

1 **High School Graduation Amendments**

2026 GENERAL SESSION

STATE OF UTAH

**Chief Sponsor: Jen Plumb**

House Sponsor:

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3 **LONG TITLE**4 **General Description:**5 This bill ensures students meeting graduation requirements can participate in graduation  
6 ceremonies.7 **Highlighted Provisions:**

8 This bill:

9 ▶ requires an LEA to allow any student receiving a diploma to participate in graduation  
10 ceremonies, including students in online programs, except when significant safety  
11 concerns exist;

12 ▶ requires State Board of Education oversight of local graduation policies; and

13 ▶ makes conforming changes.

14 **Money Appropriated in this Bill:**

15 None

16 **Other Special Clauses:**

17 This bill provides a special effective date.

18 **Utah Code Sections Affected:**19 **AMENDS:**20 **53E-3-501 (Effective 07/01/26) (Partially Repealed 07/01/28)**, as last amended by Laws  
21 of Utah 2025, First Special Session, Chapter 922 **53E-4-204 (Effective 07/01/26)**, as last amended by Laws of Utah 2025, Chapter 14223 **ENACTS:**24 **53G-4-416 (Effective 07/01/26)**, Utah Code Annotated 1953

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25 *Be it enacted by the Legislature of the state of Utah:*26 Section 1. Section **53E-3-501** is amended to read:27 **53E-3-501 (Effective 07/01/26) (Partially Repealed 07/01/28). State board to**  
28 **establish miscellaneous minimum standards for public schools.**

29 (1) The state board shall establish rules and minimum standards for the public schools that

31 are consistent with this public education code, including rules and minimum standards  
32 governing the following:

33 (a)(i) the qualification and certification of educators and ancillary personnel who  
34 provide direct student services;

35 (ii) required school administrative and supervisory services; and  
36 (iii) the evaluation of instructional personnel;

37 (b)(i) access to programs;

38 (ii) attendance;

39 (iii) competency levels;

40 (iv) in accordance with Subsection (8), graduation requirements; and

41 (v) discipline and control;

42 (c)(i) school accreditation;

43 (ii) the academic year;

44 (iii) alternative and pilot programs;

45 (iv) curriculum and instruction requirements; and

46 (v) school libraries;

47 (d) services to:

48 (i) persons with a disability as defined by and covered under:

49 (A) the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, 42 U.S.C. Sec. 12102;

50 (B) the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, 29 U.S.C. Sec. 705(20)(A); and

51 (C) the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 20 U.S.C. Sec. 1401(3); and

52 (ii) other special groups;

53 (e)(i) state reimbursed bus routes;

54 (ii) bus safety and operational requirements; and

55 (iii) other transportation needs;

56 (f)(i) school productivity and cost effectiveness measures;

57 (ii) federal programs;

58 (iii) school budget formats; and

59 (iv) financial, statistical, and student accounting requirements; and

60 (g) data collection and reporting by LEAs.

61 (2) Except as provided in Subsection (3), the state board shall determine if:

62 (a) the minimum standards have been met; and

63 (b) required reports are properly submitted.

64 (3) When the state board makes a request of an LEA under Subsection (1)(f) or (g), the

65 state board shall include:

- 66 (a) the justification for the requested information;
- 67 (b) a statement confirming that the information is not available elsewhere;
- 68 (c) a deadline by which the LEA must provide the information in accordance with state
- 69 board rule; and
- 70 (d) penalties, including withholding of funds, for non-compliance in accordance with
- 71 state and federal law.

72 (4) The state board may apply for, receive, administer, and distribute to eligible applicants

73 funds made available through programs of the federal government.

74 (5)(a) A technical college listed in Section 53H-3-1202 shall provide competency-based

75 career and technical education courses that fulfill high school graduation

76 requirements, as requested and authorized by the state board.

77 (b) A school district may grant a high school diploma to a student participating in a

78 course described in Subsection (5)(a) that is provided by a technical college listed in

79 Section 53H-3-1202.

80 (6)(a) As used in this Subsection (6), "generally accepted accounting principles" means a

81 common framework of accounting rules and standards for financial reporting

82 promulgated by the Governmental Accounting Standards Board.

83 (b) Subject to Subsections (6)(c) and (d), the state board shall ensure the rules and

84 standards described in Subsections (1)(f) and (g) allow for an LEA to make

85 adjustments to the LEA's general entry ledger, in accordance with generally accepted

86 accounting principles, to accurately reflect the LEA's use of funds for allowable costs

87 and activities:

- 88 (i) during a fiscal year; and
- 89 (ii) at the close of a fiscal year.

90 (c) If the state board determines under Subsection (2) that an LEA has not met the

91 minimum standards described in Subsection (1)(f) or (g) or has not properly

92 submitted a required report, the state board shall allow the LEA an opportunity to

93 cure the relevant defect through an adjustment described in Subsection (6)(b).

94 (d) An LEA may not, in an adjustment described in Subsection (6)(b), reflect the use of

95 restricted federal or state funds for a cost or activity that is not an allowable cost or

96 activity for the restricted funds.

97 (7)(a) As used in this Subsection (7):

- 98 (i)(A) "Comparable course" means a course that fulfills the same graduation credit

99 requirements as a course for which a student seeks to improve a grade.

100 (B) "Comparable course" does not include a course a student completes through  
101 the packet method.

102 (ii) "Grade replacement" means credit a student earns by retaking a teacher-led  
103 course for a letter grade to improve a previous grade, which:  
104 (A) may raise the student's grade point average if the new grade is higher; and  
105 (B) replaces the lower grade on the student's transcript.

106 (iii) "Original credit" means credit a student earns through the successful completion  
107 of a course for the first time.

108 (iv) "Packet" means a collection of instructional materials and assessments used to  
109 receive credit through the packet method.

110 (v) "Packet method" means an educational approach where:  
111 (A) a high school student receives a collection of instructional materials from an  
112 institution, organization, or LEA;  
113 (B) the high school student works through the materials independently with  
114 minimal or no direct instruction from a teacher; and  
115 (C) assessment is primarily based on completion of assignments within the  
116 instructional materials.

117 (vi) "Replacement credit" means a pass-fail credit a student earns for a course the  
118 student did not pass or complete, which:

119 (A) does not affect the student's grade point average; and  
120 (B) allows the student to fulfill high school graduation requirements.

121 (b) An LEA may award a grade for original credit or replacement credit through the  
122 packet method if the packet adheres to the standards prescribed in state board rule  
123 and:

124 (i) the LEA approves the packet for use as an instructional material in accordance  
125 with:

126 (A) Subsection 53G-4-402(27) for a district school; or  
127 (B) Section 53G-5-404 for a charter school; or

128 (ii) the state board recommends the packet after going through the state instructional  
129 materials process described in Title 53E, Chapter 4, Part 4, State Instructional  
130 Materials.

131 (c) An LEA may not use the packet method, or classify a packet as original credit, to  
132 improve a previous course grade of a high school student as described in Subsection

133 (7)(d).

134 (d) A high school student may improve a grade through grade replacement by:

135 (i) repeating a course one or more times; or

136 (ii) enrolling in and completing a comparable course that is teacher-led.

137 (e) The state board shall:

138 (i) in accordance with Title 63G, Chapter 3, Utah Administrative Rulemaking Act,  
139 make rules or policies that:

140 (A) establish standards for the use of the packet method to award original credit  
141 and replacement credit;

142 (B) include alignment with core standards the state board establishes under  
143 Sections 53E-3-501 and 53E-4-202; and

144 (C) maintain a comprehensive list of state board approved packets in the state  
145 board's Recommended Instructional Materials System on the state board's  
146 website; and

147 (ii) report annually to the Education Interim Committee the number of students in  
148 each LEA who receive academic credit through the packet method.

149 (f) An LEA shall:

150 (i) assign a distinct course name and number for credit earned through the packet  
151 method to easily identify the use of the packet method on a student transcript; and

152 (ii) track and record the number of packets an LEA uses to award original credit or  
153 replacement credit each school year.

154 (8) In establishing rules and minimum standards under Subsection (1)(b)(iv) regarding  
155 graduation requirements, the state board shall ensure that the rules and standards require  
156 an LEA to comply with Section 53G-4-416 regarding student participation in graduation  
157 activities.

158 Section 2. Section **53E-4-204** is amended to read:

159 **53E-4-204 (Effective 07/01/26). Standards and graduation requirements.**

160 (1) The state board shall establish rigorous core standards for Utah public schools and  
161 graduation requirements under Section 53E-3-501 for grades 9 through 12 that:

162 (a) are consistent with state law and federal regulations;

163 (b) use competency-based standards and assessments;

164 (c) include instruction that stresses general financial literacy from basic budgeting to  
165 financial investments, including bankruptcy education and a general financial literacy  
166 test-out option;

167 (d) include graduation requirements in language arts, mathematics, and science that  
168 exceed:  
169 (i) 3.0 units in language arts including up to 0.5 units emphasizing verbal  
170 communication completed in a course or a school sponsored activity;  
171 (ii) 2.0 units in mathematics; and  
172 (iii) [and] 2.0 units in science; [and]  
173 (e) include a graduation requirement in social studies that is equal to or exceeds 3.5  
174 units, including at least 1.0 unit in American constitutional government and  
175 citizenship as described in Section 53E-4-205.2; and  
176 (f) ensure up to 0.5 units described in Subsection (1)(e) may be earned by:  
177 (i) completing a course or a school sponsored activity emphasizing verbal  
178 communication provided that a significant portion of the course or activity is  
179 dedicated to civic education, including:  
180 (A) policy analysis;  
181 (B) governmental systems; and  
182 (C) civic engagement; or  
183 (ii) participation in the Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps described in 10 U.S.C  
184 Sec. 2031.  
185 (2) The state board shall establish competency-based standards and assessments for elective  
186 courses.  
187 (3) The state board shall study requiring all LEAs to issue a high school diploma to students  
188 who receive:  
189 (a) an associate's degree with at least 60 credit hours from an accredited post-secondary  
190 institution; or  
191 (b) an industry certification with at least 500 hours of instruction from a business, trade  
192 association, or other industry group in accordance with Section 53E-3-501.  
193 (4) The state board shall ensure that an LEA complies with the requirements of Section  
194 53G-4-416 regarding student graduation participation requirements.  
195 Section 3. Section **53G-4-416** is enacted to read:  
196 **53G-4-416 (Effective 07/01/26). Student graduation participation and diploma**  
197 **requirements.**  
198 (1) As used in this section, "graduation activities" means graduation ceremonies,  
199 commencement exercises, graduation celebrations, honors ceremonies, or other  
200 activities associated with graduation recognition.

201 (2)(a) An LEA shall allow a student to participate in graduation activities if the LEA  
202 awards or will award a diploma to the student, including a student participating in an  
203 online program.

204 (b) Notwithstanding Subsection (2)(a), an LEA may prohibit a student from participating  
205 in graduation activities if the LEA determines the student's participation presents  
206 significant safety concerns.

207 **Section 4. Effective Date.**

208 This bill takes effect on July 1, 2026.