
Education Committee

HB 2411

Brief Description: Regarding high school graduation requirements.

Sponsors: Representatives Haigh, Santos, Hasegawa, Kenney, Uptegrove, McCoy, Hunt and Ormsby.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Specifies 18 credits as minimum state requirements for high school graduation beginning with the class of 2016, and prohibits the State Board of Education (SBE) from exceeding what is established in statute.
- Removes provisions requiring the SBE to submit graduation requirement changes to the Legislature for review, and requiring the Legislature to authorize and fund such changes before they take effect.
- Changes the definition of Basic Education from an opportunity for students to complete 24 credits for graduation, to an equitable opportunity for all students to complete the statutory graduation requirements.

Hearing Date: 1/24/12

Staff: Barbara McLain (786-7383).

Background:

The State Board of Education (SBE) establishes minimum requirements for high school graduation through administrative rules. The current requirements are 19 credits among a specified distribution of subjects, a culminating project, and a high school and beyond plan.

The credit distribution for graduation is as follows, based on content that must be aligned with the Essential Academic Learning Requirements (EALRs):

- English: three credits.
- Mathematics: two credits.
- Science: two credits, including one laboratory science.

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.

- Social Studies: 2.5 credits, including one in U.S. History, .5 credits in Washington State History, and one in Contemporary World Problems.
- Health and Fitness: two credits.
- Arts: one credit.
- Occupational Education: one credit.
- Electives: 5.5 credits.

Beginning with the class of 2013, students must earn one additional credit in mathematics, which must be in Algebra II or an equivalent. However, students whose high school and beyond plans indicate a different mathematics course would be more appropriate, may meet with the high school and have a parent sign a form agreeing to a different course.

Legislation enacted in 2009 requires school districts, as part of their basic education program, to provide students with the opportunity to complete 24 credits, based on courses specified by the SBE. The increase to 24 credits is to be phased-in according to a schedule adopted by the Legislature, which has not yet occurred.

Changes in the minimum requirements that are proposed by the SBE must be submitted to the Education Committees of the Legislature for review before they are adopted. Changes that are found to have a fiscal impact on school districts take effect only if formally authorized and funded by the Legislature.

In November 2011 the SBE adopted the following changes within the overall 20 credit minimum, to take effect with the class of 2016:

- increasing English from three to four credits;
- increasing Social Studies from 2.5 to three credits, including one-half credit of Civics (as required by other legislation);
- changing the designation of two credits of Health and Fitness to .5 credits of Health and 1.5 credits of Fitness; and
- reducing required electives from 5.5 to four credits.

The requirement that students meet the state standard on state assessments for graduation is established in statute rather than by the SBE.

Summary of Bill:

Beginning with the graduating class of 2016, graduation requirements established by the SBE may not exceed requirements established in statute.

The SBE must establish the following course distribution requirements, for a total of 18 credits.

- English: four credits.
- Mathematics: three credits, with the content of the third credit chosen by the student based on the high school and beyond plan.
- Science: two credits.
- Social Studies: three credits.
- Health and Fitness: one credit.
- World Languages: two credits.
- Arts: one credit.

- **Career Concentration:** two credits, which are courses chosen by the student based on the high school and beyond plan and may include career and technical education.

The SBE must adopt rules defining the minimum content of the required credits and their alignment with the EALRs. The SBE is authorized to establish completion of a high school and beyond plan as a graduation requirement.

Provisions are repealed that require the SBE to submit proposed changes in graduation requirements to the Education Committees, or require the Legislature to authorize and fund such changes before they take effect.

Rather than providing students an opportunity to earn 24 credits for graduation, the definition of Basic Education is to provide all students with an equitable opportunity to complete the statutory graduation requirements.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Preliminary fiscal note available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.