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An Act To Update Maine's High School Graduation Requirements

CONCEPT DRAFT SUMMARY

This bill is a concept draft pursuant to Joint Rule 208.

This bill proposes to amend the current education laws to update the graduation requirements for the State's high schools. This bill would establish a standards-based system as follows.

1. In order to graduate from high school, a student would have to demonstrate proficiency in all 8 content areas outlined in the system of learning results established in the Maine Revised Statutes, Title 20-A, section 6209. In addition, students would be required to be engaged in learning English and mathematics during each of their 4 years of high school study, or during every year of their high school career if they graduate early.

2. Beginning with the class of 2014, students graduating from the State's high schools also would demonstrate proficiency in each of the 5 guiding principles outlined in the Department of Education Rule Chapter 132: Learning Results: Parameters for Essential Instruction.

3. School administrative units and schools would be required to create a decision-making system for graduation that enhances or replaces the current system of credit accumulation for graduation. In addition to local requirements that could include the accumulation of credits, students would build a body of evidence that demonstrates their achievement of specific content area learning standards and the goals established in the guiding principles. This evidence would come from across the content areas, would include student efforts within and outside of the school building over an extended period of time and consist of student-designed assignments and assessments, as well as teacher-designed assignments and assessments.

4. The Department of Education would create a series of rubrics for schools to use in evaluating the student's body of evidence and assigning a score to this work. Students would be expected to present their body of evidence to an audience that includes educators from the school as well as parents and key community members chosen by the student. The presentation could be a single event or a series of events taking place when students are prepared to demonstrate readiness, not on a uniform or preconceived timeline.

5. Students would be able to decide to graduate from high school sooner or continue longer than the traditional 4-year time frame, placing increased emphasis on the quality of learning rather than the time it takes each student to achieve such learning. The results of these decisions would be noted on a student's transcript as part of the student's permanent record.

6. Schools would be required to report student learning in terms of proficiency in each content area standard delineated in the system of learning results and each of the guiding principles to students and parents at the end of each grading period. Scoring decisions would be made by educators from the school administrative unit or the school and would incorporate input from other participants.

7. To ensure a level of trustworthiness of these decisions, samples of student work and local decisions would be submitted and reviewed by the Department of Education periodically to ensure that the standard for graduation retains a level of consistency across the State. Students would have multiple opportunities to demonstrate success and different formats, using multiple measures, to engage in this process.

8. With respect to the guiding principles, each school administrative unit would put in place an assessment system that uses rubrics to pass judgment on student performance on multiple examples of student work completed over time. The Department of Education would develop a set of rubrics aligned with each of the guiding principles that can be used for this purpose.

9. Each school administrative unit's standards-based system of high school graduation would be reviewed and approved annually during the basic school approval process as set forth in the Maine Revised Statutes, Title 20-A, chapter 206. A school administrative unit may choose to create and use different rubrics pending approval by the Department of Education through the basic school approval process.