

The Road to Success Widens for Students Planning to Graduate in 2019 and 2020

By Leighann Fink, Attorney

Through the passage of House Bill 491, signed into law by the Governor on December 19, 2018, the Ohio General Assembly has once again provided alternative graduation pathways similar to those applicable to students who graduated in 2018. For the 2019 graduating class, students who entered the ninth grade for the first time on or after July 1, 2014, but prior to July 1, 2016, students can graduate by choosing one of two alternative pathways described below.

To satisfy the first alternative pathway, a student must: (1) take all applicable examinations or assessments; (2) retake, at least once, any examination in English language arts or mathematics where his/her score was deficient; (3) complete all required units of instruction; and (4) satisfy at least two of the additional conditions, listed below:

- achieve an attendance rate of at least ninety-three percent (93%) during the student's twelfth grade year;
- achieve a grade point average of 2.5 on a 4.0 scale in the twelfth grade year in at least four (4) classes;
- complete a capstone project during the twelfth grade year; or
- complete one hundred and twenty (120) hours of community service or work-based learning during the twelfth grade year.

To satisfy the second alternative pathway, a student must: (1) take all applicable examinations or assessments; (2) complete all required units of instruction; (3) complete an approved career-technical training program; and (4) satisfy at least one additional condition, including:

- attain proficient cumulative scores on required courses for a career-technical education program;
- obtain an industry-recognized credential; or
- complete two hundred and fifty (250) hours of workplace experience with positive evaluations.

With a few minor differences from the class of 2019, the class of 2020, students who entered the ninth grade for the first time on or after July 1, 2016, but prior to July 1, 2017, also benefit from House Bill 491. In achieving graduation through one of the two alternative pathways detailed above, the class of 2020 (1) may not utilize attendance criteria; (2) must achieve a 2.5 grade point average during their eleventh and twelfth grade years; and (3) must complete a capstone project, community service, or worked-based learning hours in compliance with guidance from the Department of Education.

As in prior school years, House Bill 491 brings with it the hope of higher graduation rates for the classes of 2019 and 2020. The extension of alternative pathways will give students the chance to graduate on schedule and prepare for college or careers.

Please contact any of the above listed attorneys regarding House Bill 491 and the alternative graduation pathways for students in your District. We welcome your questions.

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