

House Bill 905 (COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE)

By: Representatives Millar of the 79<sup>th</sup>, Richardson of the 19<sup>th</sup>, Lindsey of the 54<sup>th</sup>, Holmes of the 61<sup>st</sup>, Everson of the 106<sup>th</sup>, and others

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED  
AN ACT

1 To amend Article 6 of Chapter 2 of Title 20 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated,  
2 relating to the "Quality Basic Education Act," so as to enact the "Building Resourceful  
3 Individuals to Develop Georgia's Economy Act" to develop programs to improve graduation  
4 rates and to improve the preparedness of students for postsecondary education and careers;  
5 to provide for definitions; to provide for the development of focused programs of study; to  
6 provide for model programs for students at risk of dropping out of high school; to train  
7 school counselors and graduation coaches to provide for educational counseling and career  
8 awareness programs for students; to establish a reform grant program; to require local school  
9 systems which receive a reform grant to comply with certain requirements; to provide for  
10 high school completion rate goals in the state accountability system; to provide for rules and  
11 regulations; to provide for exemptions from certain portions of the high school graduation  
12 test and end-of-course assessments; to provide for related matters; to repeal conflicting laws;  
13 and for other purposes.

14 BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF GEORGIA:

15 **SECTION 1.**

16 Article 6 of Chapter 2 of Title 20 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to the  
17 "Quality Basic Education Act," is amended by adding a new part to read as follows:

18 "Part 16

19 20-2-325.

20 This part shall be known and may be cited as the 'Building Resourceful Individuals to  
21 Develop Georgia's Economy Act.'

1 20-2-326.

2 For purposes of this part, the term:

3 (1) 'Career academy' means a specialized charter school established by a partnership  
4 between one or more local boards of education and a technical school or college and  
5 approved by the State Board of Education in accordance with Article 31 of this chapter.

6 This term also includes a small learning community where a student receives academic  
7 instruction at his or her assigned high school combined with work-based learning  
8 opportunities at an industry center or technical school or college.

9 (2) 'Choice technical high school' means a high school, other than the high school to  
10 which a student is assigned by virtue of his or her residence and attendance zone, which  
11 is designed to prepare a high school student for postsecondary education and for  
12 employment in a career field. A choice technical high school may be operated by a local  
13 school system or a technical school or college. A choice technical high school may also  
14 be operated as a charter school under a governance board composed of parents,  
15 employers, and representatives from the local board of education.

16 (3) 'Chronically low-performing high school' means a public high school in this state  
17 with a graduation rate less than 60 percent, as determined in accordance with  
18 methodology established by the National Governors Association's Compact on High  
19 School Graduation Data, for three consecutive years.

20 (4) 'Focused program of study' means a rigorous academic core combined with either a  
21 focus in mathematics and science; a focus in humanities, fine arts, and foreign language;  
22 or a coherent sequence of career pathway courses that is aligned with graduation  
23 requirements established by the State Board of Education and curriculum requirements  
24 established pursuant to Part 2 of this article, that prepares a student for postsecondary  
25 education or immediate employment after high school graduation, and that is in  
26 accordance with the requirements of paragraph (1) of Code Section 20-2-328.

27 (5) 'Graduation plan' means a student specific plan developed in accordance with Code  
28 Section 20-2-329.1 detailing the courses necessary for a high school student to graduate  
29 from high school and to successfully transition to postsecondary education and the work  
30 force.

31 (6) 'Industry certification' means a process of program evaluation that ensures that  
32 individual programs meet industry standards in the areas of curriculum, teacher  
33 qualification, lab specifications, equipment, and industry involvement.

34 (7) 'Small learning community' means an autonomous or semiautonomous small learning  
35 environment within a large high school which is made up of a subset of students and  
36 teachers for a two, three, or four-year period. The goal of a small learning community  
37 is to achieve greater personalization of learning with each community led by a principal

1 or instructional leader. A small learning community blends academic studies around a  
 2 broad career or academic theme where teachers have common planning time to connect  
 3 teacher assignments and assessments to college and career readiness standards. Students  
 4 voluntarily apply for enrollment in a small learning community but must be accepted and  
 5 such enrollment must be approved by the student's parent or guardian. A small learning  
 6 community also includes a career academy organized around a specific career theme  
 7 which integrates academic and career instruction, provides work-based learning  
 8 opportunities, and prepares students for postsecondary education and employment, with  
 9 support through partnerships with local employers, community organizations, and  
 10 postsecondary institutions.

11 (8) 'Technical school or college' means a school, college, institution, or other branch of  
 12 the Department of Technical and Adult Education.

13 20-2-327.

14 (a)(1) No later than July 1, 2009, the Department of Education shall develop and the State  
 15 Board of Education shall approve curriculum frameworks for focused programs of study  
 16 in accordance with a phase-in schedule as determined by the state board.

17 (2) Focused programs of study that are in high demand, high skill, and high wage  
 18 academic and career fields shall be given priority and may include, but are not limited to:

- 19 (A) Aerospace;
- 20 (B) Health care and elderly care;
- 21 (C) Agribusiness;
- 22 (D) Life science;
- 23 (E) Energy and environmental;
- 24 (F) Logistics and transportation;
- 25 (G) Information and technology;
- 26 (H) Teacher education training;
- 27 (I) Technology and engineering;
- 28 (J) Science and mathematics; and
- 29 (K) Humanities and fine arts.

30 (3) The department shall include in the curriculum frameworks the flexibility for a  
 31 student to pursue a focused program of study, utilizing courses offered within a career or  
 32 academic focus area at the school of attendance, at a technical school or college, at a  
 33 public four-year college, at a work site under an apprenticeship cooperative education  
 34 program, and at other settings approved by the State Board of Education, as appropriate.

35 (4) For each focused program of study identified pursuant to this subsection, the  
 36 department shall convene a panel which includes high school teachers; school counselors;

1 representatives from the Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia, the  
2 Department of Technical and Adult Education, and employers; and others as deemed  
3 appropriate by the department. These panels shall develop and recommend a curriculum  
4 framework aligned to essential college and career readiness standards for the focused  
5 program of study which blends academic and technical content with real world problems  
6 and projects for students. At least once every four years, the department shall convene  
7 such panels to review and update the focused programs of study.

8 (b)(1) The State Board of Education shall develop an evidence based model program for  
9 chronically low-performing high schools receiving a reform grant pursuant to  
10 subsection (f) of this Code section for addressing at-risk students, which shall include  
11 various programs and curricula proven to be effective for at-risk students focusing on:

12 (A) Identification of students at risk for being poorly prepared for the next grade level  
13 or for dropping out of school;

14 (B) Strengthening retention of ninth grade students in school and reducing high failure  
15 rates;

16 (C) Improving more student performance to grade level standards in reading and  
17 mathematics by the end of ninth grade;

18 (D) Assisting students and their parents or guardians in setting an outcome career and  
19 educational goal and identifying a focused program of study to achieve such goal; and

20 (E) Assisting students in learning and applying study skills, coping skills, and other  
21 habits that produce successful students and adults.

22 (2) The at-risk model program shall include:

23 (A) Diagnostic assessments to identify strengths and weaknesses in the core academic  
24 areas;

25 (B) A process for identifying these students, closely monitored by the Department of  
26 Education in collaboration with local school systems to ensure that students are being  
27 properly identified and provided timely, appropriate guidance and assistance and to  
28 ensure that no group is disproportionately represented; and

29 (C) An evaluation component in each high school to ensure the programs are providing  
30 students an opportunity to graduate with a high school diploma.

31 (3) The at-risk model program may include various components designed to result in  
32 more students facilitating a successful start in high school and passing the ninth grade  
33 such as:

34 (A) Utilizing a flexible schedule that increases students' time in core language  
35 arts/reading and mathematics studies designed to eliminate academic deficiencies;

36 (B) Maintaining a student-teacher ratio in ninth grade that is no higher than any other  
37 grade level ratio in high school;

- 1 (C) Utilizing experienced and effective teachers as leaders for teacher teams in ninth  
2 grade to improve instructional planning, delivery, and re-teaching strategies;
- 3 (D) Assigning students to a teacher mentor who will meet with them frequently to  
4 provide planned lessons on study skills and other habits of success that help students  
5 become independent learners and who will help them receive the assistance they need  
6 to successfully pass the ninth grade; and
- 7 (E) Including ninth grade career courses which incorporate a series of miniprojects  
8 throughout the school year that require the application of ninth grade level reading,  
9 mathematics, and science skills to complete while students learn to use a range of  
10 technology and help students explore a range of educational and career options that will  
11 assist them in formulating post high school goals and give them a reason to stay in  
12 school and work toward achieving their stated goals.
- 13 (c) No later than July 1, 2009, the State Board of Education shall promulgate rules and  
14 regulations for chronically low-performing high schools receiving a reform grant pursuant  
15 to subsection (f) of this Code section to make the high schools more relevant to and  
16 effective for all students. Such rules shall encourage high schools to implement a  
17 comprehensive school reform research based model that focuses on:
- 18 (1) Setting high expectations for all students;
- 19 (2) Personalizing graduation plans for students;
- 20 (3) Developing small learning communities or career academies with a rigorous  
21 academic foundation and emphasis in broad career fields of study;
- 22 (4) Using project based instruction embedded with strong academics to improve  
23 relevancy in learning;
- 24 (5) Fostering collaboration among academic and career/technical teachers;
- 25 (6) Implementing nontraditional scheduling in ninth grade for students behind in their  
26 grade level;
- 27 (7) Promoting parental involvement; and
- 28 (8) Training teachers to work with low-performing students and their parents or  
29 guardians.
- 30 (d) The Department of Education shall for chronically low-performing high schools  
31 receiving a reform grant pursuant to subsection (f) of this Code section provide training  
32 school counselors and graduation coaches about high demand, high skill, and high wage  
33 opportunities for bachelor's degrees, associate's degrees, and certificates, how a  
34 combination of rigorous academic and technical courses can prepare students for these  
35 fields, and how to organize a teacher adviser system that engages teachers in working with  
36 a core group of students and their parents or guardians in setting goals, identifying  
37 individual programs of study, and establishing individual graduation plans to achieve those

1 goals. The plan shall include strategies for school counselors, graduation coaches, and  
2 teacher advisers to effectively involve parents or guardians in the educational and career  
3 guidance process and in the development of individual graduation plans. Upon request by  
4 any local school system, training may be given to school counselors and graduation  
5 coaches in any high school.

6 (e) No later than July 1, 2010, the State Board of Education, in collaboration with the State  
7 Board of Technical and Adult Education, shall establish a process for certifying all career  
8 pathway programs of study receiving state funds by using national certifying agencies  
9 where they exist and developing state industry-certifying panels in career pathways where  
10 no national certifying agency exists. The certification process shall, at a minimum, validate  
11 that a program of study's curriculum meets industry standards where applicable, that its  
12 teachers hold current industry certification where applicable, and that its facilities,  
13 equipment, and software are adequate to teach the curriculum.

14 (f) Subject to appropriations by the General Assembly, the State Board of Education shall  
15 establish a competitive grant program for local school systems to implement school reform  
16 measures in selected schools pursuant to this part. The state board shall establish program  
17 requirements in accordance with the provisions of this article and shall establish grant  
18 criteria, which shall include that priority for reform grants shall be given to chronically  
19 low-performing high schools.

20 20-2-328.

21 High schools that receive a reform grant pursuant to subsection (f) of Code Section  
22 20-2-327 shall:

23 (1) Provide focused programs of study which are designed to provide a well-rounded  
24 education for students by fostering artistic creativity, critical thinking, and self-discipline  
25 through the teaching of academic content, knowledge, and skills that students will use in  
26 the workplace, further education, and life. The focused programs of study, whether  
27 provided at a choice technical high school, a career academy, a traditional high school,  
28 or on site at a technical school or college, shall be aligned with graduation requirements  
29 established by the State Board of Education and curriculum requirements established  
30 pursuant to Part 2 of this article, which shall include, at a minimum, four years of  
31 mathematics, Algebra I and higher, and four years of English, with an emphasis on  
32 developing reading and writing skills to meet college and career readiness standards;

33 (2) Implement a teacher adviser system where an individual professional educator in the  
34 school assists a small group of students and their parents or guardians throughout the  
35 students' high school careers to set postsecondary goals and help them prepare programs  
36 of study, utilizing assessments and other data to track academic progress on a regular

1 basis; communicates frequently with parents or guardians; and provides advisement,  
2 support, and encouragement as needed;

3 (3) Beginning in the 2009-2010 school year, provide students in the eighth through  
4 twelfth grades information on educational programs offered in high school, in technical  
5 and community colleges, in colleges and universities, and through apprenticeship  
6 programs and how these programs can lead to a variety of career fields. Local school  
7 systems shall provide opportunities for field trips, speakers, educational and career  
8 information centers, job shadowing, and classroom centers to assist students and their  
9 parents or guardians, with guidance from school counselors and teacher advisers, in  
10 developing a tentative individual high school graduation plan as provided for in Code  
11 Section 20-2-329.1 by the end of the student's ninth grade school year. Such individual  
12 graduation plan shall be reviewed annually, and revised, if appropriate, upon approval by  
13 the student, the student's school counselor or teacher adviser, and the student's parent or  
14 guardian;

15 (4) Enroll students no later than tenth grade into one of the following options for earning  
16 a high school diploma and preparing students for postsecondary education and a career:

17 (A) A structured program of academic study with in-depth studies in mathematics and  
18 science or in humanities, fine arts, and foreign language; or

19 (B) A structured program of academic study with in-depth studies in a career pathway  
20 that leads to passing an employer certification exam in a high demand, high skill, or  
21 high wage career field or to an associate's degree or bachelor's degree.

22 The awarding of a special education diploma to any disabled student who has not  
23 completed all of the requirements for a high school diploma, but who has completed his  
24 or her Individualized Education Program (IEP) shall be deemed to meet the requirements  
25 of this paragraph;

26 (5) Implement the at-risk model program developed by the State Board of Education  
27 pursuant to paragraph (1) of subsection (b) of Code Section 20-2-327;

28 (6) Comply with the rules and regulations promulgated by the State Board of Education  
29 for chronically low-performing high schools pursuant to subsection (c) of Code Section  
30 20-2-327; and

31 (7) Schedule annual conferences to assist parents or guardians and their children in  
32 setting educational and career goals and creating individual graduation plans beginning  
33 with students in the eighth grade and continuing through high school. These conferences  
34 shall include, but are not limited to, assisting the student in identifying educational and  
35 career interests and goals, selecting a career and academic focus area, and developing an  
36 individual graduation plan.

1 20-2-329.

2 No later than July 1, 2009, the Office of Student Achievement shall include in the  
3 accountability system provided for in Part 3 of Article 2 of Chapter 14 of this title emphasis  
4 on improving student achievement and increasing high school graduation rates, with the  
5 goal of having all public high schools in Georgia reach at least a 90 percent high school  
6 completion rate, which shall include completion by the end of the summer following a  
7 student's senior year, by July 1, 2019, with annual incremental targets.

8 20-2-329.1.

9 (a) An individual graduation plan shall:

10 (1) Include rigorous academic core subjects and focused course work in mathematics and  
11 science or in humanities, fine arts, and foreign language or sequenced career pathway  
12 course work;

13 (2) Incorporate provisions of a student's Individualized Education Program (IEP), where  
14 applicable;

15 (3) Align educational and broad career goals and a student's course of study;

16 (4) Be based on the student's selected academic and career focus area as approved by the  
17 student's parent or guardian;

18 (5) Include experience based, career oriented learning experiences which may include,  
19 but not be limited to, internships, apprenticeships, mentoring, co-op education, and  
20 service learning;

21 (6) Include opportunities for postsecondary studies through articulation, dual enrollment,  
22 and joint enrollment;

23 (7) Be flexible to allow change in the course of study but be sufficiently structured to  
24 meet graduation requirements and qualify the student for admission to postsecondary  
25 education; and

26 (8) Be approved by the student and the student's parent or guardian with guidance from  
27 the student's school counselor or teacher adviser.

28 (b) An individual graduation plan shall be reviewed annually, and revised, if appropriate,  
29 upon approval by the student and the student's parent or guardian with guidance from the  
30 student's school counselor or teacher adviser.

31 (c) An individual graduation plan may be changed at any time throughout a student's high  
32 school career upon approval by the student and the student's parent or guardian with  
33 guidance from the student's school counselor or teacher adviser.

1 20-2-329.2.  
2 The State Board of Education shall promulgate rules and regulations necessary to carry out  
3 the provisions of this part."

4 **SECTION 2.**

5 Said article is further amended in Code Section 20-2-281, relating to assessment of  
6 effectiveness of educational programs, by adding a new subsection to read as follows:

7 "(q) The State Board of Education shall provide that a student who passes an employer or  
8 industry certification examination or a state licensure examination, which are approved by  
9 the State Board of Education, shall be exempt from the high school graduation test  
10 provided for in subsection (a) of this Code section except for the reading, writing, and  
11 mathematics portions and from end-of-course assessments as provided for in subsection  
12 (f) of this Code section except for tests in the areas of mathematics, English, reading, and  
13 writing."

14 **SECTION 3.**

15 All laws and parts of laws in conflict with this Act are repealed.