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Education organizations support new graduation requirements

COLUMBUS — Four major statewide education management organizations expressed support today for new graduation requirements approved by a committee of Ohio House and Senate members.

The legislation approved Tuesday would affect students graduating in the class of 2018 and impact not only course requirements, but also end-of-course examinations.

“We have been involved with the discussion of the graduation requirements since last summer when the State Board of Education invited stakeholders to its committee considering these changes,” said Thomas Ash, director of governmental relations for the Buckeye Association of School Administrators. “These changes reflect several of the concepts that we suggested and the State Board accepted.”

Among those are alternative paths to a diploma other than through the new planned end-of-course examinations, which would replace the Ohio Graduation Tests. Ohio Association of Secondary School Administrators Executive Director Ken Baker noted that students also could earn a diploma through course completions and a sufficiently high score on a nationally recognized college admission examination or an industry-recognized job credential.

“A high school diploma should also recognize outstanding performance on other measures of achievement,” Baker said.

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All high school juniors would be required to take the nationally recognized college exam, which is thought to be the ACT exam since it is the one most used for entrance purposes by state colleges and universities. Barbara Shaner, Ohio Association of School Business Officials associate executive director, said that the cost of the testing would be borne by the state under this proposal.

“While other elements of this legislation may move expenditures a little higher, this particular effort in testing to measure readiness for higher education will be the responsibility of the state, and not local boards of education,” she said.

Ohio School Boards Association Director of Legislative Services Damon Asbury said that the legislation does not change the current credit completion requirements. However, it does provide some alternative pathways to a high school diploma.

“The State Board considered alternate routes to a diploma, especially for students on a path to a successful career with appropriate training in one of Ohio’s career-technical programs,” Asbury said. “This legislative proposal includes this approach, and these students should be rewarded for their efforts.”