
Education Committee

HB 1656

Brief Description: Establishing statewide high school graduation requirements that permit increased flexibility for students to select courses based on their interests and plans.

Sponsors: Representatives Stonier, Harris, Pike, Haigh, Wylie, Orwall, Hunt, Farrell, Sawyer, Roberts, Ormsby, Jinkins, Bergquist, Fey, Ryu, Moscoso, Freeman and Pollet.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Specifies 22 credits as minimum state requirements for high school graduation beginning with the class of 2017, which includes six credits in a Career Concentration.
- Allows the State Board of Education (SBE) to encourage students with an intent to enroll directly in a four-year institution of higher education to take specified academic courses for their Career Concentration.
- Removes provisions requiring the SBE to submit graduation requirement changes to the Legislature for review.
- 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: 2/12/13

Staff: Barbara McLain (786-7383).

Background:

Current Requirements. The State Board of Education (SBE) establishes minimum requirements for high school graduation through administrative rules. The current requirements are 20 credits among a specified distribution of subjects, a culminating project, and a High School and Beyond Plan (HSBP).

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.

The credit distribution for graduation is as follows:

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

The third credit of Mathematics must be in Algebra II or an equivalent. However, students whose HSBP's 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.

Changes to Requirements. 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 .5 credits of Civics as required by other legislation, and moving Washington State History to a non-credit requirement;
- 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.

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.

Summary of Bill:

Beginning with the graduating class of 2017, the credit and course distribution graduation requirements established by the SBE may not exceed what is established in statute.

The SBE must establish the following course distribution requirements, for a total of 22 credits.

- English: four credits.
- Mathematics: three credits, with the content of the third credit chosen by the student based on the HSBP.
- Science: two credits.
- Social Studies: three credits.
- Health and Fitness: two credits.
- Occupation Education: one credit.

- Arts: one credit.
- Career Concentration: six credits. A Career Concentration is a series of related courses within a career pathway that lead to a specific post high school career or educational outcome chosen by the student based on the HSBP and is intended to provide a focus for the student's learning.

Particularly for students whose HSBP indicates an intent to enroll directly in a four-year institution of higher education after graduation, the SBE may encourage selection of the following courses as the student's Career Concentration:

- Science: one additional credit.
- Arts: one additional credit.
- World Languages: two additional credits.
- Electives: two credits.

The SBE must adopt rules defining the minimum content of the required credits and their alignment with state learning standards.

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: Available.

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