

# FACT SHEET

## Illinois High School Course Substitution Policy



Under Illinois School Code (105 ILCS 5/27-610), school districts that serve high school grades (9–12) are authorized to adopt policies enabling students to substitute certain high school graduation requirements with approved apprenticeship programs or Career and Technical Education courses.

### Key Provisions

- **Eligibility:** Applies to students in Grades 9–12 enrolled in school districts with an applicable policy.
- **Authorized Substitutions:**
  - A registered apprenticeship program (105 ILCS 5/2-3.175), which is an industry-based occupational training program approved by the U.S. Department of Labor.
  - A related Career and Technical Education course.
- **Content Requirement:**
  - The substituted Career and Technical Education course must include at least 50% of the content of the original required course.
  - This equivalency is determined by the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) under uniform standards.

- **Parental Consent:**

- Mandatory written approval from a parent or guardian is required for students under the age of 18.
- School districts must provide official forms for this request and approval process.

School boards are not required to adopt such substitution policies. It is at their discretion. Substitutions can apply to general graduation requirements, including those specifically listed in sections of the School Code mandating physical education (105 ILCS 5/27-710) and outlining required courses for high school graduation (105 ILCS 5/27-605).



Click or scan to learn more about graduation requirements

## **Career and Technical Education (CTE) courses as a Laboratory Science**

Illinois provides a flexible approach to science education by authorizing local school districts to allow Career and Technical Education (CTE) courses to replace the lab science requirements for graduation, providing the courses contain at least 50% of the content of the courses they replace ([105 ILCS 5/27-610](#))

The following areas of Career and Technical Education may qualify as a lab science.

**Agricultural Sciences** – These courses may cover a broad spectrum of disciplines, such as animal and plant science, horticulture, agribusiness, environmental science, agricultural mechanics, food science, and leadership development, integrating FFA and work-based learning activities for practical learning.

They may qualify as a lab science by offering extensive hands-on experiences across diverse agricultural fields, involving direct interaction with natural phenomena, use of agricultural equipment, and data analysis.

**Health Science (Anatomy & Physiology/Biomedical Sciences)** – These courses may integrate the study of human anatomy, physiology, microbiology, and health conditions through laboratory experiments, hands-on investigations, and case studies, focusing on disease diagnosis and medical treatment.

They may qualify as a lab science with their practical approach to exploring the human body and health science, providing direct interaction with biological phenomena, collecting and analyzing data, and investigative learning through scientific reasoning and laboratory work.

**Biotechnical Engineering (Biomedical Engineering)** – These courses may offer experiential learning in biomedical engineering, bioprocess engineering, and environmental engineering, focusing on areas such as biomechanics, genetic engineering, and biotechnology through hands-on problem-solving.

They may qualify as a lab science by using laboratory investigations with tools and models to understand biological and technological phenomena, and embodying a hands-on, data-driven approach.

**Construction (Architecture)** – These courses may provide practical experiences in construction and building design-related trades, and teach the fundamental principles and technical skills in carpentry, masonry, plumbing, and electrical installations.

They may qualify as a lab science by offering laboratory investigations that apply construction principles, allowing students to engage in data recording, analysis, and the application of technical knowledge in real-world settings.

**Engineering (Mechanical Engineering/Applied Science)** – These courses may offer experiential learning in biomedical engineering, bioprocess engineering, and environmental engineering, focusing on areas such as biomechanics, genetic engineering, and biotechnology through hands-on problem-solving.

They may qualify as a lab science through the emphasis of in-field problem-solving, solution design, and hands-on construction projects, where students engage in scientific reasoning and technical skills development.

**Technology (Energy/Manufacturing/Construction)** – Technology courses may cover many topics, including electronics, robotics, telecommunications, electromagnetism, and energy conversion, relating to industries in manufacturing, construction, or energy production.

They may qualify as a lab science by emphasizing hands-on experiences, encouraging students to design technological solutions, and fostering scientific reasoning and tool manipulation or apply technical processes and material science, students develop critical skills in problem-solving and data analysis.