

REFERENCE TITLE: ethnic studies; academic standards; commission

State of Arizona
House of Representatives
Fifty-seventh Legislature
Second Regular Session
2026

HB 4023

Introduced by
Representative Cavero

AN ACT

AMENDING SECTIONS 15-701 AND 15-701.01, ARIZONA REVISED STATUTES; RELATING
TO SCHOOL CURRICULA.

(TEXT OF BILL BEGINS ON NEXT PAGE)

1 Be it enacted by the Legislature of the State of Arizona:

2 Section 1. Section 15-701, Arizona Revised Statutes, is amended to
3 read:

4 15-701. Common schools; promotions; requirements;
5 certificate; supervision of eighth grades by
6 superintendent of high school district; high school
7 admissions; academic credit; definitions

8 A. The state board of education shall:

9 1. Prescribe a minimum course of study incorporating the academic
10 standards adopted by the state board of education to be taught in the
11 common schools. THE ACADEMIC STANDARDS PRESCRIBED BY THE STATE BOARD IN
12 SOCIAL STUDIES MUST INCLUDE ETHNIC STUDIES.

13 2. Prescribe competency requirements for the promotion of pupils
14 from the eighth grade and competency requirements for the promotion of
15 pupils from the third grade that incorporate the academic standards in at
16 least the areas of reading, writing, mathematics, science and social
17 studies. The competency requirements for the promotion of pupils from the
18 third grade shall include the following:

19 (a) A requirement that a pupil not be promoted from the third grade
20 if the pupil obtains a score on the reading portion of the statewide
21 assessment that does not demonstrate sufficient reading skills as
22 established by the state board. A pupil may not be retained pursuant to
23 this subdivision if data regarding the pupil's performance on the
24 statewide assessment is not available before the end of the current
25 academic year and may not be retained more than once. A pupil who is not
26 retained due to the unavailability of test data must receive
27 evidence-based intervention and remedial strategies pursuant to
28 subdivision (c) of this paragraph if the third grade assessment data
29 subsequently does not demonstrate sufficient reading skills.

30 (b) A mechanism to allow a school district governing board or
31 charter school governing body to promote from the third grade a pupil who
32 does not demonstrate sufficient reading skills pursuant to subdivision (a)
33 of this paragraph if the pupil:

34 (i) Is an English learner or a limited English proficient student
35 as defined in section 15-751 and has had fewer than three years of English
36 language instruction.

37 (ii) Is in the process of a special education referral or
38 evaluation for placement in special education, has been diagnosed as
39 having a significant reading impairment, including dyslexia, or is a child
40 with a disability as defined in section 15-761 if the pupil's
41 individualized education program team and the pupil's parent or guardian
42 agree that promotion is appropriate based on the pupil's individualized
43 education program.

44 (iii) Has demonstrated or subsequently demonstrates sufficient
45 reading skills or adequate progress toward sufficient reading skills of

the third grade reading standards as evidenced through a collection of reading assessments approved by the state board of education, which includes an alternative standardized reading assessment approved by the state board.

(iv) Receives intervention and remedial services during the summer or a subsequent school year pursuant to subdivision (c) of this paragraph and demonstrates sufficient progress based on guidelines issued pursuant to subsection B, paragraph 7 of this section.

(c) Evidence-based intervention and remedial strategies developed by the state board of education for pupils who are not promoted from the third grade. A school district governing board or charter school governing body shall offer more than one of the intervention and remedial strategies developed by the state board of education. The parent or guardian of a pupil who is not promoted from the third grade and the pupil's teacher and principal may choose the most appropriate intervention and remedial strategies that will be provided to that pupil. The intervention and remedial strategies developed by the state board of education shall include:

(i) A requirement that the pupil be assigned for evidence-based reading instruction by a different teacher who was designated in that teacher's most recent performance evaluation in one of the top two performance classifications.

(ii) Summer school reading instruction.

(iii) In the next academic year, intensive reading instruction that occurs before, during or after the regular school day, or any combination of before, during and after the regular school day.

(iv) Small group and teacher-led evidence-based reading instruction, which may include computer-based or online reading instruction.

(d) A requirement that a school district governing board or charter school governing body that promotes a pupil pursuant to subdivision (b) of this paragraph provide annual reporting to the department of education on or before October 1 that includes information on the total number of pupils subject to the retention provisions of subdivision (a) of this paragraph, the total number of students promoted pursuant to subdivision (b) of this paragraph, the total number of pupils retained in grade three and the interventions administered pursuant to subdivision (c) of this paragraph.

3. Provide for universal screening of pupils in preschool programs, kindergarten programs and grades one through three that is designed to identify pupils who have reading deficiencies pursuant to section 15-704.

4. Develop evidence-based intervention and remedial strategies pursuant to paragraph 2, subdivision (c) of this subsection for pupils in kindergarten programs and grades one through three who are identified as having reading deficiencies pursuant to section 15-704.

1 5. Distribute guidelines for the school districts to follow in
2 prescribing criteria for the promotion of pupils from grade to grade in
3 the common schools. These guidelines shall include recommended procedures
4 for ensuring that the cultural background of a pupil is taken into
5 consideration when criteria for promotion are being applied.

6 B. School districts and charter schools shall provide annual
7 written notification to parents of pupils in kindergarten programs and
8 first, second and third grades that a pupil who does not demonstrate
9 sufficient reading skills pursuant to subsection A of this section will
10 not be promoted from the third grade. School districts and charter
11 schools shall identify each pupil who is at risk of reading below grade
12 level in kindergarten and grades one, two and three and shall provide to
13 the parent of that pupil a specific written notification of the reading
14 deficiency within three weeks after identifying the reading deficiency.
15 The notification shall include the following information:

16 1. A description of the pupil's specific individual needs.
17 2. A description of the current reading services provided to the
18 pupil.

19 3. A description of the available supplemental instructional
20 services and supporting programs that are designed to remediate reading
21 deficiencies. Each school district or charter school shall offer more
22 than one evidence-based intervention strategy and more than one remedial
23 strategy developed by the state board of education for pupils with reading
24 deficiencies. The notification shall list the intervention and remedial
25 strategies offered and shall instruct the parent to choose, in
26 consultation with the pupil's teacher, the most appropriate strategies to
27 be provided and implemented for that child.

28 4. Parental strategies to assist the pupil to attain reading
29 proficiency.

30 5. The frequency with which the school district or charter school
31 will provide timely updates and information to the parent on the pupil's
32 progress toward reading proficiency.

33 6. A statement that the pupil will not be promoted from the third
34 grade if the pupil does not demonstrate sufficient reading skills pursuant
35 to subsection A, paragraph 2, subdivision (a) of this section, unless the
36 pupil is exempt from mandatory retention in grade three or the pupil
37 qualifies for an exemption pursuant to subsection A, paragraph 2,
38 subdivision (b) of this section.

39 7. A description of the school district or charter school policies
40 on midyear promotion to a higher grade.

41 C. Pursuant to the guidelines that the state board of education
42 distributes, the governing board of a school district shall:

43 1. Prescribe curricula that include the academic standards in the
44 required subject areas pursuant to subsection A, paragraph 1 of this
45 section.

2. Prescribe criteria for the promotion of pupils from grade to grade in the common schools in the school district. These criteria shall include accomplishment of the academic standards in at least reading, writing, mathematics, science and social studies, as determined by district assessment. Other criteria may include additional measures of academic achievement and attendance.

D. The governing board may prescribe the course of study and competency requirements for promotion that are in addition to or higher than the course of study and competency requirements the state board prescribes.

E. A teacher shall determine whether to promote or retain a pupil in a grade in a common school on the basis of the prescribed criteria. The governing board, if it reviews the decision of a teacher to promote or retain a pupil in a grade in a common school as provided in section 15-342, paragraph 11, shall base its decision on the prescribed criteria.

F. A governing board may provide and issue certificates of promotion to pupils whom it promotes from the eighth grade of a common school. Such certificates shall be signed by the principal or superintendent of schools. If there is no principal or superintendent of schools, the certificates shall be signed by an eighth grade teacher. The certificates shall admit the holders to any high school in this state.

G. Within any high school district or union high school district, the superintendent of the high school district shall supervise the work of the eighth grade of all schools that do not employ a superintendent or principal.

H. A school district shall not deny a pupil who is between the ages of sixteen and twenty-one years admission to a high school because the pupil does not hold an eighth grade certificate. Governing boards shall establish procedures for determining the admissibility of pupils who are under sixteen years of age and who do not hold eighth grade certificates.

I. The state board of education shall adopt rules to allow common school pupils who can demonstrate competency in a particular academic course or subject to obtain academic credit for the course or subject without enrolling in the course or subject.

J. A school district may conduct a ceremony to honor pupils who have been promoted from the eighth grade.

K. For the purposes of this section: ~~1.~~

1. "Dyslexia" means a condition that:

~~1.~~ (a) Is neurological in origin.

~~2.~~ (b) Is characterized by difficulties with accurate or fluent word recognition and by poor spelling and decoding abilities, including difficulties that typically result from a deficit in the phonological component of language that is often unexpected in relation to other cognitive abilities and to the provision of effective classroom instruction.

1 ~~3.~~ (c) May include secondary consequences such as problems with
2 reading comprehension and reduced reading experience that may impede the
3 growth of vocabulary and background knowledge.

4 2. "ETHNIC STUDIES":

5 (a) MEANS THE INTERDISCIPLINARY SOCIAL AND HISTORICAL STUDY OF HOW
6 DIFFERENT POPULATIONS HAVE EXPERIENCED AND PARTICIPATED IN BUILDING THE
7 UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

8 (b) INCLUDES THE STUDY OF THE CULTURE, HISTORY AND CONTRIBUTION OF
9 RESIDENTS OF THIS STATE FROM DIVERSE ETHNIC BACKGROUNDS.

10 Sec. 2. Section 15-701.01, Arizona Revised Statutes, is amended to
11 read:

12 15-701.01. High schools; graduation; requirements; community
13 college or university courses; transfer from
14 other schools; academic credit; report

15 A. The state board of education shall:

16 1. Prescribe a minimum course of study that incorporates the
17 academic standards adopted by the state board for the graduation of pupils
18 from high school.

19 2. Prescribe competency requirements for the graduation of pupils
20 from high school incorporating the academic standards in at least the
21 areas of reading, writing, mathematics, science and social studies. The
22 academic standards prescribed by the state board in social studies ~~shall~~
23 **MUST** include **ETHNIC STUDIES AS DEFINED IN SECTION 15-701**, personal
24 finance, American civics education and a comparative discussion of
25 political ideologies, such as communism and totalitarianism, that conflict
26 with the principles of freedom and democracy that are essential to the
27 founding principles of the United States. The state board may consider
28 establishing a required separate personal finance course for the purpose
29 of the graduation of pupils from high school. The state board shall
30 require at least one-half of a course credit in economics, which shall
31 include financial literacy and personal financial management.

32 3. Through the graduating class of 2025, include in the competency
33 requirements for social studies prescribed in paragraph 2 of this
34 subsection a requirement that, in order to graduate from high school or
35 obtain a high school equivalency diploma, a pupil must correctly answer at
36 least sixty of the one hundred questions listed on a test that is
37 identical to the civics portion of the naturalization test used by the
38 United States citizenship and immigration services. Beginning with the
39 graduating class of 2026, the state board shall include in the competency
40 requirements for social studies prescribed in paragraph 2 of this
41 subsection a requirement that, in order to graduate from high school or
42 obtain a high school equivalency diploma, a pupil must correctly answer at
43 least seventy of the one hundred questions listed on a test that is
44 identical to the civics portion of the naturalization test used by the
45 United States citizenship and immigration services. A district school or

1 charter school shall document on the pupil's transcript only a pass or
2 fail designation that the pupil has passed or failed the test required by
3 this paragraph. A pupil in grade seven or eight may take the test
4 described in this paragraph, and if the pupil correctly answers at least
5 seventy of the one hundred questions on the test:

6 (a) The district school or charter school shall document on the
7 pupil's transcript only a pass or fail designation that the pupil has
8 passed or failed the test required by this paragraph.

9 (b) The pupil is not required to take the test required by this
10 paragraph again in high school.

11 4. Develop and adopt competency tests pursuant to section 15-741.
12 English language learners who are subject to article 3.1 of this chapter
13 are subject to the assessments prescribed in section 15-741.

14 B. The governing board of a school district shall:

15 1. Prescribe curricula that include the academic standards in the
16 required subject areas pursuant to subsection A, paragraph 1 of this
17 section.

18 2. Prescribe criteria for the graduation of pupils from the high
19 schools in the school district. These criteria shall include
20 accomplishment of the academic standards in at least reading, writing,
21 mathematics, science and social studies, as determined by district
22 assessment. Other criteria may include additional measures of academic
23 achievement and attendance. Pursuant to the prescribed graduation
24 requirements adopted by the state board of education, the governing board
25 may approve a rigorous computer science course that would fulfill a
26 mathematics course required for graduation from high school. The
27 governing board may approve a rigorous computer science course only if the
28 rigorous computer science course includes significant mathematics content
29 and the governing board determines the high school where the rigorous
30 computer science course is offered has sufficient capacity, infrastructure
31 and qualified staff, including competent teachers of computer science.
32 The school district governing board or charter school governing body may
33 determine the method and manner in which to administer a test that is
34 identical to the civics portion of the naturalization test used by the
35 United States citizenship and immigration services. A pupil who does not
36 obtain a passing score on the test that is identical to the civics portion
37 of the naturalization test may retake the test until the pupil obtains a
38 passing score.

39 C. The governing board may prescribe the course of study and
40 competency requirements for the graduation of pupils from high school that
41 are in addition to or higher than the course of study and competency
42 requirements that the state board prescribes.

43 D. The governing board may prescribe competency requirements for
44 the passage of pupils in courses that are required for graduation from
45 high school.

1 E. A teacher shall determine whether to pass or fail a pupil in a
2 course in high school on the basis of the competency requirements, if any
3 have been prescribed. The governing board, if it reviews the decision of
4 a teacher to pass or fail a pupil in a course in high school as provided
5 in section 15-342, paragraph 11, shall base its decision on the competency
6 requirements, if any have been prescribed.

7 F. Graduation requirements established by the governing board may
8 be met by a pupil who passes courses in the required or elective subjects
9 at a community college or university, if the course is at a higher level
10 than the course taught in the high school attended by the pupil or, if the
11 course is not taught in the high school, the level of the course is equal
12 to or higher than the level of a high school course. The governing board
13 shall determine whether the subject matter of the community college or
14 university course is appropriate to the specific requirement the pupil
15 intends it to fulfill and whether the level of the community college or
16 university course is less than, equal to or higher than a high school
17 course, and the governing board shall award at least one-half of a
18 Carnegie unit and up to and including one Carnegie unit for each three
19 semester hours of credit that the pupil earns in an appropriate community
20 college or university course. If a pupil is not satisfied with the
21 decision of the governing board regarding the amount of credit granted or
22 the subjects for which credit is granted, the pupil may request that the
23 state board of education review the decision of the governing board, and
24 the state board shall make the final determination of the amount of credit
25 to be given the pupil and for which subjects. The governing board shall
26 not limit the number of credits that is required for high school
27 graduation and that may be met by taking community college or university
28 courses. For the purposes of this subsection:

29 1. "Community college" means an educational institution that is
30 operated by a community college district as defined in section 15-1401 or
31 a postsecondary educational institution under the jurisdiction of an
32 Indian tribe recognized by the United States department of the interior.

33 2. "University" means a university under the jurisdiction of the
34 Arizona board of regents.

35 G. A pupil who transfers from a private school shall be provided
36 with a list that indicates those credits that have been accepted and
37 denied by the school district. A pupil may request to take an examination
38 in each particular course in which credit has been denied. The school
39 district shall accept the credit for each particular course in which the
40 pupil takes an examination and receives a passing score on a test designed
41 and evaluated by a teacher in the school district who teaches the subject
42 matter on which the examination is based. In addition to the above
43 requirements, the governing board of a school district may prescribe
44 requirements for the acceptance of the credits of pupils who transfer from
45 a private school.

1 H. If a pupil who was previously enrolled in a charter school or
2 school district enrolls in a school district in this state, the school
3 district shall accept credits earned by the pupil in courses or
4 instructional programs at the charter school or school district. The
5 governing board of a school district may adopt a policy concerning the
6 application of transfer credits for the purpose of determining whether a
7 credit earned by a pupil who was previously enrolled in a school district
8 or charter school will be assigned as an elective or core credit. A
9 school district or charter school may note the learning outcomes that a
10 student mastered as prescribed in the rules adopted pursuant to section
11 15-203, subsection A, paragraph 38 to provide a record of the demonstrated
12 competencies and award partial credit.

13 I. A pupil who transfers credit from a charter school, a school
14 district or Arizona online instruction shall be provided with a list that
15 indicates which credits have been accepted as elective credits and which
16 credits have been accepted as core credits by the school district or
17 charter school. Within ten school days after receiving the list, the
18 pupil may request to take an examination in each particular course in
19 which core credit has been denied. The school district or charter school
20 shall accept the credit as a core credit for each particular course in
21 which the pupil takes an examination and receives a passing score on a
22 test that is aligned to the competency requirements adopted pursuant to
23 this section and that is designed and evaluated by a teacher in the school
24 district or charter school who teaches the subject matter on which the
25 examination is based. If a pupil is enrolled in a school district or
26 charter school and that pupil also participates in Arizona online
27 instruction between May 1 and July 31, the school district or charter
28 school shall not require proof of payment as a condition of the school
29 district or charter school accepting credits earned from the online course
30 provider.

31 J. The state board of education shall adopt rules to allow high
32 school pupils who can demonstrate competency in a particular academic
33 course or subject to obtain academic credit for the course or subject
34 without enrolling in the course or subject.

35 K. Pupils who earn a Grand Canyon diploma pursuant to article 6 of
36 this chapter are exempt from the graduation requirements prescribed in
37 this section. Pupils who earn a Grand Canyon diploma are entitled to all
38 the rights and privileges of persons who graduate with a high school
39 diploma issued pursuant to this section, including access to postsecondary
40 scholarships and other forms of student financial aid and access to all
41 forms of postsecondary education. Notwithstanding any other law, a pupil
42 who is eligible for a Grand Canyon diploma may elect to remain in high
43 school through grade twelve and shall not be prevented from enrolling at a
44 high school after the pupil becomes eligible for a Grand Canyon diploma.
45 A pupil who is eligible for a Grand Canyon diploma and who elects not to

1 pursue one of the options prescribed in section 15-792.03 may only be
2 readmitted to that high school or another high school in this state
3 pursuant to policies adopted by the school district of readmission.

4 L. Each school district and charter school shall report to the
5 department of education all of the following aggregate data, organized by
6 grade level, relating to the test that is identical to the civics portion
7 of the naturalization test used by the United States citizenship and
8 immigration services required by subsection A, paragraph 3 of this
9 section:

- 10 1. The median score.
- 11 2. The percentage of pupils who passed by correctly answering the
12 minimum number of questions required to pass the test pursuant to
13 subsection A, paragraph 3 of this section.
- 14 3. The percentage of pupils who failed by correctly answering fewer
15 than the minimum number of questions required to pass the test pursuant to
16 subsection A, paragraph 3 of this section.
- 17 4. Any other data required by the department relating to the test.

18 M. A school district or charter school may not include the
19 personally identifiable information of any pupil in the data reported to
20 the department of education under subsection L of this section. The
21 department of education shall make the data publicly available, organized
22 at a minimum by school district or charter school and grade level, on the
23 website that includes the school report cards required by section 15-746.

24 Sec. 3. Ethnic studies commission; members; state board of
25 education; duties; delayed repeal

26 A. The ethnic studies commission is established to review the
27 contributions of residents of this state from diverse ethnic backgrounds
28 and to make recommendations to the state board of education for
29 prescribing academic standards in social studies that include ethnic
30 studies as defined in section 15-701, Arizona Revised Statutes, as amended
31 by this act. The commission is composed of the following members:

- 32 1. Five members of the senate who are appointed by the president of
33 the senate, not more than three of whom are members of the same political
34 party. The president of the senate shall designate one of the members to
35 serve as cochairperson of the commission.
- 36 2. Five members of the house of representatives who are appointed
37 by the speaker of the house of representatives, not more than three of
38 whom are members of the same political party. The speaker of the house of
39 representatives shall designate one of the members to serve as
40 cochairperson of the commission.
- 41 3. Two members who are appointed by the governor.

42 B. Commission members are not eligible to receive compensation but
43 are eligible for reimbursement of expenses pursuant to title 38, chapter
44 4, article 2, Arizona Revised Statutes. Meetings of the commission are
45 subject to the requirements of title 38, chapter 3, article 3.1, Arizona

1 Revised Statutes. The state board of education shall provide staff and
2 meeting space for the commission.

3 C. The commission shall:

4 1. Review the history and contributions of residents of this state
5 who are from diverse ethnic backgrounds.

6 2. Make recommendations for recognizing the contributions of
7 residents of this state who are from diverse ethnic backgrounds.

8 3. Review proposed academic standards that are submitted to the
9 commission by the state board of education pursuant to subsection E of
10 this section.

11 4. Make recommendations to the state board of education for
12 incorporating ethnic studies as defined in section 15-701, Arizona Revised
13 Statutes, as amended by this act, into the academic standards in social
14 studies.

15 D. The commission may establish subcommittees to assist the
16 commission in performing any of the duties prescribed by subsection C of
17 this section. A subcommittee established pursuant to this subsection may
18 include members of the public who represent a community organization,
19 public schools or the general public.

20 E. Before prescribing academic standards in social studies that
21 include ethnic studies as defined in section 15-701, Arizona Revised
22 Statutes, as amended by this act, the state board of education shall:

23 1. Submit to the ethnic studies commission established by this
24 section a draft of the proposed academic standards for review and
25 recommendations.

26 2. Consider all of the following:

27 (a) Existing academic standards that increase cultural awareness of
28 all communities in this state.

29 (b) Opportunities to recognize and incorporate into the ethnic
30 studies requirements the history, contributions and perspectives of
31 residents of this state who are from diverse ethnic backgrounds.

32 (c) Recommendations from the ethnic studies commission established
33 by this section.

34 F. Not later than January 1, 2028, the state board of education
35 shall:

36 1. Prescribe academic standards in social studies that include
37 ethnic studies as defined in section 15-701, Arizona Revised Statutes, as
38 amended by this act.

39 2. Develop guidelines to support public schools in developing
40 curricula that includes the academic standards prescribed pursuant to
41 paragraph 1 of this subsection.

42 3. Provide professional development training and resources on
43 ethnic studies as defined in section 15-701, Arizona Revised Statutes, as
44 amended by this act, to certificated teachers in this state who provide

1 instruction in social studies to students in kindergarten programs or any
2 of grades one through twelve.

3 G. Beginning in the 2028-2029 school year, each school district and
4 charter school shall prescribe curricula that include the academic
5 standards prescribed pursuant to subsection F of this section and that
6 focus on shared identity and honoring unique cultural differences,
7 including:

- 8 1. That each individual student has unique characteristics.
- 9 2. The common elements that unite residents of this state.
- 10 3. Respect for distinct socio-cultural identities.
- 11 4. Cultural histories within American history and global history.
- 12 H. This section is repealed from and after December 31, 2030.