

ADVOCACY UPDATE: AUGUST 11, 2021

CONTEXT: In March 2021, Illinois Governor J.B. Pritzker signed **House Bill 2170**. At 218-pages long, this legislation is aimed primarily at improving access and racial equity in Illinois schools from prekindergarten through higher education. HB 2170 represents some of the most extensive reforms to Illinois public education in over a decade.

The bill covers topics including, but not limited to, assessments, data reporting, early intervention services, “COVID-19 learning recovery” initiatives, trauma support, and the inclusion of “the pre-enslavement of Black people from 3,000 BCE to AD 1619” in social studies. Specific to this newsletter, HB 2170 also makes considerable changes the requisite coursework for earning a high school diploma.

| SCHOOL YEAR | NEW GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS |
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| 2022-2023 | Illinois high school students will be required to take one year of a course that “includes intensive instruction of computer literacy.” |
| 2023-2024 | High schools must provide students with “an opportunity [to] take at least one computer science course” containing “the study of computers and algorithms, including their principles, their hardware and software designs, their implementation, and their impact on society.” This course “[cannot] include the everyday use of computers and computer applications, such as keyboarding or accessing the Internet.” |
| 2023-2024 | Students who meet or exceed State standards in English Language Arts “shall be automatically enrolled into the next most rigorous level of advanced course in English, social studies, humanities, or related subjects.” Meeting or exceeding State standards in mathematics or science will also result in a student’s automatic enrollment in the “next most rigorous level of advanced courses” in math and science, respectively. This state-mandated “automatic enrollment” in Honors, Advanced Placement, or dual credit is intended to “reach groups of students and families who have been historically underrepresented in [advanced coursework].” |
| 2024-2025 | Students will be required to take two years of laboratory science instead of unspecified science courses. |
| 2028-2029 | Students will be required to take two years of a foreign language. |

To be clear, most of the reforms in HB 2170 shine a much-needed light on systemic inequities in Illinois public schools. However, the components of the bill referenced above inadvertently “crowd the field,” trimming the time allotted in students’ schedules to take wholly self-selected courses. According to the ICTA Advocacy Committee’s research, in the majority of Illinois high schools, formal oral communication instruction is limited almost exclusively to elective speech and debate courses.

It is incumbent upon ICTA members—especially those who teach those electives—to learn how to advocate for the importance of oral communication in their high schools, at the local level.

CONTEXT: According to the Advocacy Committee’s research, on average, Illinois high schools require that students earn a minimum of 40 one-semester credits in order to graduate.

COURSE SELECTION PRIOR TO HB 2170

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

FOUR YEARS / EIGHT ONE-SEMESTER CREDITS

- *Frosh/Sophomore/Junior/Senior English*

MATHEMATICS

THREE YEARS / SIX ONE-SEMESTER CREDITS

- *Algebra I*
- *Geometry*
- *Typically an Algebra II course*

SCIENCE

TWO YEARS / FOUR ONE-SEMESTER CREDITS

- *Typically one Biology course*
- *Typically one Physical Science*

SOCIAL STUDIES

TWO YEARS / FOUR ONE-SEMESTER CREDITS

- *Must include two credits of U.S. History.*
- *Must include one credit of Civics.*

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

FOUR YEARS / EIGHT ONE-SEMESTER CREDITS

- *Must include one credit of Health.*
- *May include Driver’s Education.*

STATE-SPECIFIED ELECTIVES

ONE YEAR (TWO CREDITS) SELECTED FROM:

- *Music;*
- *Art;*
- *World Language; or*
- *Vocational education.*

TIME REMAINING FOR STUDENT-SELECTED ELECTIVES:

EIGHT ONE-SEMESTER CREDITS

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May be a combination of year-long (two-credit) courses and one-semester (one-credit) courses.

COURSE SELECTION AFTER HB 2170

“COMPUTER LITERACY” (2022-2023)

ONE YEAR / TWO ONE-SEMESTER CREDITS

May be a new class or another required class revised so as to have an “intensive computer literacy” focus.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS (2023-2024)

FOUR YEARS / EIGHT ONE-SEMESTER CREDITS

“Grade-level” courses unless student is “auto-enrolled” in Honors/AP/Dual Credit.

MATHEMATICS (2023-2024)

THREE YEARS / SIX ONE-SEMESTER CREDITS

“Grade-level” courses unless student is “auto-enrolled” in Honors/AP/Dual Credit.

LABORATORY SCIENCE (2024-2025)

TWO YEARS / FOUR ONE-SEMESTER CREDITS

“Grade-level” courses unless “auto-enrolled” in Honors/AP/Dual Credit.

SOCIAL STUDIES (2023-2024)

TWO YEARS / FOUR ONE-SEMESTER CREDITS

“Grade-level” U.S. History and Civics. Student may be “auto-enrolled” in Honors/AP/Dual Credit.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

FOUR YEARS / EIGHT ONE-SEMESTER CREDITS

Must include Health. May include Driver’s Education.

WORLD LANGUAGE (2028-2029)

TWO YEARS / FOUR ONE-SEMESTER CREDITS

STATE-SPECIFIED ELECTIVES (2028-2029)

ONE YEAR (TWO ONE-SEMESTER CREDITS) SELECTED FROM:

- *Music;*
- *Art;*
- *Vocational education; or*
- *A third year of World Language.*

TIME REMAINING FOR STUDENT-SELECTED ELECTIVES:

FOUR ONE-SEMESTER CREDITS

IF COMPUTER LITERACY IS COMBINED WITH ANOTHER COURSE.

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OR

TWO ONE-SEMESTER CREDITS

IF COMPUTER LITERACY IS ITS OWN COURSE.

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As mentioned, in the majority of Illinois high schools, formal oral communication instruction is limited to speech and debate electives. By the 2028-2029 school year, on the average Illinois high school student’s class schedule, time allotted for electives may be cut by half (or more). The ICTA Advocacy Committee continues to monitor these and other legislative reforms. At the upcoming Convention, the Committee will host two panels...

ICTA CONVENTION: ADVOCACY PANELS

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 24, 2021

**“New Adventures for Advocacy, Part I:
ELA Teacher Licensure”
(Fon du Lac D)**

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 25, 2021

**“New Adventures for Advocacy, Part II:
Speak Up for Speech”
(Fon du Lac D)**

The Committee will supply a wealth of resources that attendees may use to effectively engage in local advocacy—in their schools, districts, and communities. Now more than ever, **ICTA members must promote the importance of affording a wealth of elective speech and debate opportunities to our students.**