

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2556

As Reported by House Committee On: Education

Title: An act relating to eliminating the certificate of academic achievement as a requirement for high school graduation.

Brief Description: Eliminating the certificate of academic achievement as a requirement for high school graduation.

Sponsors: Representatives S. Hunt, Appleton, Ormsby and Scott; by request of Superintendent of Public Instruction.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Education: 1/26/16, 2/4/16 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Eliminates provisions establishing, governing, and mandating the earning of a Certificate of Academic Achievement (CAA) or a Certificate of Individual Achievement (CIA) as a requirement for graduating from a public high school.
- Establishes that, beginning in the 2016-17 school year, twelfth grade students who have not met the state standard on the English Language Arts or mathematics assessments must, to qualify for graduation, take and pass a locally determined course in the content area in which the student was not successful.
- Discontinues administration of the tenth grade reading and writing and mathematics assessments and eliminates all existing alternative assessment options.
- Modifies provisions governing the high school assessment in science by removing a provision requiring the Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI) to implement a two-year transition period after the SPI has adopted a comprehensive science assessment.
- Adds specificity to High School and Beyond Plans.

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.

- Makes other changes related to the statewide student assessment system and graduation requirements.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 13 members: Representatives Santos, Chair; Ortiz-Self, Vice Chair; Reykdal, Vice Chair; Bergquist, Griffey, S. Hunt, Kilduff, Klippert, Kuderer, Orwall, Pollet, Rossetti and Springer.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 8 members: Representatives Magendanz, Ranking Minority Member; Muri, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Stambaugh, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Caldier, Hargrove, Harris, Hayes and McCaslin.

Staff: Ethan Moreno (786-7386).

Background:

High School Graduation Requirements-General Provisions, Role of State Board of Education.

A Certificate of Academic Achievement (CAA) or a Certificate of Individual Achievement (CIA) is one of the requirements for graduation from a Washington public high school. To obtain a CAA, a student must meet state standards on required assessments. Students requiring special education who are not appropriately assessed by the statewide assessment system, even with accommodations, may earn a CIA via a variety of ways to demonstrate skills and abilities commensurate with their individual education programs. High school transcripts include a notation of whether the student has earned a CAA or CIA.

An additional state requirement for graduation is the completion of a High School and Beyond Plan (HSBP). Rules adopted by the State Board of Education (SBE) provide that each student must have a HSBP for their high school experience, including what they expect to do the year following graduation. The content of the plan and whether a student's plan meets the requirement is determined at the district level.

The SBE has statutory authority to establish and enforce minimum high school graduation requirements and to periodically reevaluate the requirements. Local school district boards of directors, however, may adopt local graduation requirements that are in excess of state requirements. A student who completes and passes all required International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma Programme courses as scored at the local level and satisfies other requirements is considered to have satisfied state minimum requirements for graduation, but he or she must still earn a CAA or CIA to be eligible to graduate from a public high school.

School districts that operate a high school must have policies and procedures that permit students who are receiving special education or related services under an individualized education program and will continue to receive these services between the ages of 18 and 21, to receive a certificate of attendance and participate in the graduation ceremony after four

years of high school attendance. Participation in a graduation ceremony and receipt of a certificate of attendance may not be construed as the student's receipt of a high school diploma or a CIA.

Statewide Student Assessment System and Alternative Assessment Options.

The Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI), in consultation with the SBE, is authorized to maintain and revise a statewide academic assessment system to measure student knowledge and skills on state learning standards and for purposes of state and federal accountability.

The statewide assessment system must cover the content areas of reading, writing, mathematics, and science for elementary, middle, and high school years. The federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act, as reauthorized by the Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015, requires states to assess students based on state learning standards in reading and mathematics in each of grades 3 through 8 and one high school grade, as well as in at least one grade in elementary, middle, and high school in science. In addition to being used for purposes of earning a CAA and meeting graduation requirements, high school assessments are used for assessing student career and college readiness.

In recent years, high school mathematics have been assessed in Washington using end-of-course assessments (EOCs) in Algebra I and Geometry, while English Language Arts (ELA) have been assessed using a tenth grade reading and writing assessment.

Legislation adopted in 2011 directed that high school science be assessed statewide using a Biology EOC assessment. Subsequently, the Legislature expressed intent to implement a two-year transition from a Biology EOC to a more comprehensive science assessment. The SPI has limited authority with regard to developing and adopting a science assessment, as a new science EOC or comprehensive science assessment may only be developed and adopted when specifically directed by the Legislature. In accordance with legislation adopted in 2015, attaining a passing score on the Biology EOC assessment is not required for graduation for the class of 2016, but passing the assessment is a graduation requirement for subsequent classes.

In 2013 the SPI was directed to, beginning with the 2014-15 school year, implement student assessments in ELA and mathematics that were developed with a multistate consortium. (Washington is part of the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium, known as the SBAC.) Full integration of the SBAC assessments will occur for the class of 2019, as beginning with that class, the eleventh grade SBAC assessments will be the exclusive high school assessments for ELA and mathematics. During the multi-year transition period, however, the SPI was directed to develop and administer a tenth grade ELA assessment and algebra and geometry-based EOCs using test items and other resources from the SBAC assessments.

Students who have taken a high school assessment at least once, but who have not earned a score sufficient for attaining a CAA, may use alternative assessment options established in statute to earn a CAA. The following is a list of the alternative assessment options:

- earning a high enough score on the SAT or ACT;
- earning a high enough score on an Advanced Placement/IB exam;
- grade comparison; and
- a collection of evidence process, scored at the state level or by regional panels of educators.

There are also provisions for waiving specific requirements pertaining to the CAA for students who transferred to a Washington public school in their junior or senior year or who have special, unavoidable circumstances.

Statute specifies numerous assessment-related general administration requirements for the SPI that are unrelated to high school graduation. One such requirement specifies that, effective with 2009 assessments forward, the SPI must redesign assessments in the content areas of reading, mathematics, and science in all non-high school grades for purposes of shortening test administration and reducing the number of short answer and extended response questions.

The SBE is responsible for establishing the performance scores that students must meet on state assessments to obtain a CAA. In accordance with statutory requirements, the SBE has established performance scores for the assessments used during the transition period, as well as for the SBAC assessments. In setting scores for the high school SBAC assessments, the SBE must review the experience during the transition period, examine scores used in other states for the SBAC assessments, including states that require passage of an eleventh grade assessment for graduation. The scores established for purposes of graduation may be different from the scores used for the purpose of determining career and college readiness.

Washington State Seal of Biliteracy.

Established in 2014, the Washington State Seal of Biliteracy (Biliteracy Seal) recognizes public high school graduates who have attained a high level of proficiency in speaking, reading, and writing in one or more world languages in addition to English.

The Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction adopts rules establishing criteria for award of the Biliteracy Seal. The criteria must require a student to demonstrate proficiency in English by meeting state high school graduation requirements in English, including through state assessments and credits, and proficiency in one or more world languages other than English.

Extended Learning Opportunities Program.

The Extended Learning Opportunities Program (ELOP) provides assistance to eleventh and twelfth grade students who are not on track to meet local or state graduation requirements. The ELOP also provides assistance to eighth grade students who need additional assistance in order to have the opportunity for a successful entry into high school.

Provisions governing the ELOP specify that districts must make available to students in twelfth grade who have failed to meet one or more local or state graduation requirements the option of continuing enrollment in the school district. This provision is subject to funding availability.

Instructional services provided through ELOP may include, but are not limited to:

- individual or small group instruction;
- instruction in ELA and/or mathematics that eligible students need to pass all or part of the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (a statewide assessment discontinued in 2009);

- inclusion in remediation programs, including summer school; and
- language development instruction for English language learners.

Academic Acceleration Policy.

Each school district is encouraged to adopt an academic acceleration policy for high school students. Under an academic acceleration policy, the district automatically enrolls any student who meets the state standard on the high school statewide student assessment in the next most rigorous level of advanced courses offered by the high school. Students who successfully complete such an advanced course are then enrolled in the next most rigorous level of advanced course, with the objective that students will eventually be automatically enrolled in courses that offer the opportunity to earn dual credit for high school and college. Districts choosing to adopt an academic acceleration policy must provide a parent or guardian with an opportunity to opt out of the policy and enroll a student in an alternative course.

The subject matter of the advanced courses in which the student is automatically enrolled depends on the content area or areas of the statewide student assessment where the student has met the state standard. Students who meet the state standard on both EOC mathematics assessments are considered to have met the state standard for high school mathematics. Students who meet the state standard in both reading and writing are eligible for enrollment in advanced courses in English, social studies, humanities, and other related subjects.

Participation in High School Completion Pilot Program.

In 2007 the Legislature established a Participation in High School Completion Pilot Program for students meeting age requirements and other criteria who had satisfied all state and local high school graduation requirements except for earning a CAA or CIA. The purpose of the program was to provide eligible students with the opportunity to earn a diploma through classes taken at a community or technical college. Authorization to participate in the pilot program expired August 1, 2015.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

Elimination of the Certificate of Academic Achievement and Certificate of Individual Achievement.

Provisions establishing, governing, and requiring the earning of a CAA or a CIA as a requirement for graduating from a Washington public high school are repealed. Numerous provisions referencing a CAA or a CIA are modified to delete the reference.

Statewide Student Assessment System.

New statewide assessment provisions are established. Beginning in the 2016-17 school year, students in twelfth grade who have not met the state standard on the ELA or mathematics statewide student assessment must take and pass a locally determined course in the content area in which the student was not successful. Taking and passing the locally determined course is a graduation requirement for these students. The course must be consistent with the student's college and career goals identified in his or her HSBP. When available, school districts should prioritize enrolling such students in high school transition courses.

A "high school transition course" is defined as an ELA, mathematics, or science course offered in high school whose successful completion will ensure the student college-level placement at a public institution of higher education. High school transition courses must satisfy core or elective credit graduation requirements established by the SBE. A student's successful completion of a high school transition course does not entitle the student to be admitted to any public institution of higher education.

After the 2015-16 school year, tenth grade ELA assessment and algebra and geometry-based EOC assessments are not administered. All of the existing alternative assessment options for earning a CAA are eliminated, and associated provisions are repealed. The SBAC assessments in ELA and mathematics will continue to be used for assessing student career and college readiness, but with the discontinuation of the CAA, the results will no longer be used for purposes of earning a CAA.

The statewide high school assessment in science continues to be the Biology EOC. The SPI authority related to science assessments is modified, and the SPI may develop or adopt EOC assessments or a comprehensive science assessment when so directed by the Legislature. A provision requiring the SPI to implement a two-year transition period after the SPI has adopted a more comprehensive science assessment is removed, as is a requirement that the SPI, after it is directed to develop or adopt a new science assessment, review objective alternative assessments and make related recommendations to the Legislature.

High School and Beyond Plans.

Each student must have a HSBP to guide the student's high school experience and ensure preparation for postsecondary education or training and career. The HSBP must:

- be adopted for each student before the student's enrollment in high school;
- be updated during the high school grades by reviewing transcripts, assessing progress toward identified goals, and revising as necessary for changing interests, goals, and needs; and
- include a four-year plan for course-taking that will ensure fulfillment of state and local graduation requirements and align with the student's career and educational goals.

For students in grade 12 who have not met the standard on the statewide student assessment, the HSBP must include the specified information, including:

- the student's results on the state assessment;
- the student's progress toward meeting state and local graduation requirements; and
- the courses, competencies, and other steps needed to be taken by the student to meet state academic standards and be eligible for graduation.

Washington State Seal of Biliteracy.

A reference to state assessments and credits in the criteria that a student must meet as part of the requirements for earning a Washington State Seal of Biliteracy is removed.

Extended Learning Opportunities Program.

Provisions governing the instructional services that may be included in an ELOP program are modified to specify that provided services may include instruction in ELA and/or

mathematics that eligible students need to meet the career and college readiness standard on the statewide high school assessment. Provisions referencing the Washington Assessment of Student Learning, a statewide assessment discontinued in 2009, are deleted.

Academic Acceleration Policy.

Academic Acceleration Policy provisions are modified by deleting a provision specifying that students who meet the state standard on both EOC mathematics assessments, assessments that are proposed for discontinuation, are considered to have met the state standard for high school mathematics.

Other Provisions.

Other modifications related to assessments and satisfying graduation requirements are modified or deleted. A summary of these changes is described below.

Redesign of Assessment Content for Non- High School Assessments.

A provision requiring the SPI to redesign assessments in the content areas of reading, mathematics, and science in all non-high school grades for purposes of shortening test administration and reducing the number of short answer and extended response questions is repealed.

High School Transcripts.

References to CAAs and CIAs on the standardized high school transcript developed by the SPI are deleted, but a requirement that the transcript indicate whether the student has met the career and college readiness standard on statewide high school assessments is added.

Repeal of the Participation in High School Completion Pilot Program.

Provisions establishing and governing the Participation in High School Completion Pilot Program that expired on August 1, 2015, are repealed.

Reference Changes.

Statutory references to statewide assessments in the content area of reading and writing are changed to ELA.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

The substitute bill restores a statute proposed for repeal in the underlying bill that obligates school districts to establish a policy and procedures that permit qualifying students who are receiving special education or related services under an individualized education program to participate in a graduation ceremony and earn a certificate of attendance. The substitute bill also modifies this same statute by deleting a reference to a CIA.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) This is a request bill from the SPI that addresses testing, reducing the number of required tests, and eliminating the earning of a CAA as a graduation requirement.

Superintendent Dorn believes the current assessment system is confusing, complicated, time consuming, and costly. He believes all students should take the high school assessments, and that if they receive a score of one or two, they should take and pass a locally determined course in the area of their deficiency. A plethora of alternative assessments does not meet goals of providing useful planning options for students, identifying school performances, and providing legislators with quality data for policymaking purposes. The Legislature needs to adopt a system that is simple and yields useful information for students and policymakers.

The Washington State School Directors' Association supports the concept of de-linking CAAs from graduation requirements. This bill will help to produce more meaningful school performance comparisons. The Legislature should consider options for addressing science assessment issues in this bill.

(Opposed) The Washington Education Association (WEA) supports reforming the school assessment process to focus on teaching, learning, and teacher-driven assessments rather than student performance on standardized tests. The WEA also supports using data from statewide tests as was originally intended: as a systems check for monitoring students' information and closing achievement gaps. The WEA appreciates delinking the Biology assessment from graduation requirements, and the removal of tenth grade tests and alternative assessments. The WEA does not support this bill's continued use of standardized test scores in ELA and math for the purposes of making high-stakes decisions about coursework in the twelfth grade. Last spring's problematic first administration of the SBAC made course scheduling difficult or impossible. Also, because there were so many variations in the administration of the tests, students cannot be assured of fair and reliable test scores, scores that may be used for high-stakes decisions. The Legislature should completely delink of scores from high-stakes decision-making, and should respect the professional judgment of teachers in identifying needed student supports, rather than relying on single test scores and unreliable, untimely data.

The Washington Roundtable supports the requirement that students meet standard on the statewide assessments in order to earn a high school diploma. This bill severs the relationship between state tests and graduation. This bill allows a single locally determined course to substitute for the skills and knowledge required for the state test. There are numerous problems associated with this policy, including that there is no way to ensure that local courses are sufficiently rigorous and that grades are uniformly applied to all high school students. Locally determined courses cannot be a substitute for high school assessments. Also, what is the recourse for students who disagree with the grades they receive in a locally determined course? How can you assure that the grades students receive are fair and free of bias? Standardized test are subjected to rigorous reviews, but locally developed courses will not be subjected to comparable reviews.

The SBE supports exit exams and the role that the CAA plays in the state's education system. The SBE agrees that the HSBP and its educational role needs to be strengthened. The SBE also agrees that the requirements for the Biology assessment need to be modified.

Persons Testifying: (In support) Representative Hunt, prime sponsor; Marcia Fromhold, Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction; and Alan Burke, Washington State School Directors' Association.

(Opposed) Wendy Rader-Konofalski, Washington Education Association; Brian Jeffries, Washington Roundtable; and Ben Rarick, State Board of Education.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.