

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1599

As Reported by House Committee On:
Education

Title: An act relating to promoting career and college readiness through modified high school graduation requirements.

Brief Description: Promoting career and college readiness through modified high school graduation requirements.

Sponsors: Representatives Stonier, Harris, Dolan, Ortiz-Self, MacEwen, Kilduff, Young, Valdez, Wylie, Volz, Bergquist, Stanford, Tharinger, Lekanoff, Pollet, Slatter and Ormsby.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Education: 2/12/19, 2/21/19 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Effective with the graduating class of 2020, decouples graduation requirements from statewide high school assessments by discontinuing the Certificate of Academic Achievement and the Certificate of Individual Achievement.
- Extends an appeals process that allows the Superintendent of Public Instruction to waive certain graduation requirements for qualifying students in the graduating class of 2019.
- Requires graduating students in the class of 2020 and subsequent classes to demonstrate career and college readiness through one of 13 pathway options.
- Requires school districts, beginning with the graduating class of 2022, to make six optional assessments available to students for the purpose of demonstrating career and college readiness.
- Directs the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction to contract with a vendor to implement a statewide online electronic platform for high school and beyond plans that will be available to students beginning in the 2020-21 school year.
- Directs the State Board of Education to convene, lead, and staff a competency-based education work group.

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.

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; Dolan, Vice Chair; Paul, Vice Chair; Steele, Ranking Minority Member; Bergquist, Caldier, Harris, Kilduff, Rude, Stonier, Thai, Valdez and Ybarra.

Minority Report: Without recommendation. Signed by 4 members: Representatives Callan, Corry, Kraft and Ortiz-Self.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 1 member: Representative McCaslin, Assistant Ranking Minority Member.

Staff: Ethan Moreno (786-7386).

Background:

Graduation Requirements—Overview.

To qualify for graduation from a public high school in Washington, students must satisfy minimum course credit requirements, meet standards on required statewide assessments or approved alternatives, complete a high school and beyond plan, and satisfy any graduation requirements adopted by the local school district.

Credits Required for Graduation, Waivers and Pre-High School Credit.

Beginning with the graduating class of 2019, students must complete 24 credits in specified subject areas as determined by the State Board of Education (SBE). The SBE adopts rules to implement the 24-credit graduation requirement, and those rules must include authorizations for school districts to waive up to two credits for individual students based on unusual circumstances. The waivers of districts must be issued in accordance with written policies adopted by the applicable school district board of directors.

If requested by the student and his or her family, a student who completed high school courses before attending high school must be given high school credit that is applied to fulfilling graduation requirements. To qualify for this credit, the academic level of the course must exceed the requirements for grades 7 and 8, and other specified criteria must be met.

Statewide Student Assessment System.

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 to use it for purposes of state and federal accountability. The state assessment system must cover the content areas of reading, writing, mathematics, and science for elementary, middle, and high school years.

The federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) 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. The ESSA also requires states to assess students in science at least once in each of three grade spans: grades 3 through 5; grades 6 through 9; and grades 10 through 12.

Students must earn a Certificate of Academic Achievement (CAA) or a Certificate of Individual Achievement (CIA) to qualify for graduation from a public high school. To obtain a CAA, a student must meet state standard on required statewide assessments administered in grade 10. Students requiring special education who are not appropriately assessed by the state assessment system, even with accommodations, may earn a CIA through a variety of ways to demonstrate skills and abilities commensurate with their individual education programs.

Students in the graduating class of 2019 and in subsequent classes must meet the state standard on the English Language Arts (ELA) SBAC and mathematics assessments. (Washington is part of the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium, known as the SBAC, a multistate consortium that developed student assessment in ELA and mathematics.) Beginning with the graduating class of 2021, graduating students must also meet the science standard on the Next Generation Science Standards assessment.

The SBE is responsible for establishing the performance scores that students must meet on state assessments. The scores established for purposes of graduation may be different from the scores used for the purpose of determining career and college readiness.

Objective Alternative Assessment Options.

If a student does not meet standard on an assessment required for graduation, he or she may utilize one or more objective alternative assessment options (alternative assessments) if the student has taken the applicable standard assessment or assessments at least once. The alternative assessments must be comparable in rigor to the skills and knowledge that the student must demonstrate on statewide student assessments, and must be objective in their determination of student achievement of state standards. If a student meets the state standard on the alternative assessment, he or she earns a CAA. The alternative assessments include:

- grade comparison, provided the student has a sufficient grade point average;
- earning a high enough score on the SAT or ACT;
- earning a high enough score on an Advanced Placement/International Baccalaureate exam;
- earning college credit by completing a dual credit course in ELA or mathematics; and
- taking and passing a locally determined course and associated assessment.

Limited Waiver Options for Certificates of Academic and Individual Achievement.

Legislation adopted in 2017 (chapter 31, Laws of 2017 3rd sp. sess., enacted as Engrossed Substitute House Bill 2224), made numerous changes to provisions governing and affecting graduation requirements. Among other changes, the legislation established an expedited appeals process authorizing the SPI, following local approval, to waive requirements for the CAAs and the CIAs for qualifying students in the graduating classes of 2014 through 2018 who have not met standard on ELA assessments, mathematics assessments, or both.

School districts may also waive 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.

High School and Beyond Plans.

Students qualifying for graduation must complete a high school and beyond plan (HSBP). The purpose of the HSBP is to guide the student's high school experience and to prepare the student for postsecondary education and career opportunities. The HSBP must be initiated for each student during grade 7 or 8 and must include specific elements established in statute, including the identification of career and education goals, information about dual credit programs, and a four-year plan for high school courses. The HSBP must be updated to reflect student results on statewide assessments and revised as necessary for changing interests, goals, and needs.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

High School Graduation Requirements—Decoupling from Assessments.

Beginning with the graduating class of 2020, requirements for graduating from high school are decoupled from statewide high school assessments by discontinuing the CAA, the earning of which is currently required as proof that a student has successfully met standard on statewide assessments required for graduation. The CIA is simultaneously discontinued after the graduating class of 2019 and ceases to be a graduation requirement for qualifying students.

The SPI and the SBE remain obligated to maintain and continue to develop and revise a statewide assessment system for students in the content areas of reading, writing, mathematics, and science, but numerous provisions related to assessments and the earning of a CAA are modified or scheduled for repeal in 2021. For example:

- all alternative assessment options for earning a CAA are discontinued;
- a temporary provision governing end-of-course assessments for high school mathematics is discontinued; and
- references to CAAs (or CIAs) in provisions that govern International Baccalaureate diplomas, the Running Start Program, high school transcripts, and private schools are modified to reflect the elimination of the CAA and the CIA.

Graduation Requirements and Selected Credit Waivers.

Requirements directing rules of the SBE to include authorizations that allow school districts to waive up to two credits for individual students are modified to specify that the waiver must be based on the student's circumstances, rather than unusual circumstances, and none of the waived credits may be identified as mandatory credits by the SBE. Additionally, school districts issuing the waivers must adhere to written school district policies adopted by the applicable school district board of directors.

Limited Waiver Options for Students in the Graduating Class of 2019.

The expedited appeals process that allows the SPI, following approval by the local school district, to waive requirements for the CAAs and the CIAs for qualifying students is extended by one-year to apply to eligible students in the graduating class of 2019.

Application of Pre-High School Credit to High School Requirements.

Opt-in provisions for earning pre-high school credit are changed to opt-out provisions. Unless requested otherwise by the student and the student's family, a student who completed

high school courses before attending high school must be given high school credit that applies to high school graduation requirements.

High School and Beyond Plans.

Numerous modifications are made to provisions governing the HSBPs. The stated purpose of the HSBP is revised to specify that an HSBP is intended to guide the student's high school experience and inform course taking that is aligned with the student's goals for education or training and career after high school. Also, each student's HSBP must be updated to inform junior year course taking.

Other changes provide that if a student has an individualized education program (IEP), the written plan that guides the delivery of special education services, the HSBP must be developed in alignment with their IEP. For students with IEPs, their HSBP must be updated in alignment with their school to postschool transition plan.

The four-year plan for high school course taking that is part of a student's HSBP must identify a course sequence to inform academic acceleration that meets specified requirements. Additionally, each student's HSBP must include evidence that the student has received specific information about federal and state financial aid programs that provide financial assistance for postsecondary education programs.

Online Platform for High School and Beyond Plans.

The Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), subject to specific legislative funding, is directed to select and contract with a vendor to develop and implement a statewide online electronic platform (platform) for the HSBPs of students. Beginning in the 2020-21 school year, the platform must be available to all students who are required to have an HSBP. The platform must meet specified minimum requirements, and the OSPI is authorized to adopt and revise rules related to the development and administration of the platform.

Graduation Pathways for the Graduating Class of 2020 and Subsequent Classes.

Beginning with the class of 2020, the pathway to graduation and a meaningful high school diploma must include:

- demonstration of career and college readiness through successful completion of the HSBP;
- the earning of required credits; and
- successfully completing one or more of 13 graduation pathway options.

Examples of the graduation pathways, include:

- acceptance into an institution of higher education;
- earning high school credit in a high school transition course;
- earning college credit by completing a dual credit course in ELA or mathematics;
- earning high school credit in a career and technical education sequence of courses or program of study;
- earning high school credit through an apprenticeship preparation program;
- meeting or exceeding standard on the high school assessment in ELA or mathematics;

- meeting or exceeding scores necessary to earn college credit on Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, or Cambridge international exams in ELA or mathematics;
- passing the armed services vocational aptitude battery; and
- employment in an occupation identified in the student's HSBP.

School districts are encouraged to make all 13 pathway options available to their students, and to expand their list of options until all are offered, but districts are granted discretion in determining which options they offer to students.

Optional Assessments for Demonstrating College and Career Readiness.

With limited exceptions, beginning with the graduating class of 2022, school districts must make the following six assessments available to students in grade 10:

- the SAT test;
- the ACT test;
- a science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) literacy and high technology assessment developed through a specific advisory board and rule adoption-based process;
- a trade skills aptitude assessment developed through a specific advisory board and rule adoption-based process;
- the armed forces qualification test of the armed services vocational aptitude battery; and
- an assessment developed by the school district that has been approved for use by the SPI.

The requirement to make the STEM literacy and high technology assessment, or the trade skills aptitudes assessment, available to students does not apply if the assessment has not been approved for use by the SPI.

Beginning with the graduating class of 2022, students may complete one or more of the offered optional assessments to demonstrate career and college readiness, and school districts must provide students with an opportunity to retake an offered assessment at least annually. Assessment scores earned by students may not be used, in whole or part, to determine whether a student is eligible to graduate from high school.

If a student elects to complete only one of the offered assessments, that assessment must align with personalized pathway requirements or a specific post high school career or educational outcome identified by the student in his or her HSBP. If a student elects to complete two or more of the offered assessments, at least one of the assessments must align with personalized pathway requirements or a specific post high school career or educational outcome identified in the student's HSBP.

The offered optional assessments must be administered at no cost to the student. However, students who have completed an assessment but who wish to improve their results may be responsible for the costs of retaking the assessment.

School districts must establish and publicize goals for the percentage of students that meet standard on the optional assessments. School districts must also collect and annually submit

to the SPI and the SBE the number and percentage of graduating students that met standard on one of the assessments. Data collected and submitted in accordance with this requirement, and any resulting reports or reporting, must comply with established disaggregation requirements.

Competency-Based Education Work Group.

By June 1, 2019, the SBE is directed to convene and lead a competency-based education work group. The purpose of the work group is to facilitate student access to relevant and robust pathways aligned to their personal goals for their career and further education, as reflected in their HSBPs. The work group, which is to be staffed by the SBE, must coordinate the development of a competency-based pathway to the earning of a high school diploma, and the expansion of options for competency-based credit that meet graduation requirements.

The work group must include representatives from specified agencies and organizations, as selected by those agencies and organizations, and may not exceed 12 members. The SBE must coordinate work group membership to ensure member diversity, including racial, ethnic, gender, geographic, community-size, and expertise diversity.

The SBE must submit an interim report outlining preliminary findings and potential recommendations to the Governor and the education committees of the House of Representatives and the Senate by December 1, 2019. A final report detailing all findings and recommendations related to the work group's purpose and tasks is due to the same recipients by December 1, 2020.

Continued Application of Preexisting Graduation Requirements to Class of 2019 and Prior Classes.

Specific provisions related to statewide assessments, assessments for special education students, and the earning of the CAA or the CIA that existed on January 1, 2019, continue to apply to students in the graduating class of 2019 and prior graduating classes.

Modifications to Statewide High School Science Assessment.

Requirements for the statewide high school assessment in science are modified to remove and obsolete reference to an end-of-course biology assessment, and to specify that the assessment must be a comprehensive assessment that measures the state standards for the application of science and engineering practices, disciplinary core ideas, and crosscutting concepts in the domains of physical sciences, life sciences, Earth and space sciences, and engineering design.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

The substitute bill makes the following changes to the original bill:

- adds acceptance to an institution of higher education and qualifying employment as pathway options for high school students in the graduating class of 2020 and all subsequent classes, rather than only for students in the graduating classes of 2020 and 2021;
- encourages school districts to make all pathway options available to students, but grants districts discretion in determining which pathway options they will offer;

- removes a provision that required the OSPI, in collaboration with the SBE and others to examine and report upon options for replacing the statewide assessments in ELA and mathematics for high school students;
- directs the SBE to convene, lead, and staff a competency-based education work group;
- directs the OSPI, subject to specific funding provisions, to select and contract with a vendor to develop and implement a statewide online electronic platform for the high school and beyond plans of students, and requires the platform to be available to all students beginning in the 2020-21 school year; and
- changes graduating class by which school districts must make optional assessments available to students from the graduating class of 2021 to the graduating class of 2022.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on February 11, 2019.

Effective Date of Substitute Bill: This bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed, except for section 101, relating to the extending the expedited appeals process of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, section 102, relating to the high school and beyond plans, credit waivers for individual circumstances, and pre-high school credits, and section 301, relating to a competency-based education task force, which take effect immediately.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) United State Senators recognize that the use of state tests can have a negative impact on the ability of teachers to teach. The federal education rules were not intended to bring states to this point, and federal rules have relaxed. It is time for Washington to address the issue of assessments and graduation requirements. This bill represents the efforts of stakeholders to create a future workforce. Amendments are forthcoming and a proposed substitute bill is being developed.

The Legislature has made progress in creating flexibility with graduation standards. It is time to delink assessments from graduation requirements. The bill delinks assessments from graduation requirements and makes the HSBP come alive by building a plan for students' junior and senior years that leads them to a postsecondary outcome.

Support exists for fully decoupling assessments from graduation requirements, and mandating robust HSBPs that connect with postsecondary pathways. There is urgency for the class of 2019 and the decoupling provisions must apply to them. Care should be taken to ensure that districts can honor the pathway options established in the bill.

Statewide tests were not intended to determine whether the student can graduate—this is not reasonable or fair. Statewide tests are designed to assess student knowledge and to improve teaching. Bright students are not graduating because they cannot pass an SBAC assessment,

and test scores are a barrier to a college education. Delinking assessments from graduation requirements will help redirect resources to support all students. The bill should have more funding for counselors, as academic counselors play an important role in the graduation process.

School principals are divided on the topic of assessments and high school graduation requirements, as they see student and system stress, but also successes in aligning standards and improving learning. The bill provides meaning and relevancy to HSBPs and student learning plans, but the system needs additional staffing and counselors to make it work. The bill is supported by education and business stakeholders.

(Opposed) The section that requires students to complete graduation pathways is concerning. Some districts may not be able to offer all of the pathways and this may lead to a limiting of graduation options for some students.

(Other) The expedited appeal provisions for the class of 2019 that are in the bill are critical, as the students in that class should not be used for political leverage. The bill requires the completing of a pathway through numerous options, but the menu of options may not be the correct one. Support exists for multiple and equally legitimate pathways to one diploma.

The bill shares components and common spirit with House Bill 1121. The HSBP provisions in the bill, especially those relating to alignment with individualized education programs, are appreciated.

No single test should hold a student back and deny that student a diploma. There are concerns about the multiple pathways called for in the bill. The bill includes two important pathways that are only available to students in the graduating classes of 2020 and 2021, but those pathways should be available to students in all classes.

The current assessment system tests knowledge levels for achieving a minimum grade 9 standard. The current system is working and graduation requirements have risen since testing requirements were established. The bill moves the graduation requirements from a competency-based system to a pathways-based system. The concept of a pathway-based system is something the business community can work with, but the legislation needs additional work and amendments are being discussed.

Persons Testifying: (In support) Representative Stonier, prime sponsor; Chris Reykdal, Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction; Jessica Vavrus; Washington State School Directors' Association; Alicia Chua; Jade McQuire; Rhonda Litzenberger, Eatonville School Board; Roz Thompson, Association of Washington School Principals; and Melissa Gombosky, Evergreen and Vancouver Public Schools.

(Opposed) Simone Boe, Washington Education Association.

(Other) Harium Martin-Morris and Kaaren Heikes, State Board of Education; Marie Sullivan, Washington State Parent Teacher Association; and Neil Sterge, Washington Roundtable.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.