

LEGISLATURE OF NEBRASKA
ONE HUNDRED EIGHTH LEGISLATURE
SECOND SESSION

LEGISLATIVE BILL 1371

Introduced by Vargas, 7.

Read first time January 17, 2024

Committee: Education

- 1 A BILL FOR AN ACT relating to schools; to amend sections 79-729 and
- 2 79-760.01, Revised Statutes Supplement, 2023; to adopt the Media
- 3 Literacy Act; to provide and change graduation requirements; to
- 4 change duties relating to academic content standards; and to repeal
- 5 the original sections.
- 6 Be it enacted by the people of the State of Nebraska,

1 Section 1. Sections 1 to 4 of this act shall be known and may be
2 cited as the Media Literacy Act.

3 Sec. 2. For purposes of the Media Literacy Act, media literacy
4 includes, but is not limited to, knowledge and skills regarding (1) the
5 research process and how information is created and produced, (2)
6 critical thinking and using information resources, (3) research methods,
7 including the difference between primary and secondary sources, (4) the
8 difference between facts, points of view, and opinions, (5) accessing
9 peer-reviewed print and digital library resources, (6) the economic,
10 legal, and social issues surrounding the use of information, and (7) the
11 ethical production of information.

12 Sec. 3. Beginning with the 2025-26 school year, each school
13 district, in consultation with the State Department of Education, shall
14 include media literacy instruction aligned to the academic content
15 standards adopted pursuant to section 79-760.01, as appropriate, in the
16 instructional program of students in kindergarten through twelfth grade.
17 Beginning with the 2027-28 school year, each school district shall
18 require each student to complete at least one three-credit high school
19 course in media literacy prior to graduation.

20 Sec. 4. On or before December 31, 2026, and on or before December
21 31 of each year thereafter, in order to promote and support media
22 literacy education, each school district shall provide an annual media
23 literacy status report to its school board, including, but not limited
24 to, student progress in media literacy courses and other district
25 determined measures of media literacy progress from the previous school
26 year.

27 Sec. 5. Section 79-729, Revised Statutes Supplement, 2023, is
28 amended to read:

29 79-729 (1) The Legislature recognizes the importance of assuring
30 that all persons who graduate from Nebraska high schools possess certain
31 minimum levels of knowledge, skills, and understanding. Each high school

1 student shall complete a minimum of two hundred high school credit hours
2 prior to graduation. At least eighty percent of the minimum credit hours
3 shall be core curriculum courses prescribed by the State Board of
4 Education.

5 (2) For students attending a public school:

6 (a) Beginning in school year 2023-24, at least five of the minimum
7 credit hours shall be a high school course in personal finance or
8 financial literacy;~~and~~

9 (b) Beginning in school year 2027-28, at least five of the minimum
10 credit hours shall include computer science and technology education as
11 required under section 79-3304; and -

12 (c) Beginning in school year 2027-28, at least three of the minimum
13 credit hours shall be a high school course in media literacy as defined
14 in section 2 of this act.

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

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

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

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

1 school principal's designee; or

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

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

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

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

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

29 (e) On or before December 31, 2025, and on or before December 31 of
30 each year thereafter, the Commissioner of Education shall electronically
31 submit a report with the information received by the State Department of

1 Education pursuant to subdivision (3)(d) of this section to the Clerk of
2 the Legislature.

3 (4) The State Board of Education may establish recommended statewide
4 graduation guidelines.

5 (5) This section does not apply to high school students whose
6 individualized education programs prescribe a different course of
7 instruction.

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

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

16 (a) A timeline for the distribution of the Free Application for
17 Federal Student Aid and the forms prescribed pursuant to subdivision (3)
18 (c) of this section by public high schools and for the submission of the
19 Free Application for Federal Student Aid and the forms prescribed
20 pursuant to subdivision (3)(c) of this section;

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

23 (i) Instructions for filling out the Free Application for Federal
24 Student Aid;

25 (ii) The options available to a student under subdivision (3)(b) of
26 this section if a student wishes to decline to complete and submit a Free
27 Application for Federal Student Aid; and

28 (iii) The method by which a student shall provide proof to the
29 public high school that such student has completed and submitted the Free
30 Application for Federal Student Aid or a form prescribed pursuant to
31 subdivision (3)(c) of this section; and

1 (c) A requirement for each public high school to report the number
2 of students who completed and submitted a Free Application for Federal
3 Student Aid and the number of students who instead submitted a form
4 prescribed pursuant to subdivision (3)(c) of this section.

5 Sec. 6. Section 79-760.01, Revised Statutes Supplement, 2023, is
6 amended to read:

7 79-760.01 (1) The State Board of Education shall adopt measurable
8 academic content standards for at least the grade levels required for
9 statewide assessment pursuant to section 79-760.03. The standards shall
10 cover the subject areas of reading, writing, mathematics, science, and
11 social studies.

12 (2)(a) The board shall also adopt measurable academic content
13 standards for the following as part of the social studies standards:

14 (i) Financial literacy;~~and~~

15 (ii) Education on the Holocaust and other acts of genocide as
16 recognized by the Congress of the United States or the United Nations as
17 of January 1, 2022; and -

18 (iii) Media literacy as defined in section 2 of this act.

19 (b) On or before March 1, 2024, the board shall also adopt
20 measurable academic content standards for computer science and technology
21 education under the mathematics, science, or career and technical
22 education standards.

23 (3) Academic content standards adopted or recommended pursuant to
24 this section shall be sufficiently clear and measurable to be used for
25 testing student performance with respect to mastery of the content
26 described in the state standards.

27 (4) The State Board of Education shall develop a plan to review and
28 update standards for each subject area every seven years. The state board
29 plan shall include a review of commonly accepted standards adopted by
30 school districts.

31 Sec. 7. Original sections 79-729 and 79-760.01, Revised Statutes

1 Supplement, 2023, are repealed.