

House Bill 171: School Graduation Requirements

New Mexico’s high school graduation requirements were last comprehensively updated in 2007. Consequently, these have not been updated to reflect shifting workforce needs and expanded postsecondary options available today.

[House Bill 171](#) (HB171) modernizes New Mexico’s high school graduation requirements, setting a foundation of rigorous core academic expectations while also ensuring students are prepared for any path they may choose after high school, as well as civic life. The proposed graduation requirements emphasize a strong academic foundation for all students, but also increase options for student engagement. The bill expands access to career and technical education (CTE), opportunities for internships, and increased flexibility and personalization. The bill also supports relevant learning by strengthening advising processes for students, requiring all students take a course in economics/personal financial literacy, and supporting communities with developing graduate profiles so school systems can align the education they offer with a community-driven vision of what it means to be ready for life after high school.

HB171 also allows school districts and charter schools to play a meaningful role in developing the graduation requirements for their community and to re-design the high school experience to meet student needs. School districts and charter schools would determine two of the 24 required units—either as core or elective units.

Academic Subject	HB171 Requirements	Impact
English	<p style="text-align: center;">4 units</p> <p>Must include a 3-unit sequence; Department-approved work-based learning, career technical education, or English language development courses that meet English or English language development standards may qualify.</p>	<p>Students would take a sequence of three English units, meaning courses that sequentially build on one another such as English 9, English 10, and English 11; the fourth unit would be selected to meet the student’s individual goals. For example, a student could take journalism, communications, or a CTE-focused English course such as business writing, among many other options.</p>
Math	<p style="text-align: center;">4 units</p> <p>2 units must include a sequence of algebra 1 and geometry, or another integrated pathway of mathematics equivalent to algebra 1 and geometry; Department-approved financial literacy courses, work-based learning, or career technical education courses that meet math academic content and performance standards may qualify. Algebra 2 <u>must</u> be offered in all school districts and charter schools.</p>	<p>Students would take a sequence of algebra I and geometry, or another set of two integrated math courses equal to the level of algebra I and geometry. The other two courses would be selected based on the student’s goals, but could include math courses such as algebra II, calculus, statistics and probability, financial literacy, or CTE-focused math courses such as construction math or computer science, among many other options.</p>
Science	<p style="text-align: center;">3 units</p> <p>2 units must have a laboratory component; Department-approved work-based learning or career technical education courses that meet science academic content and performance standards may qualify.</p>	<p>All students would take three units of science, with two of these years in laboratory-based science courses.</p>
Social Studies	<p style="text-align: center;">4 units</p> <p>3 units are specified. These 3 units must include: 1 unit of United States history and geography, which must include New Mexico history; 1 unit of government and economics/personal financial literacy, which must include civics content, and 1 unit of world history and geography.</p>	<p>Students would take four units of social science with three of these units specified in law (United States history and geography, government and economics/personal financial literacy, and world history and geography); the fourth unit must be selected by the student. This could include any number of history courses, but could also include other social science courses such as ethnic studies, psychology, anthropology, or sociology, among other options. It could also include CTE-focused courses in, for example, healthcare or education focused CTE pathways.</p>
Physical Education	<p style="text-align: center;">1 unit</p> <p>The 1 unit of physical education is determined by the school district or charter school.</p>	<p>Physical education may include a physical education program, or participation in marching band, dance programs, junior reserve officers’ training corps, or interscholastic sports sanctioned by the New Mexico Activities Association, or any other co-curricular physical activity.</p>
Health	<p style="text-align: center;">0.5 unit</p> <p>Health can be taken in middle or high school.</p>	<p>0.5 unit, typically a semester long class, is required in health, but this can be taken in middle or high school at the school district or charter school’s discretion.</p>

Academic Subject	HB171 Requirements	Impact
Electives	<p style="text-align: center;">5.5 units</p> <p>Must include a two-unit pathway of the student’s choice; All electives must meet academic content and performance standards.</p>	<p>The two-unit pathway requirement could be in a language other than English (including American Sign Language), CTE courses, health, military preparation, fine arts, health, community learning or a capstone course, or work-based learning. With the addition of the two-unit pathway, students would be able to choose a focus (or more than one focus) and take two connected courses in this subject. This could enable a student to take two years of a language other than English, rather than a single year of a language course, or support their goals to become CTE concentrators who are students that take two connected CTE courses.</p>
Local Discretion Units	<p style="text-align: center;">2 units</p> <p>Local school districts and charter schools must set 2 additional units for graduation requirements. These must meet academic content and performance standards and can be elective units or core competencies.</p>	<p>School districts and charter schools would be expected to set two additional units for their own students. HB171 would allow these units to transfer with a student and be accepted by a receiving school district if a student were to transfer schools. These two units could be directed as specific courses by a school district or charter school and could be either electives or core units.</p>
Total Units	<p style="text-align: center;">24 units</p>	<p>24 total units would be required as a state minimum, but this could be exceeded by a local school district or charter school if they chose.</p>

Timeline for Implementation

HB171 would go into effect for students entering ninth grade in the 2025-2026 school year, allowing several months for the Public Education Department to update administrative rule (which would be required by HB171) and time for schools to plan for new requirements. Current law prohibits graduation requirements from being changed for a student once they begin ninth grade. HB171 would keep this language so graduation requirements wouldn’t change for students who are already in high school and wouldn’t be allowed to be changed for students under the proposed new requirements.

Local Discretion Units

HB171 directs school districts and charter schools to set two of the required units for graduation. These units could be elective units or core academic subject units, so long as these units align with academic content and performance standards set by the Public Education Department. The intent of these units is to allow for local flexibility in graduation requirements while retaining high rigor in overall statewide graduation requirements.

Financial Literacy

Financial literacy is highlighted in three places in HB171, promoting access to this content in multiple ways. First, all students are guaranteed access to economics and personal finance course content as part of required social science units. Second, financial literacy is required to be offered as an elective. Third, financial literacy can also count as a math course if a student selects this option. Additionally, in their local discretion units, a school district or charter school could require its students to take personal finance if they chose to.

Graduate Profiles and Student Advising

Graduate profiles are a national best practice in which school districts and charter schools—in partnership with their community’s families, business leaders, students, and educators—specify the cognitive, personal, and interpersonal competencies students should have when they graduate. They are locally driven and tailored to each community, but allow for robust visioning about the purpose of a high school education. These are already in use in schools across New Mexico, including Hobbs, [Aztec](#), [Zuni](#), [Gallup](#), and [Raton](#), among others. HB171 also requires every student to develop a personal advising plan (called a Next Step Plan), outlining their academic and career goals, ensuring they receive guidance and take the appropriate courses that are aligned to their individual goals.