

SENATE BILL REPORT

SHB 1758

As of March 17, 2009

Title: An act relating to expanding options for students to earn high school diplomas.

Brief Description: Expanding options for students to earn high school diplomas.

Sponsors: House Committee on Education (originally sponsored by Representatives Quall, Hope, Wallace, Sullivan, Goodman, Kagi, Santos, Morrell, Hasegawa and Ormsby).

Brief History: Passed House: 3/05/09, 97-0.

Committee Activity: Early Learning & K-12 Education: 3/16/09.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION

Staff: Brandon Roché (786-7405)

Background: The State Board of Education (SBE) establishes minimum statewide high school graduation requirements. Current requirements include 19 credits of a specified distribution of courses, a high school and beyond plan, and a culminating project. Beginning with the graduating class of 2008, an additional state requirement for graduation from a public high school is achievement of a Certificate of Academic Achievement (CAA) or Certificate of Individual Achievement (CIA). Through the class of 2012, there is an exception to this requirement for students who did not successfully meet the state standard on the high school mathematics assessment. Local school districts may adopt additional requirements. School districts issue high school diplomas to students who satisfactorily complete all state and local graduation requirements.

Community and technical colleges are also authorized under state law to issue high school diplomas or certificates, based on rules adopted by the SBE. The current rules require individuals to meet the same credit requirements to earn a diploma from a college (also called a high school completion diploma) as are required for a diploma from a high school. For individuals over age 18, colleges have flexibility to award credit based on college courses, correspondence courses, independent study, testing, work experience, and other evidence of educational attainment. For individuals under 18, a high school principal must approve of the program of studies that will lead to the diploma. Students over the age of 21 are not required to earn a CAA or a CIA.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Associate degrees typically require two years or 90 credits. Professional-technical certificates requiring 45 or more credits, or equivalent clock hours, must include general education instruction along with technical instruction.

Summary of Bill: In addition to high school completion diplomas issued under rules adopted by the SBE, community and technical colleges are authorized to issue high school diplomas to:

- individuals who enroll in the college and complete an Associate's Degree, including students enrolled in Running Start; or
- individuals who have completed at least the equivalent of 10th grade, enroll in a college, and complete a professional-technical certificate program of 45 or more credit hours, including students enrolled in Running Start.

School districts must include these options in various required notifications to students about available educational options.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: We used to have only two options for students graduating from high school. Times have changed, and we encourage a wider range of options. We've blurred the lines on dual credit programs. This is a dual degree, dual certification program. It gives students more options which means more incentive. I'm excited to see this option being considered and it compliments many other things we've been prioritizing in recent years. Many students and counselors focus on making sure that students jump through every hoop and they lose sight of the goal. This passed the House floor unanimously. This is a terrific bill that gives students another option and another way to show proficiency. This is a motivational incentive for the kids and could help to reduce the dropout rate. This doesn't require new funding and could possibly save money in the form of not having to administer extra WASL exams.

OTHER: There are some functional things that cause concern: especially funding. As the bill is written, it looks like the students who do not take the WASL will count against the school districts' passage rate. Also, the school district would still be responsible for implementing a student learning plan. Another concern is that the student doesn't have to meet the requirements that all students have to meet to get a high school diploma. The concerns I'd like to raise are with consistency in requirements and a property right in a diploma. We've diminished the requirements for a diploma by giving so many options. There should be something like a waiver certifying someone has completed coursework and is a graduate of a high school in Washington.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Representative Quall, prime sponsor; Lynette Anderson, citizen; Wendy Rader-Konofalski, Washington Education Association; Bill Williams, Washington State PTA; Christie Perkins, Washington State Special Education Coalition.

OTHER: Marcia Fromhold, Evergreen School District; Barbara Mertens, Washington Association of School Administrators.