

SENATE BILL REPORT

ESSB 6778

As Passed Senate, February 15, 2010

Title: An act relating to establishing an alternative route to a high school diploma.

Brief Description: Establishing an alternative route to a high school diploma.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Early Learning & K-12 Education (originally sponsored by Senators McAuliffe, Shin, Kauffman and Kline).

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Early Learning & K-12 Education: 2/04/10 [DPS, w/oRec].

Passed Senate: 2/15/10, 35-12.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6778 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators McAuliffe, Chair; Kauffman, Vice Chair, Early Learning; Oemig, Vice Chair, K-12; King, Ranking Minority Member; Gordon and Roach.

Minority Report: That it be referred without recommendation.

Signed by Senator Brandland.

Staff: Alicia Kinne (786-7784)

Background: To earn a high school diploma in Washington, students must complete a minimum of nineteen high school credits, pass state tests or approved alternatives to those tests, complete a culminating project, and complete a High School and Beyond Plan. Beginning with the class of 2013, graduation requirements will include an additional credit of math. By 2018, new graduation requirements are to be phased in and require the completion of 24 credits for high school graduation. The Washington State Board of Education establishes the minimum credits for graduation, requirements for the culminating project, and requisites for the High School and Beyond Plan. The state legislature establishes the state testing requirements. Local school districts may set additional graduation requirements.

The minimum admissions requirements are established by the higher education coordinating board for regular admission to a public four-year institution in Washington. Students must complete four English credits, three math credits with one being in the senior year of high

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school, two science credits, two language credits, three social science credits, and one arts credit.

One credit of occupational education is a minimum requirement for high school graduation as established by the State Board of Education. Occupational education means credits resulting from a series of learning experiences designed to assist the student to acquire and demonstrate competency of skills under student learning goal four, and which skills are required for success in current and emerging occupations. At a minimum, these competencies must align with the definition of an exploratory course as proposed or adopted in the career and technical education program standards of the Superintendent of Public Instruction.

Summary of Engrossed Substitute Bill: As an alternative to high school graduation requirements, students who successfully complete the minimum requirements for admission to a public four-year institution of higher education, as adopted by the Higher Education Coordinating Board, earn a cumulative grade point average of at least three on a four point scale, complete a culminating project and a High School and Beyond Plan, and complete one occupational education credit must receive a high school diploma.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect on September 1, 2011.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: This bill creates a realistic goal of meeting requirements related to higher education standards. It uses grade point average as a metric for better assessing a child's academic potential as opposed to standardized tests. It offers a higher standard and a positive motivation for success. The bill provides another option for students who are failing to navigate the current system.

CON: Lowering graduation requirements is not the best way to encourage higher academic achievement. Instead of diminishing standards, the state should improve academic curriculums to encourage students to stay in school. This is at odds with the Core 24 as recently established by the legislature.

OTHER: This bill encourages discussion about seat time versus student learning.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator McAuliffe, prime sponsor; Wendy Rader-Konafalski, Washington Education Association; Barbara Mertens, Washington Association of School Administrators; Ben Kodama, Equitable Opportunity Caucus; Ricardo Sanchez, Latino Educational Achievement Project; Dan Steele, Washington State School Director's Association.

CON: Peggy Goldberg, Centralia College; Nancy Witeshue, WA Roundtable; Dan Newell, OSPI; Randy Spaulding, HECB; Robert Harkins, OSPI; Brad Burnham, WA State Board of Education; George Scarola, League of Education Voters; Kevin Washington; Tabor 100.

OTHER: Jerry Bender, Association of Washington School Principals.