

Graduation requirements changed for first time in 10 years

Written by Staff Reports

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SANTA FE — Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham signed HB 171 into law, a bill that updates high school graduation requirements in New Mexico for the first time in over a decade, on Feb. 10.

“High school should be about preparing students for the real world while providing more opportunities to pursue their unique interests and future careers,” the governor said. “These changes will lead to more young New Mexicans staying engaged in school, graduating, and continuing that success in their adult lives.”

The requirements outlined in HB 171 will impact students entering the ninth grade in the 2025-2026 school year. The bill makes key changes to graduation requirements that better align with New Mexico’s workforce and higher education landscape. These include the addition of two units decided on by local school boards or charter school governing bodies, as long as they meet Public Education Department academic content and performance standards.

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“This allows flexibility for districts to tailor the requirements to the needs of their communities and allows students to gain valuable experience and receive credit at the same time,” Public Education Department Secretary Dr. Arsenio Romero said. “A modern, flexible, forward-looking curriculum will help engage students, address chronic absences and improve student achievement.”

HB 171 would keep a requirement for a minimum of 24 credits to graduate, remove the Algebra II requirement for graduation (while still requiring that Algebra II be offered), increase flexibility for electives which could be used for Career Technical Education or foreign language arts, and create more opportunities for offering financial literacy, without mandating it as required class.

The updated requirements provide a greater level of student choice while keeping the total number of credits needed to graduate at 24.

In an interview with the *Sun*, Gallup-McKinley County Schools Superintendent Mike Hyatt explained that the bill was introduced during last year’s legislative session, but the school district opposed that version.

“We understood and thought that the idea of changing the graduation requirements was good, [but] we needed to make sure there was local flexibility in the graduation requirement language,” Hyatt said. “This year they listened to a lot of concerns and were able to put together a pretty good bill in regards to graduation requirements.”

Hyatt noted that the new requirements would allow more flexibility with the district’s Career Pathways program. Now, some of those courses can be tailored to fit in with the core curriculum.

He did see the Algebra situation as being a potential problem. Currently, high school students have to take an assessment in their junior year that Hyatt says includes some Algebra II skills. Those questions would need to be removed from the test since the course will no longer be required.

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Rep. G. Andrés Romero was one of the sponsors of HB 171, and he is excited about what the bill mean for New Mexico students.

“By providing our students with greater flexibility and control over their course load, we can better engage them, increase their graduation rates, and more effectively prepare them for life after high school,” he said. “House Bill 171 will help chart the path forward for students interested in the trades, giving them a head start to a successful career and helping New Mexico staff up these in-demand fields.»

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