



SENATE BILL 257: 2026 Appropriations Act, Sec. 7.29: Career Development Adjustment

2025-2026 General Assembly

Analysis of: S.L. 2026-41, Sec. 7.29

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Section 7.29 of S.L. 2026-41 (Senate Bill 257) requires the Superintendent of Public Instruction (Superintendent) to create an Annual Career Development Plan Pilot Program (Program) for students entering seventh grade at select schools during the 2026-2027 and 2027-2028 school years. For these students, the Program will continue through the students' graduation from high school.

The purpose of the Program is to evaluate the efficacy of reviewing students' Career Development Plans (Plans) annually to better align students for on-time graduation and achievement of college and career goals, and to ensure that all students graduate from high school college or career ready.

The Superintendent must establish a process for schools to apply to participate and must select 12 partnered schools to participate in the Program. The Superintendent must select schools that are proportionally representative of the population size and geographic distribution of public high schools in the State.

Partnered Schools – Partnered schools must require each student entering the seventh grade during the 2026-2027 and 2027-2028 school years to complete an annual review of the student's Plan until graduation.

Local boards of education governing the partnered schools must annually provide the students with the assistance of a school counselor and planning time during the instructional day to update the student's Plans prior to scheduling courses for the next school year. Local boards of education must ensure that Plans are accessible to parents and students and provide parents annual written notice of the creation or revision of a Plan, information on how to access a Plan, a list of course offerings for the next school year, and high school graduation requirements where appropriate.

School Counselors – School counselors in partnered schools must do the following:

- Attempt to meet with parents prior to creating or updating a student's Plan.
- Beginning in tenth grade, provide each student and parent information regarding State and federal need-based and merit-based financial aid programs and the federal Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).
- Notify parents that information included in the FAFSA is confidential and not accessible by the school.

Annual Plan Update – Partnered schools must provide the following information to all participating students prior to updating their Plans:

- For eighth grade students, by the end of the school year, a list of the required core courses to be taken in ninth and tenth grade.

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- For tenth grade students, an identification of the graduation requirements relevant to each student's chosen postsecondary goals based on the student's career development planning.
- For any eleventh grade student not meeting the career and college readiness standards established by the State Board of Community Colleges, a plan for enrolling in remedial coursework for his or her senior year.
- Any other minimum requirements established by the Superintendent.

Report – The Superintendent or a local board of education must develop reporting requirements for partnered schools. By August 15, 2027, and each year thereafter until all students in partnered schools who entered seventh grade during the 2027-2028 or 2028-2029 school year have graduated, the Superintendent must submit a report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee on the progress of the Program, including any logistical issues that have been identified.

This section became effective July 1, 2026.