

1 **School Attendance Amendments**

2026 GENERAL SESSION

STATE OF UTAH

Chief Sponsor: Jen Plumb

House Sponsor:

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:**

- 26 **53E-4-501**, Utah Code Annotated 1953
- 27 **53E-4-502**, Utah Code Annotated 1953
- 28 **53E-4-503**, Utah Code Annotated 1953
- 29 **53E-4-504**, Utah Code Annotated 1953
- 30 **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

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;

and

(b) award a high school diploma to an eligible student who meets the state baseline graduation standard.

(3) An LEA may not require an eligible student to meet additional local graduation requirements that exceed the state baseline graduation standard if those requirements would prevent the student from graduating within the student's fourth year of high school enrollment.

(4) If an eligible student has not completed the state baseline graduation standard by the end of the student's fourth year of high school:

(a) the student may remain enrolled through the end of the academic year when the student turns 19 years old; and

(b) the LEA may involve relevant staff including, if applicable, the McKinney-Vento liaison, in helping the student meeting the state baseline graduation standards.

(5) An eligible student who meets the requirements of this section shall:

(a) receive a diploma; and

(b) be allowed to participate in the LEA's graduation ceremony.

Section 3. Section **53E-4-503** is enacted to read:

53E-4-503 . Credit requirements and transfer.

(1) An LEA shall:

(a) award full or partial credit for coursework satisfactorily completed by an eligible student at a previous school;

(b) accept credit earned through:

(i) distance learning courses;

(ii) courses completed in mental health or rehabilitative facilities;

(iii) courses completed in juvenile detention facilities;

(iv) courses completed in other LEAs that use different credit standards; or

(v) other educational programs the LEA approves;

(c) consolidate partial credit from multiple sources to provide opportunities for credit accrual that eliminate academic barriers; and

(d) when partial credit is awarded in a particular course, enroll the eligible student in the same or equivalent course to enable completion of the entire course.

(2) An LEA may not require an eligible student to satisfy seat time or attendance requirements for credit if the student demonstrates mastery of course content.

(3) An LEA shall develop written procedures for awarding partial credit that include:

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

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

101 **53E-4-504 . School mobility and transfer protections.**

102 (1) An eligible student who changes schools after completing grade 10 is exempt from
103 coursework and graduation requirements that exceed the state baseline graduation
104 standard, unless the LEA determines the student can reasonably complete the
105 requirements in time to graduate by the end of the student's fourth year of high school.

106 (2) If an eligible student transfers to a new LEA during grade 11 or grade 12 and cannot
107 meet the new LEA's graduation requirements, the previous LEA shall award a diploma if
108 the student meets the previous LEA's graduation requirements.

109 (3) An LEA shall provide priority placement in classes that meet the state baseline
110 graduation standard for an eligible student who changes schools during the school year.

111 (4) An LEA shall facilitate enrollment and may not require documentation that is not
112 typically required of other students.

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

114 **53E-4-505 . Academic support and planning.**

115 (1) An LEA shall provide each eligible student with:
116 (a) timely assistance and counseling to improve college and career readiness;
117 (b) a personal graduation plan that identifies coursework needed to meet graduation
118 requirements;
119 (c) access to extracurricular activities and summer programs at nominal or no cost;
120 (d) credit recovery opportunities;
121 (e) tutoring and extended learning services at nominal or no cost; and
122 (f) access to career pathway programs, including:
123 (i) Utah First Credential program opportunities as described in Section 53E-10-310;
124 (ii) catalyst center programs as described in Section 53E-3-507.1; and
125 (iii) other industry-recognized credential programs that align with high-demand
126 career pathways.

127 (2) An LEA shall review and update the personal graduation plan described in Subsection
128 (1)(b) for each eligible student at least once each semester.

129 (3) An LEA shall provide supports to ease transitions during the first two weeks at a new
130 school.

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

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

139 **53E-4-506 . Discipline protections and restorative practices.**

140 (1) Before removing an eligible student from the classroom for more than one school day,
141 an LEA shall:
142 (a) consider the impact of the student's circumstances on the student's behavior;
143 (b) provide interventions to mitigate the impact of the student's circumstances;
144 (c) presume that the student's behavior was caused by the student's circumstances unless
145 the LEA determines otherwise; and
146 (d) involve the McKinney-Vento liaison or child welfare caseworker, as applicable, in
147 the determination process.

148 (2) An LEA may not suspend or expel an eligible student unless the LEA determines that
149 the student's behavior was not caused by the student's circumstances.

150 (3) An LEA shall provide unaccompanied youth with the right to participate in disciplinary
151 conferences.

152 (4) An LEA shall offer restorative discipline interventions and support services to any
153 eligible student who is removed from the classroom for more than two days.

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

155 **53E-4-507 . School of origin rights.**

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

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

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

161 **53E-4-508 . Data collection and reporting.**

162 (1) An LEA shall disaggregate and annually report discipline data by:
163 (a) race and ethnicity;
164 (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.