

## *Long-awaited graduation requirements approved for next two years*

As expected, the Ohio House and Senate took action during the year-end lame duck legislative session to delay previously approved stricter graduation requirements from remaining in place for the graduating classes of 2019 and 2020.

An amendment to H.B. 491 extends the alternative graduation requirements granted to the class of 2018 for an additional year, and – with a few modifications – to the class of 2020.

Under previous law, the class of 2019 would have been the first to be required to score 18 out of a possible 35 points on end-of-course exams, earn professional credentials, or earn remediation-free scores on the ACT or SAT to graduate.

A phase-in of the new tougher graduation requirements granted flexibility to the class of 2018. Ohio Department of Education (ODE) data show that as many as 18 percent of those students used alternative options – good attendance, a 2.5 GPA for senior-year grades, a capstone project or community service/employment – to meet graduation requirements.



Concerns regarding the number of students who relied on the eased requirements for graduation prompted various education stakeholders to advocate for extension for an additional two years.

Ultimately, lawmakers reached consensus on a one-year extension, providing the same options for the class of 2019 as was put in place for the class of 2018. For the class of 2020, students may not use attendance as condition for graduation. They will also be required to earn a 2.5 GPA not just for their senior year, but for their final two years of high school. Capstone projects and community service hours must comply with ODE guidance.

The General Assembly intends to continue to consider appropriate high school graduation requirements and has tasked ODE with making recommendations approved by the State Board of Education for a long-term proposal for diploma requirements that reduces reliance on state testing, encourages local innovation, and supports student readiness for career, college and life. They must also include a transition plan to allow adequate time for a smooth transition from old requirements to new. The bill establishes a deadline of April 1, 2019 to allow for potential inclusion in the next state biennial budget to be approved by June 30, 2019.