆ **Summary survey responses:** Similar themes to math concerns; Courses must be aligned to NGSS (Next Generation Science Standards); Computer coding should not replace a science credit
- ◆ **Current PC flexibility:** No modification allowed except for students with an IEP and transfer students who have completed 2 years of high school



Health & Physical Education Considerations:

- ◆ **Current requirement:** Proficiency in State Content Standards for Physical Education and Health (1 credit); Or Proficiency with State Content Standards for Health (1/2 credit) and district-approved extra-curricular activities involving physical activities (1/2 credit)
- ◆ **Summary survey responses:** Health courses provide the only class opportunity for students to learn about mental health; P.E. & health are also possibly the only time they learn about fitness and nutrition



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Health & Physical Education Considerations, cont:

- ◆ **Current PC flexibility includes:** Credit can be exchanged for an additional English language arts, math, science, or world languages credit, or department-approved formal CTE program.



World Language Recommendations:

- ◆ **Current requirement:** 2 World Language Credits

Formal coursework OR an equivalent learning experience in grades K-12 (2 credits)

Or

- ◆ Formal coursework or an equivalent learning experience in grades K-12 (1 credit) and completion of a department-approved formal CTE program or an additional visual, performing and applied arts credit (1 credit)



World Language Recommendations, continued:

- ◆ **Summary survey responses:** One year is a reasonable requirement to pique interest in another language & culture; Learning a second language strengthens ELA skills
- ◆ **Current PC flexibility includes:** No modification except for students with an IEP and transfer students who have completed 2 years of high school



Visual & Performing Applied Arts Considerations:

- ◆ **Current requirement:** 1 credit
- ◆ **Summary survey responses:** Eliminating a VPAA requirement could actually limit students by making them believe they should only take “academic” courses; One required credit is reasonable, especially when so many choices fulfill this requirement
- ◆ **Current PC flexibility includes:** Credit can be exchanged for an additional English language arts, math, science, or world languages credit, or department-approved formal CTE program completion



The bottom line:

- ◆ What problems do these laws seek to fix?
- ◆ We should not lower the rigor or weaken standards, regardless of what we label courses
- ◆ Current requirements *already* offer flexibility and options, when fully understood
- ◆ Inconsistencies from district to district may be causing some of the confusion & desire for these changes



Given the current COVID-19 crisis, flexibility for students is even more important than ever.

When standards are taught and schools fully understand the flexibility allowed by current laws and policies, particularly the use of personal curriculum, it becomes clear these proposed changes are not necessary.

If we are truly concerned about Michigan's high school requirements, perhaps it is time for a generational change--not a piecemeal temporary fix for problems we aren't even sure exist. As just one example, perhaps we could consider an alternative diploma path for our students with special needs.