

House Bill 400

By: Representatives Millar of the 79th, Lindsey of the 54th, Pruett of the 144th, Amerson of the 9th, and Ashe of the 56th

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.'

22 20-2-326.

23 For purposes of this part, the term:

24 (1) 'Articulation' means agreement between a high school and a postsecondary institution
25 regarding the awarding of both secondary and postsecondary credit for a dual enrollment
26 course.

27 (2) 'Career academy' means a specialized charter school established by a partnership
28 between one or more local boards of education and a technical school or college and
29 approved by the State Board of Education in accordance with Article 31 of this chapter
30 or the Georgia Charter Schools Commission in accordance with Article 31A of this
31 chapter. This term also includes a small learning community where a student receives
32 academic instruction at his or her assigned high school combined with work based
33 learning opportunities at an industry center or technical school or college.

34 (3) 'Choice technical high school' means a high school, other than the high school to
35 which a student is assigned by virtue of his or her residence and attendance zone, which
36 is designed to prepare a high school student for postsecondary education and for
37 employment in a career field. A choice technical high school may be operated by a local
38 school system or a technical school or college. A choice technical high school may also
39 be operated as a charter school under a governance board composed of parents,
40 employers, and representatives from the local board of education.

41 (4) 'Chronically low-performing high school' means a public high school in this state
42 with a graduation rate less than 60 percent for three consecutive years, as determined in
43 accordance with methodology established by the National Governors Association's
44 Compact on High School Graduation Data or that has not made adequate yearly progress
45 for three consecutive years, as defined by the Office of Student Achievement.

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

53 (6) 'Graduation plan' means a student specific plan developed in accordance with
54 paragraph (7) of subsection (a) of Code Section 20-2-327 detailing the courses necessary
55 for a high school student to graduate from high school and to successfully transition to
56 postsecondary education and the work force.

57 (7) 'Industry certification' means a process of program evaluation that ensures that
58 individual programs meet industry standards in the areas of curriculum, teacher
59 qualification, lab specifications, equipment, and industry involvement.

60 (8) 'Small learning community' means an autonomous or semiautonomous small learning
61 environment within a large high school which is made up of a subset of students and
62 teachers for a two, three, or four-year period. The goal of a small learning community
63 is to achieve greater personalization of learning with each community led by a principal
64 or instructional leader. A small learning community blends academic studies around a
65 broad career or academic theme where teachers have common planning time to connect
66 teacher assignments and assessments to college and career readiness standards. Students
67 voluntarily apply for enrollment in a small learning community but must be accepted and
68 such enrollment must be approved by the student's parent or guardian. A small learning
69 community also includes a career academy organized around a specific career theme
70 which integrates academic and career instruction, provides work-based learning
71 opportunities, and prepares students for postsecondary education and employment, with
72 support through partnerships with local employers, community organizations, and
73 postsecondary institutions.

74 (9) 'Technical school or college' means a school, college, institution, or other branch of
75 the Technical College System of Georgia.

76 20-2-327.

77 (a)(1) The Department of Education shall develop focused programs of study in high
78 demand, high skill, and high wage academic and career fields in accordance with a
79 phase-in schedule as determined by the state board.

80 (2) Focused programs of study may include, but are not limited to:

81 (A) Aerospace;

82 (B) Health care and elderly care;

83 (C) Agribusiness;

84 (D) Life science;

85 (E) Energy and environmental;

86 (F) Logistics and transportation;

87 (G) Information and technology;

88 (H) Teacher education training;

89 (I) Technology and engineering;

90 (J) Science and mathematics; and

91 (K) Humanities and fine arts.

92 (3) The department shall include in the focused programs of study the flexibility for a
93 student to pursue courses at the school of attendance, at a technical school or college, at
94 a public four-year college, at a work site under an apprenticeship cooperative education
95 program, and at other settings approved by the State Board of Education, as appropriate.

96 (4) For each focused program of study identified pursuant to this subsection, the
97 department shall convene a committee which includes high school teachers; school
98 counselors; representatives from the Board of Regents of the University System of
99 Georgia, the Technical College System of Georgia, and employers; and others as deemed
100 appropriate by the department. These committees shall develop and recommend a
101 focused program of study which blends academic and technical content developed around
102 college and career readiness standards with real world problems and projects for students.
103 Recommendations shall include state-wide articulation and dual enrollment courses
104 between local school systems and postsecondary institutions to provide seamless
105 pathways for adequately prepared high school students to move directly into
106 postsecondary education. The committees shall develop measures to certify equivalency
107 in content and rigor for all state-wide articulation and dual enrollment courses and shall
108 follow related policies and procedures established by the Department of Education for
109 awarding articulation and dual enrollment credit which shall be based on students
110 qualifying to enroll in credit bearing postsecondary courses.

111 (5) Student performance at the advanced proficiency/honors level on any assessments
112 required for purposes of high school graduation shall be recognized as: (1) meeting
113 postsecondary entrance test requirements, and (2) qualifying students to enroll in
114 credit-bearing postsecondary course work.

115 (6) Secondary and postsecondary credit shall be awarded immediately upon successful
116 completion of any articulated or dual enrollment course.

117 (7) Beginning with the 2009-2010 school year, students in the sixth, seventh, and eighth
118 grades shall be provided counseling, advisement, career awareness, career interest
119 inventories, and information to assist them in evaluating their academic skills and career
120 interests. Before the end of the second semester of the eighth grade, students shall select
121 a preferred focused program of study and develop an individual graduation plan in
122 consultation with their parents, guardians, or individuals appointed by the parents or
123 guardians to serve as their designee. High school students shall be provided guidance,
124 advisement, and counseling annually that will enable them to successfully complete their
125 individual graduation plans, preparing them for a seamless transition to postsecondary
126 study, further training, or employment. An individual graduation plan shall:

127 (A) Include rigorous academic core subjects and focused course work in mathematics
128 and science or in humanities, fine arts, and foreign language or sequenced career
129 pathway course work;

130 (B) Incorporate provisions of a student's Individualized Education Program (IEP),
131 where applicable;

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

- 133 (D) Be based on the student's selected academic and career focus area as approved by
134 the student's parent or guardian;
- 135 (E) Include experience based, career oriented learning experiences which may include,
136 but not be limited to, internships, apprenticeships, mentoring, co-op education, and
137 service learning;
- 138 (F) Include opportunities for postsecondary studies through articulation, dual
139 enrollment, and joint enrollment;
- 140 (G) Be flexible to allow change in the course of study but be sufficiently structured to
141 meet graduation requirements and qualify the student for admission to postsecondary
142 education; and
- 143 (H) Be approved by the student and the student's parent or guardian with guidance
144 from the student's school counselor or teacher adviser.
- 145 (8) The Department of Education shall provide training for school counselors and
146 graduation coaches about high demand, high skill, and high wage opportunities for
147 bachelor's degrees, associate's degrees, and certificates, how a combination of rigorous
148 academic and technical courses can prepare students for these fields, and how to organize
149 a teacher adviser system that engages teachers in working with a core group of students
150 and their parents or guardians in setting goals, identifying individual programs of study,
151 and establishing individual graduation plans to achieve those goals. The plan shall
152 include strategies for school counselors, graduation coaches, and teacher advisers to
153 effectively involve parents or guardians in the educational and career guidance process
154 and in the development of individual graduation plans. Upon request by any local school
155 system, training may be given to school counselors and graduation coaches in any middle
156 or high school.
- 157 (9) No later than July 1, 2011, the State Board of Education, in collaboration with the
158 Technical College System of Georgia, shall establish a process for certifying all focused
159 programs of study receiving state funds by using national certifying agencies where they
160 exist and developing state industry-certifying panels in career pathways where no
161 national certifying agency exists. The certification process shall, at a minimum, validate
162 that a program of study curriculum meets industry standards where applicable, that its
163 teachers hold current industry certification where applicable, and that its facilities,
164 equipment, and software are adequate to teach the curriculum.
- 165 (b)(1) The State Board of Education shall develop an evidence based model program for
166 chronically low-performing high schools receiving a reform grant pursuant to
167 subsection (d) of this Code section for addressing at-risk students, which shall include
168 various programs and curricula proven to be effective for at-risk students focusing on:

- 169 (A) Identification of students at risk for being poorly prepared for the next grade level
170 or for dropping out of school;
- 171 (B) Strengthening retention of ninth grade students in school and reducing high failure
172 rates;
- 173 (C) Improving more student performance to grade level standards in reading and
174 mathematics by the end of ninth grade;
- 175 (D) Assisting students and their parents or guardians in setting an outcome career and
176 educational goal and identifying a focused program of study to achieve such goal; and
- 177 (E) Assisting students in learning and applying study skills, coping skills, and other
178 habits that produce successful students and adults.
- 179 (2) The at-risk model program shall include:
- 180 (A) Diagnostic assessments to identify strengths and weaknesses in the core academic
181 areas;
- 182 (B) A process for identifying these students, closely monitored by the Department of
183 Education in collaboration with local school systems to ensure that students are being
184 properly identified and provided timely, appropriate guidance and assistance and to
185 ensure that no group is disproportionately represented; and
- 186 (C) An evaluation component in each high school to ensure the programs are providing
187 students an opportunity to graduate with a high school diploma.
- 188 (3) The at-risk model program may include various components designed to result in
189 more students facilitating a successful start in high school and passing ninth grade such
190 as:
- 191 (A) Utilizing a flexible schedule that increases students' time in core language
192 arts/reading and mathematics studies designed to eliminate academic deficiencies;
- 193 (B) Maintaining a student-teacher ratio in ninth grade that is no higher than any other
194 grade level ratio in high school;
- 195 (C) Utilizing experienced and effective teachers as leaders for teacher teams in ninth
196 grade to improve instructional planning, delivery, and re-teaching strategies;
- 197 (D) Assigning students to a teacher mentor who will meet with them frequently to
198 provide planned lessons on study skills and other habits of success that help students
199 become independent learners and who will help them receive the assistance they need
200 to successfully pass ninth grade; and
- 201 (E) Including ninth grade career courses which incorporate a series of miniprojects
202 throughout the school year that require the application of ninth grade level reading,
203 mathematics, and science skills to complete while students learn to use a range of
204 technology and help students explore a range of educational and career options that will

205 assist them in formulating post high school goals and give them a reason to stay in
 206 school and work toward achieving their stated goals.

207 (c) No later than July 1, 2010, the State Board of Education shall promulgate rules and
 208 regulations for chronically low-performing high schools receiving a reform grant pursuant
 209 to subsection (d) of this Code section to make the high schools more relevant to and
 210 effective for all students. Such rules shall encourage high schools to implement a
 211 comprehensive school reform research based model that focuses on:

212 (1) Setting high expectations for all students;

213 (2) Personalizing graduation plans for students;

214 (3) Developing small learning communities or career academies with a rigorous
 215 academic foundation and emphasis in broad career fields of study;

216 (4) Using project based instruction embedded with strong academics to improve
 217 relevancy in learning;

218 (5) Fostering collaboration among academic and career/technical teachers;

219 (6) Implementing nontraditional scheduling in ninth grade for students behind in their
 220 grade level;

221 (7) Promoting parental involvement; and

222 (8) Training teachers to work with low-performing students and their parents or
 223 guardians.

224 (d) Subject to appropriations by the General Assembly, the State Board of Education shall
 225 establish a competitive grant program for local school systems to implement school reform
 226 measures in selected high schools pursuant to this part. The state board shall establish
 227 program requirements in accordance with the provisions of this part and shall establish
 228 grant criteria, which shall include that priority for reform grants shall be given to
 229 chronically low-performing high schools.

230 20-2-328.

231 High schools that receive a reform grant pursuant to subsection (d) of Code Section
 232 20-2-327 shall:

233 (1) Provide focused programs of study which are designed to provide a well-rounded
 234 education for students by fostering artistic creativity, critical thinking, and self-discipline
 235 through the teaching of academic content, knowledge, and skills that students will use in
 236 the workplace, further education, and life. The focused programs of study, whether
 237 provided at a choice technical high school, a career academy, a traditional high school,
 238 or on site at a technical school or college, shall be aligned with graduation requirements
 239 established by the State Board of Education and curriculum requirements established
 240 pursuant to Part 2 of this article, which shall include, at a minimum, four years of

241 mathematics, Algebra I and higher, and four years of English, with an emphasis on
242 developing reading and writing skills to meet college and career readiness standards;
243 (2) Implement a teacher adviser system where an individual professional educator in the
244 school assists a small group of students and their parents or guardians throughout the
245 students' high school careers to set postsecondary goals and help them prepare programs
246 of study, utilizing assessments and other data to track academic progress on a regular
247 basis; communicates frequently with parents or guardians; and provides advisement,
248 support, and encouragement as needed;
249 (3) Provide students in the ninth through twelfth grades information on educational
250 programs offered in high school, in technical and community colleges, in colleges and
251 universities, and through apprenticeship programs and how these programs can lead to
252 a variety of career fields. Local school systems shall provide opportunities for field trips,
253 speakers, educational and career information centers, job shadowing, and classroom
254 centers to assist students and their parents or guardians, with guidance from school
255 counselors and teacher advisers, in revising, if appropriate, the individual graduation plan
256 developed pursuant to paragraph (7) of subsection (a) of Code Section 20-2-327;
257 (4) Enroll students no later than tenth grade into one of the following options for earning
258 a high school diploma and preparing students for postsecondary education and a career
259 which will include a structured program of academic study with in-depth studies in:
260 (A) Mathematics and science;
261 (B) Humanities, fine arts, and foreign language; or
262 (C) A career pathway that leads to passing an employer certification exam in a high
263 demand, high skill, or high wage career field or to an associate's degree or bachelor's
264 degree.
265 The awarding of a special education diploma to any disabled student who has not
266 completed all of the requirements for a high school diploma, but who has completed his
267 or her Individualized Education Program (IEP) shall be deemed to meet the requirements
268 of this paragraph;
269 (5) Implement the at-risk model program developed by the State Board of Education
270 pursuant to paragraph (1) of subsection (b) of Code Section 20-2-327;
271 (6) Comply with the rules and regulations promulgated by the State Board of Education
272 for chronically low-performing high schools pursuant to subsection (c) of Code Section
273 20-2-327; and
274 (7) Schedule annual conferences to assist parents or guardians and their children in
275 setting educational and career goals and creating individual graduation plans beginning
276 with students in the eighth grade and continuing through high school. These conferences
277 shall include, but are not limited to, assisting the student in identifying educational and

278 career interests and goals, selecting a career and academic focus area, and developing an
 279 individual graduation plan.

280 20-2-329.

281 No later than July 1, 2010, the Office of Student Achievement shall include in the
 282 accountability system provided for in Part 3 of Article 2 of Chapter 14 of this title emphasis
 283 on improving student achievement and increasing high school graduation rates, with the
 284 goal of having all public high schools in Georgia reach at least a 90 percent high school
 285 completion rate, which shall include completion by the end of the summer following a
 286 student's senior year, by July 1, 2020, with annual incremental targets.

287 20-2-329.1.

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

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

294 20-2-329.2.

295 The State Board of Education shall promulgate rules and regulations necessary to carry out
 296 the provisions of this part."

297 **SECTION 2.**

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

300 "(q) The State Board of Education shall provide that a student who passes an employer or
 301 industry certification examination or a state licensure examination which is approved by
 302 the State Board of Education shall be exempt from the high school graduation test provided
 303 for in subsection (a) of this Code section except for the reading, writing, and mathematics
 304 portions and from end-of-course assessments as provided for in subsection (f) of this Code
 305 section except for tests in the areas of reading, writing, mathematics, and English."

306 **SECTION 3.**

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