

1 State of Arkansas
2 90th General Assembly
3 Regular Session, 2015

A Bill

SENATE BILL 212

4
5 By: Senator Elliott

For An Act To Be Entitled

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7
8 AN ACT TO ESTABLISH A STATEWIDE REENGAGEMENT PROGRAM;
9 TO INCREASE HIGH SCHOOL COMPLETION THROUGH THE
10 ALTERNATIVE PATHWAY TO A HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA PROGRAM;
11 AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

Subtitle

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15 TO ESTABLISH A STATEWIDE REENGAGEMENT
16 PROGRAM; TO INCREASE HIGH SCHOOL
17 COMPLETION THROUGH THE ALTERNATIVE
18 PATHWAY TO A HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA PROGRAM.

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21 BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ARKANSAS:

22
23 SECTION 1. Arkansas Code Title 6, Chapter 16, is amended to add an
24 additional subchapter to read as follows:

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26 Subchapter 15 – Reengagement System and Alternative Pathway to a High
27 School Diploma Program.

28
29 6-16-1501. Findings and intent.

30 (a) The General Assembly finds that some students are unlikely to
31 become reengaged in their education through the traditional high school
32 pathway to a high school diploma because they have:

33 (1) Failed multiple classes and are far behind their peers in
34 accumulating credits to graduate; and

35 (2) Come to believe that obtaining a high school diploma is not
36 an achievable goal.



1 (b) The General Assembly further finds that:

2 (1) For many years, school districts, two-year institutions of
3 higher education, and community-based organizations such as the National
4 Guard Youth Challenge Program have created partnerships to provide
5 appropriate educational programs for students at risk of becoming disengaged;

6 (2) In recent years, many of these partnerships have ceased to
7 operate due to laws and rules that permit school districts to contract using
8 basic education allocations that do not provide sufficient guidance to
9 students and direct hundreds of disengaged students to a learning environment
10 that includes preparation for the General Education Development Test; and

11 (3) Programs have been forced to adapt to laws and rules that
12 were not designed to address the needs of the students being served, leaving
13 students without a viable alternative for continuing their public education
14 and graduating from a high school.

15 (c)(1) It is the intent of the General Assembly to provide a statutory
16 framework that will support a statewide reengagement through a Reengagement
17 System and Alternative Pathway to a High School Diploma Program for students.

18 (2) The framework for the program addresses funding, programs,
19 and administration by directing the State Board of Education to develop model
20 contracts and interlocal agreements that can be tailored by a school district
21 to fit the needs of the school district.

22 (3) The General Assembly further intends to encourage school
23 districts, two-year institutions of higher education, career education, and
24 community-based organizations such as the Arkansas National Guard Youth
25 Challenge, to participate in the program and to provide appropriate
26 instruction and services to reengage students and help them progress toward a
27 high school diploma and workforce readiness skills.

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29 6-15-1502. Program established.

30 (a) The Reengagement System and Alternative Pathway to a High School
31 Diploma Program is established.

32 (b) The purpose of the program is to provide appropriate educational
33 opportunities and access to services for students sixteen (16) years of age
34 to twenty-one (21) years of age who are disengaged from the traditional high
35 school setting and who are in danger of dropping out of high school or not
36 accumulating sufficient credits to reasonably complete a high school diploma.

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2 6-15-1503. Definitions.

3 As used in this subchapter:

4 (1) "Eligible student" means a student who is:

5 (A) At least sixteen (16) years of age;

6 (B) Either: (i) Below the fifty percent (50%) of credits
7 required for grade level and the minimum set of credits needed to complete a
8 high school diploma from a public school before the age of twenty-one (21);
9 or

10 (ii) Recommended for participation in the
11 Reengagement System and Alternative Pathway to a High School Diploma Program
12 by a high school counselor; and

13 (C) Enrolled in or enrolls in the school district in which
14 the student resides or in a nonresident school district under a legal school
15 choice option;

16 (2)(A) "Full-time equivalent eligible student" means an eligible
17 student whose enrollment and attendance meet the criteria adopted by the
18 school district specifically for the program.

19 (B) Criteria adopted by a school district shall be based
20 on:

21 (i) The accumulated credits generated by the student
22 in high school, at a two-year institution of higher education, or in the
23 National Guard Youth Challenge Program; and

24 (ii) A minimum amount of planned programming or
25 instruction and minimum attendance by the student, rather than the hours of
26 seat time; and

27 (3) "Participating program" means an educational program that
28 offers without limitation the following instruction and services:

29 (A)(i) Academic instruction that generates credits that
30 can be applied to a high school diploma from the student's school district or
31 from a two-year institution of higher education with the goal of enabling the
32 student to obtain the academic and workforce skills necessary for employment,
33 postsecondary education, or the military, including without limitation:

34 (a) Academic skills instruction; and

35 (b) College and workforce readiness
36 preparation.

1 (ii) Academic instruction is not limited to only the
2 subject areas in which the student is deficient in accumulated credits.

3 (iii) Academic instruction shall be provided by a
4 certified teacher or by an instructor employed by a two-year institution of
5 higher education;

6 (B) Individual graduation plans;

7 (C) Academic and career counseling;

8 (D) Assistance with accessing services and resources that
9 support the student and reduce barriers to achieving educational success and
10 earning a high school diploma; and

11 (E)(i) If the program is offered by a two-year institution
12 of higher education, the opportunity for qualified students to enroll in
13 college courses or workforce readiness courses that lead to a high school
14 diploma or enrollment in postsecondary education programs, including
15 certification programs.

16 (ii) College tuition and fees shall be paid by the
17 school district unless a previous memorandum of understanding specifies that
18 the cost is to be shared by the school district, the two-year institution of
19 higher education, and the student.

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21 6-16-1504. School district participation.

22 (a) A school district may participate in the Reengagement System and
23 Alternative Pathway to a High School Diploma Program by entering into:

24 (1) A model contract as specified under § 6-16-1505; or

25 (2) An interlocal agreement as specified under § 6-16-1505.

26 (b) This section does not affect the authority of a school district
27 to:

28 (1) Contract for educational services; or

29 (2) Offer reengagement programs that include career and college
30 classes or other educational services for eligible students directly.

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32 6-16-1505. Model contract and model interlocal agreement.

33 (a) The State Board of Education shall develop and adopt a model
34 contract and model interlocal agreement that a school district can tailor to
35 its needs for adopting a participating program in the Reengagement System and
36 Alternative Pathway to a High School Diploma Program.

1 (b) A model contract or model interlocal agreement shall address
2 without limitation:

3 (1) The responsibilities of identifying, referring, and
4 enrolling eligible students;

5 (2) Instruction and services to be provided as part of a
6 participating program;

7 (3) The responsibilities for data collection and reporting,
8 including student transcripts and data required by the Department of
9 Education;

10 (4) Administration of the high school student assessments or
11 their equivalent;

12 (5)(A) Uniform financial reimbursement rates per full-time
13 equivalent eligible student enrolled in a participating program, calculated
14 and allocated as a statewide annual average of public school funding and
15 including enhancements for students enrolled in college classes and workforce
16 readiness programs.

17 (B) Financial reimbursement may include a uniform
18 administrative fee to be retained by the school district;

19 (6) The responsibilities for providing special education or
20 related services for eligible students with disabilities who have an
21 individualized education plan;

22 (7) Minimum instructional staffing ratios for participating
23 programs offered by community-based organizations such as the National Guard
24 Youth Challenge Program, which are not required to be the same as for other
25 basic education programs in school districts; and

26 (8) Performance measures that are required to be reported to
27 high school counselors for the purpose of accountability, including
28 longitudinal monitoring of student progress.

29 (c) An eligible student enrolled in a participating program is
30 considered a regularly enrolled student of the school district in which he or
31 she is enrolled.

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33 6-16-1506. Rules.

34 The State Board of Education shall adopt rules to implement the
35 Reengagement System and Alternative Pathway to a High School Diploma Program,
36 including without limitation rules addressing:

1 (1) The eligibility of a student at least sixteen (16) years of
2 age but less than nineteen (19) years of age to take the General Education
3 Development Test if the student provides a substantial and warranted reason
4 for leaving the regular high school education program; and

5 (2) The determination of whether or not a student is eligible to
6 enroll in a participating program.

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