

**School Attendance Amendments**

2026 GENERAL SESSION

STATE OF UTAH

**Chief Sponsor: Jen Plumb**

House Sponsor:

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**LONG TITLE****General Description:**

This bill modifies graduation requirements and provides services for high school students experiencing homelessness or involved in the child welfare system.

**Highlighted Provisions:**

This bill:

- defines terms;
- requires local education agencies to offer diplomas based on the state baseline graduation standard;
- limits local graduation requirements for eligible students;
- requires acceptance of partial credits from various sources;
- exempts students from additional requirements when transferring schools;
- mandates academic support and personal graduation plans;
- restricts disciplinary removals for eligible students;
- establishes data collection and reporting requirements;
- requires staff training and school point of contact designation; and
- creates rulemaking authority for implementation.

**Money Appropriated in this Bill:**

None

**Other Special Clauses:**

This bill provides a special effective date.

**Utah Code Sections Affected:****ENACTS:****53E-4-501**, Utah Code Annotated 1953**53E-4-502**, Utah Code Annotated 1953**53E-4-503**, Utah Code Annotated 1953**53E-4-504**, Utah Code Annotated 1953**53E-4-505**, Utah Code Annotated 1953

31 **53E-4-506**, Utah Code Annotated 1953

32 **53E-4-507**, Utah Code Annotated 1953

33 **53E-4-508**, Utah Code Annotated 1953

34 **53E-4-509**, Utah Code Annotated 1953

35 **53E-4-510**, Utah Code Annotated 1953

36  
37 *Be it enacted by the Legislature of the state of Utah:*

38 Section 1. Section **53E-4-501** is enacted to read:

39 **Part 5. Graduation Requirements and Supports for Students Experiencing**

40 **Homelessness and Students in the Child Welfare System**

41 **53E-4-501 . Definitions.**

42 As used in this part:

- 43 (1) "Eligible student" means a student in grade 9 through grade 12 who:  
44 (a) qualifies as a homeless student; or  
45 (b) is involved in the child welfare system.
- 46 (2) "Homeless student" means a student who qualifies under the McKinney-Vento  
47 Homeless Education Assistance Improvements Act of 2001, 42 U.S.C. Sec. 11431 et seq.
- 48 (3) "Partial credit" means credit awarded for satisfactory completion of a portion of  
49 coursework when a student has not completed the entire course.
- 50 (4) "School of origin" means the same as that term is defined in McKinney-Vento  
51 Homeless Education Assistance Improvements Act of 2001, 42 U.S.C. Sec. 11431 et seq.
- 52 (5) "State baseline graduation standard" means the graduation requirements the state board  
53 establishes under Section 53E-4-502 for eligible students.
- 54 (6) "State minimum graduation requirements" means the graduation requirements  
55 established by the state board under Section 53E-4-204.
- 56 (7) "Unaccompanied youth" means a youth not in the physical custody of a parent or  
57 guardian.

58 Section 2. Section **53E-4-502** is enacted to read:

59 **53E-4-502 . Graduation requirements for eligible students.**

- 60 (1) The state board shall establish a state baseline graduation standard for eligible students.
- 61 (2) An LEA shall:
- 62 (a) offer a diploma based on the state baseline graduation standard to eligible students;

- 63           and
- 64           (b) award a high school diploma to an eligible student who meets the state baseline
- 65           graduation standard.
- 66       (3) An LEA may not require an eligible student to meet additional local graduation
- 67           requirements that exceed the state baseline graduation standard if those requirements
- 68           would prevent the student from graduating within the student's fourth year of high
- 69           school enrollment.
- 70       (4) If an eligible student has not completed the state baseline graduation standard by the end
- 71           of the student's fourth year of high school:
- 72           (a) the student may remain enrolled through the end of the academic year when the
- 73           student turns 19 years old; and
- 74           (b) the LEA may involve relevant staff including, if applicable, the McKinney-Vento
- 75           liaison, in helping the student meeting the state baseline graduation standards.
- 76       (5) An eligible student who meets the requirements of this section shall:
- 77           (a) receive a diploma; and
- 78           (b) be allowed to participate in the LEA's graduation ceremony.
- 79       Section 3. Section **53E-4-503** is enacted to read:
- 80       **53E-4-503 . Credit requirements and transfer.**
- 81       (1) An LEA shall:
- 82           (a) award full or partial credit for coursework satisfactorily completed by an eligible
- 83           student at a previous school;
- 84           (b) accept credit earned through:
- 85               (i) distance learning courses;
- 86               (ii) courses completed in mental health or rehabilitative facilities;
- 87               (iii) courses completed in juvenile detention facilities;
- 88               (iv) courses completed in other LEAs that use different credit standards; or
- 89               (v) other educational programs the LEA approves;
- 90           (c) consolidate partial credit from multiple sources to provide opportunities for credit
- 91           accrual that eliminate academic barriers; and
- 92           (d) when partial credit is awarded in a particular course, enroll the eligible student in the
- 93           same or equivalent course to enable completion of the entire course.
- 94       (2) An LEA may not require an eligible student to satisfy seat time or attendance
- 95           requirements for credit if the student demonstrates mastery of course content.
- 96       (3) An LEA shall develop written procedures for awarding partial credit that include:

- (a) methodology for calculating credit;
- (b) consolidation of partial credit to eliminate barriers; and
- (c) processes for credit recovery and acceleration.

Section 4. Section **53E-4-504** is enacted to read:

**53E-4-504 . School mobility and transfer protections.**

- (1) An eligible student who changes schools after completing grade 10 is exempt from coursework and graduation requirements that exceed the state baseline graduation standard, unless the LEA determines the student can reasonably complete the requirements in time to graduate by the end of the student's fourth year of high school.
- (2) If an eligible student transfers to a new LEA during grade 11 or grade 12 and cannot meet the new LEA's graduation requirements, the previous LEA shall award a diploma if the student meets the previous LEA's graduation requirements.
- (3) An LEA shall provide priority placement in classes that meet the state baseline graduation standard for an eligible student who changes schools during the school year.
- (4) An LEA shall facilitate enrollment and may not require documentation that is not typically required of other students.

Section 5. Section **53E-4-505** is enacted to read:

**53E-4-505 . Academic support and planning.**

- (1) An LEA shall provide each eligible student with:
  - (a) timely assistance and counseling to improve college and career readiness;
  - (b) a personal graduation plan that identifies coursework needed to meet graduation requirements;
  - (c) access to extracurricular activities and summer programs at nominal or no cost;
  - (d) credit recovery opportunities;
  - (e) tutoring and extended learning services at nominal or no cost; and
  - (f) access to career pathway programs, including:
    - (i) Utah First Credential program opportunities as described in Section 53E-10-310;
    - (ii) catalyst center programs as described in Section 53E-3-507.1; and
    - (iii) other industry-recognized credential programs that align with high-demand career pathways.
- (2) An LEA shall review and update the personal graduation plan described in Subsection (1)(b) for each eligible student at least once each semester.
- (3) An LEA shall provide supports to ease transitions during the first two weeks at a new school.

- (4) An LEA may accept participation in programs described in Subsection (1)(f) as equivalent to regular classroom coursework when:
- (a) the student cannot reasonably participate in traditional classroom instruction due to the student's circumstances;
  - (b) the career pathway program provides measurable learning outcomes; and
  - (c) the program aligns with the student's personal graduation plan described in Subsection (1)(b).

Section 6. Section **53E-4-506** is enacted to read:

**53E-4-506 . Discipline protections and restorative practices.**

- (1) Before removing an eligible student from the classroom for more than one school day, an LEA shall:
  - (a) consider the impact of the student's circumstances on the student's behavior;
  - (b) provide interventions to mitigate the impact of the student's circumstances;
  - (c) presume that the student's behavior was caused by the student's circumstances unless the LEA determines otherwise; and
  - (d) involve the McKinney-Vento liaison or child welfare caseworker, as applicable, in the determination process.
- (2) An LEA may not suspend or expel an eligible student unless the LEA determines that the student's behavior was not caused by the student's circumstances.
- (3) An LEA shall provide unaccompanied youth with the right to participate in disciplinary conferences.
- (4) An LEA shall offer restorative discipline interventions and support services to any eligible student who is removed from the classroom for more than two days.

Section 7. Section **53E-4-507** is enacted to read:

**53E-4-507 . School of origin rights.**

An LEA shall ensure a homeless student has the right to:

- (1) remain in the school of origin for the duration of the student's homelessness; and
- (2) remain in the school of origin for one additional academic year after moving into permanent housing if that will be the student's final year at that school.

Section 8. Section **53E-4-508** is enacted to read:

**53E-4-508 . Data collection and reporting.**

- (1) An LEA shall disaggregate and annually report discipline data by:
  - (a) race and ethnicity;
  - (b) homelessness status;

- 165 (c) foster care status;  
166 (d) English learner status; and  
167 (e) disability status.
- 168 (2) An LEA shall maintain the following data and report the data at the request of the state  
169 board:
- 170 (a) the number of eligible students served, disaggregated by:  
171 (i) students following traditional academic pathways; and  
172 (ii) students following career and technical education pathways, including:  
173 (A) Utah First Credential program participants as described in Section 53E-10-310;  
174 (B) catalyst center participants as described in Section 53E-3-507.1; and  
175 (C) other industry-recognized credential program participants;
- 176 (b) graduation rates for eligible students, disaggregated by pathway type as described in  
177 Subsection (2)(a);
- 178 (c) disciplinary actions taken against eligible students;  
179 (d) services provided under this part; and  
180 (e) outcomes for eligible students, including:  
181 (i) postsecondary enrollment rates by pathway type;  
182 (ii) industry credential attainment; and  
183 (iii) employment outcomes where available.
- 184 (3) At the request of the Education Interim Committee, the state board shall provide the  
185 reports described in Subsection (2).
- 186 Section 9. Section **53E-4-509** is enacted to read:  
187 **53E-4-509 . Training and school point of contact.**
- 188 (1) An LEA shall provide annual training to the relevant school personnel as the LEA  
189 determines regarding:  
190 (a) identifying eligible students;  
191 (b) the rights of eligible students;  
192 (c) available resources and services;  
193 (d) trauma-informed practices; and  
194 (e) the requirements of this part.
- 195 (2) Training described in Subsection (1) may be embedded in other trainings the LEA  
196 provides.
- 197 (3) Each school within an LEA shall designate a point of contact for eligible students who  
198 shall:

- 199       (a) identify eligible students;  
200       (b) connect students to the LEA's McKinney-Vento liaison;  
201       (c) facilitate access to services under this part; and  
202       (d) monitor academic progress of eligible students.

203       Section 10. Section **53E-4-510** is enacted to read:

204       **53E-4-510 . Implementation and enforcement.**

- 205       (1) The state board shall make rules in accordance with Title 63G, Chapter 3, Utah  
206       Administrative Rulemaking Act, to implement this part.  
207       (2) The rules made under Subsection (1) shall include:  
208       (a) procedures for awarding partial credit;  
209       (b) standards for implementing the state baseline graduation standard;  
210       (c) guidelines for personal graduation plans;  
211       (d) requirements for data collection and reporting; and  
212       (e) procedures for appealing LEA decisions under this part.  
213       (3) An LEA that fails to comply with this part may be subject to corrective action by the  
214       state board.

215       Section 11. **Effective Date.**

216       This bill takes effect on July 1, 2026.