



ILLINOIS GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

Overview

Of the 881 school districts in Illinois, 500 will have a graduating class in 2005. Each student in those districts must meet graduation requirements set by the state. The current high school graduation requirements were established for the 1984-85 school year---prior to the creation of Illinois academic goals and standards. While these requirements have not been changed in the intervening period, most school districts have standards that go well beyond these current minimums. Indeed, many districts raised graduation requirements to meet the entrance requirements of Illinois' public universities and to also meet the academic standards that were put into place in 1997.

This review will look at the proposed legislation from a variety of viewpoints: How the enhanced requirements will be implemented over time; how the enhanced requirements compare with existing entrance requirements for Illinois' public universities; how our new requirements will compare with the rest of the country; how our new requirements align to our existing academic standards; and why we need to upgrade our expectations from the standpoint of graduating seniors entering both college and the workforce.

Implementation of enhanced graduation requirements as proposed in SB 575

	Current	Proposed 2005-06	Proposed 2006-07	Proposed 2007-08	Proposed 2008-09
Language Arts	3 years	3 years	3 years	3 years	4 years
Writing Intensive Courses			2 years	2 years	2 years
Math/Computer Technology	2 years	3 years			
Math/Algebra 1/Geometry			3 years	3 years	3 years
Science	1 year	1 year	1 year	2 years	2 years
Social Studies/US History	2 years	2 years	2 years	2 years	2 years
Music/Art/foreign language	1 year	1 year	1 year	1 year	1 year

High School Graduation Requirements vs Illinois University Entrance Requirement

	High School		Illinois University Entrance		
	Current	Proposed 2008-09	UI/UC	CSU	WIU
Language Arts	3 years	4 years	4 years	4 years	4 years
Writing Intensive Courses		2 years			
Math/Computer Technology	2 years				
Math/Algebra 1/Geometry		3 years	3-3.5 years*	3 years	3 years*
Science	1 year	2 years	2 years**	3 years**	3 years**
Social Studies/US History	2 years	2 years	2 years	3 years	3 years
Music/Art/foreign language	1 year	1 year	2 years***		
Flex (Includes fine arts)			2 years	2 years	2 years

*includes trigonometry for a number of majors within the various schools; **Laboratory Sciences; ***Foreign language

High School Graduation requirements vs the rest of the country

MATH: This legislation will specify coursework completion in Algebra 1 and Geometry within two years. Currently, only 11 other states meet this requirement. Arkansas is the only state currently that requires coursework beyond Geometry. At least 13 other states have committed to raise their graduation requirements in math.

ENGLISH: One state requires three years of English in high school. Six states require 4 years of English. Two of these six states require a speech course. With the additional writing coursework and the additional year of language arts, Illinois will be in the top tier of states.

High School Graduation requirements vs Illinois Academic Standards

MATH: Illinois Academic Standards require that students in late high school have working knowledge of Numeration, Algebra 1, Geometry, statistical methods, data analysis, and probability. To fully align our graduation requirements with our academic standards, a 4th year of math—Algebra 2 or Statistics—should be added.

SCIENCE: Illinois Academic Standards require that students in late high school know and can apply key concepts in life, physical, and earth/space sciences. The proposed requirements will minimally meet the standards.

ENGLISH: Illinois Academic Standards require a high school student to read with understanding and fluency; to write to communicate; to listen and speak effectively in a variety of situations; and to use language arts to research, acquire, assess, and communicate information. The proposed legislation will meet these standards.

High School Graduate Self-Identified Academic Deficiencies

Of every 100 Freshmen entering high school in Illinois, 72 will graduate; 43 will immediately enter college; 30 will still be enrolled in college their sophomore year; and only 20 will graduate college within the traditional four years. Of the two options available to high school graduates—work or college—self identified academic deficiencies are remarkably similar in both groups. What is needed for both groups is high expectations and quality academic standards.

	College Entry		Workforce Entry	
	Gap	Large Gap	Gap	Large Gap
Oral Communications	45%	12%	46%	15%
Science	44%	11%	51%	14%
Mathematics	42%	13%	41%	16%
Research Abilities	40%	10%	45%	13%
Writing	35%	9%	38%	10%