



# HOUSE BILL 621: Increase Dropout Age/Completion Indicator.

2021-2022 General Assembly

<b>Committee:</b>	House Rules, Calendar, and Operations of the House	<b>Date:</b>	May 11, 2021
<b>Introduced by:</b>	Reps. Elmore, Graham, Setzer	<b>Prepared by:</b>	Drupti Chauhan
<b>Analysis of:</b>	First Edition		Committee Counsel

**OVERVIEW:** *House Bill 621 would raise the compulsory school attendance age from 16 to 18 over a 5-year period. The bill also establishes a completion rate indicator for school performance grades.*

## **PARTS I-IV: Raising the Dropout Rate**

**CURRENT LAW:** North Carolina's compulsory attendance law requires children between the ages of 7 and 16 to be continuously enrolled in and attend school. An undisciplined juvenile is an individual who is less than 16 but at least 6 and is unlawfully absent from school.

**BILL ANALYSIS:** House Bill 621 would incrementally raise the compulsory school attendance age to 18 over a 5-year period in the following manner:

- For the 2022-2023 school year, the dropout age would rise to age 16 and 6 months with the change being effective July 1, 2022.
- For the 2023-2024 school year, the dropout age would rise to age 17 with the change being effective July 1, 2023.
- For the 2024-2025 school year, the dropout age would rise to age 17 and 6 months with the change being effective July 1, 2024.
- For the 2025-2026 school year, the dropout age would rise to age 18 with the change being effective July 1, 2025.

**BACKGROUND:** Section 8.49 of S.L. 2013-360 enacted the "Pilot Program to Raise the High School Dropout Age from Sixteen to Eighteen" with Hickory Public Schools and Newton-Conover City Schools with the first full year of implementation being the 2015-2016 school year. Rutherford County Schools and McDowell County Schools were later added to the Pilot Program. The most recent report on the Pilot Program from March, 2020, made the following findings:

- While there have been fluctuations in graduation rates for the four pilot districts, Hickory City has an increased rate in 2019 over the 2017 rate of the last report. Newton-Conover and Rutherford County rates remain stable and McDowell has only one year of data under the "pilot" status.
- Short-term suspensions have increased for all pilot districts. Rutherford and Hickory City have suspension rates below their reported numbers in the 2018 report.
- The most significant impact of the pilot to date is the additional "time factor" to support students in earning credits to graduation. All four districts concur that this "time" may not always yield the districts measurable decrease in dropout rate. It does create an opportunity window that is otherwise not available.

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## **PART V: Completion Rate Indicator For School Performance Grades**

**CURRENT LAW:** A variety of indicators are used to calculate school achievement scores for schools having grades 9-12. For example, one indicator assigns points for each percent of students who score at or above proficient on tests such as the English II end-of-course test. Additionally, a graduation rate indicator assigns one point for each percent of students who graduate within 4 years of entering high school. For federal compliance purposes, certain indicators, such as the graduation rate, must be categorized as academic indicators for schools with grades 9-12. Other indicators, such as proficiency on the Biology end-of-course test, must be categorized as school quality and student success indicators.

**BILL ANALYSIS:** Part V of the bill would add one half of a point for school achievement scores for 9-12 schools for each percent of students who meet 1 of the following criteria within 5 years of entering high school: (i) graduate from high school; (ii) earn a high school diploma; or (iii) earn an adult high school equivalency diploma.

The school quality and student success indicators for federal compliance purposes would add as an indicator the percentage of students who meet one of the following criteria within 5 years of entering high school: (i) graduate from high school; (ii) earn a high school diploma; or (iii) earn an adult high school equivalency diploma.

This Part would also requires the State Board of Education (SBE) to provide the State Board of Community Colleges (SBCC), for the purposes of calculating the high school completion rate, with identifying information for any students who meet the following criteria: (i) the student unenrolled from a public school unit before graduation or completion of a program of study without transferring to another secondary school; and (ii) the student entered high school no more than 5 years earlier. The SBCC must then provide the SBE, for the students identified in the SBE report, the dates the students earned an adult high school equivalency diploma.

**EFFECTIVE DATE:** Except as otherwise provided, the bill would become effective when it becomes law.