

LEGISLATURE OF NEBRASKA  
ONE HUNDRED EIGHTH LEGISLATURE  
FIRST SESSION

**LEGISLATIVE BILL 201**

Introduced by Vargas, 7.

Read first time January 09, 2023

Committee:

- 1 A BILL FOR AN ACT relating to schools; to amend section 79-729, Revised
- 2 Statutes Cumulative Supplement, 2022; to add a high school
- 3 graduation requirement and provide an exception as prescribed; to
- 4 provide a duty for schools to submit data to the State Department of
- 5 Education; to provide duties for the Commissioner of Education and
- 6 require an annual report to the Legislature; to provide for rules
- 7 and regulations as prescribed; and to repeal the original section.
- 8 Be it enacted by the people of the State of Nebraska,

1 Section 1. Section 79-729, Revised Statutes Cumulative Supplement,  
2 2022, is amended to read:

3 79-729 (1) The Legislature recognizes the importance of assuring  
4 that all persons who graduate from Nebraska high schools possess certain  
5 minimum levels of knowledge, skills, and understanding.

6 (2) Each high school student shall complete a minimum of two hundred  
7 high school credit hours prior to graduation. At least eighty percent of  
8 the minimum credit hours shall be core curriculum courses prescribed by  
9 the State Board of Education. For students attending a public school,  
10 beginning in school year 2023-24, at least five of the minimum credit  
11 hours shall be a high school course in personal finance or financial  
12 literacy, and beginning in school year 2026-27, at least five of the  
13 minimum credit hours shall be a high school course or the equivalent of a  
14 one-semester high school course in computer science and technology.

15 (3)(a) Beginning with the 2024-25 school year, each public high  
16 school student shall complete and submit to the United States Department  
17 of Education a Free Application for Federal Student Aid prior to  
18 graduating from such high school except as otherwise provided in this  
19 subsection.

20 (b) A public high school student shall not be required to comply  
21 with subdivision (3)(a) of this section if:

22 (i) A parent or legal guardian of or a person standing in loco  
23 parentis to such student signs and submits the appropriate form  
24 prescribed by the Commissioner of Education pursuant to subdivision (3)  
25 (c) of this section indicating that such parent, legal guardian, or  
26 person standing in loco parentis authorizes such student to decline to  
27 complete and submit a Free Application for Federal Student Aid;

28 (ii) The school principal or the school principal's designee signs  
29 and submits the appropriate form prescribed by the Commissioner of  
30 Education pursuant to subdivision (3)(c) of this section authorizing such  
31 student to decline to complete and submit a Free Application for Federal

1 Student Aid for good cause as determined by the school principal or the  
2 school principal's designee; or

3 (iii) A student who is nineteen years of age or older or is an  
4 emancipated minor signs and submits the appropriate form prescribed by  
5 the Commissioner of Education pursuant to subdivision (3)(c) of this  
6 section stating that such student declines to complete and submit a Free  
7 Application for Federal Student Aid.

8 (c) The Commissioner of Education shall prescribe the forms to be  
9 used by each public high school for purposes of compliance with  
10 subdivision (3)(b) of this section. Such forms shall be made available:

11 (i) By each public high school to students, parents and legal  
12 guardians of students, and persons standing in loco parentis to students;  
13 and

14 (ii) In English, Spanish, and any other language spoken by a  
15 majority of the students enrolled in any English learner program at such  
16 public high school.

17 (d) The school principal or the school principal's designee of each  
18 public high school shall provide such compliance information to the  
19 school district or governing authority for such public high school and to  
20 the State Department of Education without disclosing, for any student who  
21 has complied with the requirements of this subsection, personally  
22 identifiable information distinguishing whether such compliance was  
23 pursuant to subdivision (3)(a) of this section or subdivision (3)(b) of  
24 this section. Such school principal or school principal's designee shall  
25 provide separately the aggregate number of students who have not complied  
26 with this subsection, who complied pursuant to subdivision (3)(a) of this  
27 section, and who complied pursuant to subdivision (3)(b) of this section,  
28 unless otherwise prohibited by federal or state law regarding the  
29 confidentiality of student educational information.

30 (e) On or before December 31, 2025, and on or before December 31 of  
31 each year thereafter, the Commissioner of Education shall electronically

1 submit a report with the information received by the State Department of  
2 Education pursuant to subdivision (3)(d) of this section to the Clerk of  
3 the Legislature.

4 (4) The State Board of Education may establish recommended statewide  
5 graduation guidelines. This section does not prohibit the governing board  
6 of any high school from prescribing specific graduation guidelines as  
7 long as such guidelines do not conflict with this section.

8 (5) This section does not apply to high school students whose  
9 individualized education programs prescribe a different course of  
10 instruction. ~~This section does not prohibit the governing board of any~~  
11 ~~high school from prescribing specific graduation guidelines as long as~~  
12 ~~such guidelines do not conflict with this section.~~

13 (6) For purposes of this section, high school means grades nine  
14 through twelve and credit hour shall be defined by appropriate rules and  
15 regulations of the State Board of Education but shall not be less than  
16 the amount of credit given for successful completion of a course which  
17 meets at least one period per week for at least one semester.

18 (7) The State Board of Education shall adopt and promulgate rules  
19 and regulations as necessary to implement this section. Such rules and  
20 regulations shall include, but not be limited to:

21 (a) A timeline for the distribution of the Free Application for  
22 Federal Student Aid and the forms prescribed pursuant to subdivision (3)  
23 (c) of this section by public high schools and for the submission of the  
24 Free Application for Federal Student Aid and the forms prescribed  
25 pursuant to subdivision (3)(c) of this section;

26 (b) Standards regarding the information that a public high school  
27 must provide to students regarding:

28 (i) Instructions for filling out the Free Application for Federal  
29 Student Aid;

30 (ii) The options available to a student under subdivision (3)(b) of  
31 this section if a student wishes to decline to complete and submit a Free

1 Application for Federal Student Aid; and  
2 (iii) The method by which a student shall provide proof to the  
3 public high school that such student has completed and submitted the Free  
4 Application for Federal Student Aid or a form prescribed pursuant to  
5 subdivision (3)(c) of this section; and  
6 (c) A requirement for each public high school to report the number  
7 of students who completed and submitted a Free Application for Federal  
8 Student Aid and the number of students who instead submitted a form  
9 prescribed pursuant to subdivision (3)(c) of this section.

10 Sec. 2. Original section 79-729, Revised Statutes Cumulative  
11 Supplement, 2022, is repealed.