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MEMORANDUM

To: District School Superintendents

From: Jim Warford

Date: May 26, 2004

Subject: 2004 LEGISLATIVE CHANGES REGARDING HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION PROGRAMS

The 2004 Legislature passed Committee Substitute for Senate Bill 364 that amended several laws related to high school graduation requirements. The purpose of these amendments is to revise current laws regarding three-year graduation programs and extend the policy for specified students to use concordant scores on the SAT or ACT to meet FCAT requirements for graduation. Technical assistance regarding the authorization for specified students to use an alternative assessment to meet the grade 10 FCAT graduation requirement was disseminated via a memo from Commissioner Horne, dated May 13, 2004. The purpose of this memo is to provide general information related to the three high school graduation programs.

JIM WARFORD
K-12 Chancellor

Beginning with the 2004-2005 school year, students who enter the ninth grade may select one of three high school graduation programs. Any student who selected an accelerated graduation program before July 1, 2004, may continue that program, and all statutory requirements that were applicable when the student made the program choice shall remain applicable to the student as long as he or she continues that program. (See "Online Sunshine," the Florida Legislature's Internet site, at www.flsenate.gov/data/session/2004/senate/bills/billtext/pdf/s0364er.pdf for a copy of Committee Substitute for Senate Bill 364, sections 1, 2, and 3.)

This legislation amended Section 1003.429, Florida Statutes (Accelerated high school graduation options.--), to require that each district school board must provide students in grades six through nine and their parents with specific information related to the three high school graduation options, including curriculum for students and parents to select the postsecondary education or career plan that best fits their needs. The law prohibits district school boards from establishing requirements for the accelerated three-year high school graduation options in excess of the required 18 credits. The bill requires students to select one of the graduation options by the end of ninth grade and establishes a cumulative weighted grade point average of 3.0 on a 4.0 scale, or its equivalent, in the courses required for graduation for both three-year graduation programs.

Summary of High School Graduation Options

Four-year standard graduation requirements (minimum of 24 credits – no change from current requirements including flexibility for completion of additional requirements prescribed by district school board):

- 4 credits in English (major concentration in composition and literature)
- 3 credits in math (must include Algebra I)
- 3 credits in science (two of which must include a lab component)
- 1 credit in American history
- 1 credit in world history
- .5 credit in economics
- .5 credit in American government
- 1 credit in practical arts career and technical education or performing fine arts; or .5 credit each in practical arts career and technical education and performing fine arts
- .5 credit in life management skills
- 1 credit in physical education
- 8.5 credits in electives

Three-year standard college preparatory program (18 credits – italics indicate new language):

- 4 credits in English (major concentration in composition and literature)
- 3 credits in math (Algebra I or higher)
- 3 credits in science (two of which must include a lab component)
- 3 credits in social sciences (*must include 1 credit in American history, 1 credit in world history, .5 credit in American government, and .5 credit in economics*)
- 2 credits in same second language or demonstrated proficiency in another language
- 3 credits in electives

- *At least 6 of the 18 credits required for this program must be received in classes that are honors; dual enrollment; advanced placement; International Baccalaureate; Advanced International Certificate of Education; specifically listed or identified by the Department of Education as rigorous pursuant to section 1009.531(3), Florida Statutes; or weighted by the district school board for class ranking purposes*

Three-year career preparatory program (18 credits – italics indicate new language):

- 4 credits in English (major concentration in composition and literature)
- 3 credits in math (must include Algebra I)
- 3 credits in science (two of which must include a lab component)
- 3 credits in social sciences (*must include 1 credit in American history, 1 credit in world history, .5 credit in American government, and .5 credit in economics*)
- *3 credits in a single vocational or career education program, 3 credits in career and technical certificate dual enrollment, or 5 credits in vocational or career technical courses*
- *2 credits in electives unless 5 credits are earned as referenced above*
- *Deleted foreign language requirement*

Bright Futures

The three-year graduation options may be used to meet the requirement for a student to earn a standard Florida high school diploma in order to be eligible for a Florida Bright Futures Scholarship. You may visit the Bright Futures website for specific details at www.MyFloridaEducation.com/brfuture and select “First-Time Applicants” and click on “What are the Academic Requirements?”

Minimum State University System Admission Requirements

The number of English, math, science, social science, foreign language, and elective credits within the three-year standard college preparatory program aligns with the minimum state university admissions standards listed in current law. High school counselors must continue to encourage students interested in pursuing university studies to take the designated courses within these categories regardless of whether students choose the three or four-year graduation option.

In Summary

The three graduation programs are simply options. Each student and his or her parents must select the graduation option and curriculum that most appropriately prepares the student for his or her postsecondary education or career plan. Students and parents should consider the benefits of other acceleration opportunities, such as dual enrollment, advanced placement, early admission, and the International Baccalaureate program, and are encouraged to discuss these plans with their school counselor on a regular basis in grades 6-12.

Information found within publications and on websites is currently being updated. The *Florida Counseling for Future Education Handbook* is recommended for use in advising students seeking admission to Florida’s postsecondary institutions and can be viewed online from the Department of Education’s website at www.fldoe.org. Under the site index, scroll down to the *Future Education Handbook*. A newer version of the *Handbook* currently is being edited and will contain the updated information regarding new graduation requirements.

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Department staff are developing technical assistance materials with input from district staff to provide guidance with implementation of this legislation, including additional requirements to the three-year programs that are not addressed in this memo and will need further clarification. Please note that all revisions regarding high school graduation options must be included in your 2004-2005 student progression plan. Additional information regarding these provisions will be available in the near future.

If you have questions or need additional information regarding K12 curriculum, instruction, or guidance services, please contact Mary Jo Butler or Mike Tremor. If you have questions regarding career and technical education programs, please contact Nancy Cordill.

If you have questions regarding community college admissions, please contact Sylvia Fleishman at (850) 245-9468 or by email at sylvia.fleishman@fldoe.org. You may contact Lynda Page or Nell Kelly at (850) 245-0467 or by email at nell.kelly@fldoe.org regarding admission to the state universities.

If you have questions regarding the Florida Bright Futures Scholarship Program, please contact JoAnn McGonagill at (850) 410-5175 or by email at joann.mcgonagill@fldoe.org.

JW:mjbo

cc: Assistant Superintendents for Instruction
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