

FINAL BILL REPORT

E2SHB 1599

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Synopsis as Enacted

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

Sponsors: House Committee on Appropriations (originally sponsored by Representatives Stonier, Harris, Dolan, Ortiz-Self, MacEwen, Kilduff, Young, Valdez, Wylie, Volz, Bergquist, Stanford, Tharinger, Lekanoff, Pollet, Slatter and Ormsby).

House Committee on Education
House Committee on Appropriations
Senate Committee on Early Learning & K-12 Education
Senate Committee on Ways & Means

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.

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 Superintendent of Public Instruction, 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.

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 individualized 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 AP/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.

Optional Academic Acceleration Policy.

School district boards of directors are 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 the 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 dual credit courses that offer students the opportunity to earn college course credit while also earning credit toward high school graduation. Districts adopting an academic acceleration policy must provide parents or guardians with an opportunity to opt out of the policy and to enroll students 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 met the state standard on end-of-course mathematics assessments that were discontinued after the graduating class of 2018 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.

Summary:

Discontinuing the Direct Link Between Assessments and Graduation Requirements.

The requirement that graduating students earn a Certificate of Academic Achievement (CAA) to demonstrate meeting standard on statewide assessments is discontinued after the graduating class of 2019. The requirement that qualifying students earn a Certificate of Individual Achievement (CIA) as a prerequisite to graduation is discontinued after the graduating class of 2021.

The Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI) and the State Board of Education (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 to reflect the discontinuation of the CAA and the CIA. For example:

- all alternative assessment options for earning a CAA are discontinued after the graduating class of 2019;
- 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, private schools, and interventions, academic supports, and courses for qualifying students are modified to reflect the discontinuation of the CAA and the CIA.

Additionally, the statewide assessment system is expressly required to include the Washington Access to Instruction and Measurement Assessment for students with significant cognitive challenges.

Establishing Graduation Pathway Options for the Graduating Class of 2020 and Subsequent Classes.

With the exception of students who qualify for a CIA, students in the class of 2020 and subsequent classes who qualify for graduation from a public high school must:

- satisfy the graduation requirements established by the SBE and any graduation requirements established by the applicable public high school or school district;
- satisfy the credit requirements for graduation;
- demonstrate career and college readiness through completion of the high school and beyond plan (HSBP); and
- meet the requirements of at least one of eight authorized graduation pathway options. A student may choose to pursue more than one pathway option, but any option used by a student to demonstrate career and college readiness must align with the student's HSBP.

The graduation pathway options, which are to be implemented through rules adopted by the SBE, are as follows:

- meet or exceed the graduation standard established by the SBE on the statewide high school assessments in English language arts (ELA) and mathematics;
- complete and qualify for college credit in dual credit courses in ELA and mathematics;
- earn high school credit in a high school transition course that meets specific requirements in ELA and mathematics;
- earn high school credit with an appropriate grade or exam score in specified AP, International Baccalaureate, or Cambridge international courses in ELA and mathematics;
- meet or exceed the scores established by the SBE for the mathematics portion and the reading, English, or writing portion of the SAT or ACT;
- meet any combination of at least one ELA option and at least one mathematics option established in the previous bullets;
- meet standard in the armed services vocational aptitude battery; and
- complete a sequence of career and technical education courses that are relevant to the student's postsecondary pathway and that meet specific criteria.

School districts are encouraged to make all graduation 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.

Graduation Requirements for Students Who are not Appropriately Served by the Graduation Pathway Options.

As noted above, the requirement that qualifying students earn a CIA as a prerequisite to graduation is discontinued after the graduating class of 2021. Until then, students who are not appropriately served by the graduation pathway options and who qualify for a CIA may use multiple measures to demonstrate their skills and abilities that are commensurate with their individualized education programs (IEPs).

The determination of whether the graduation pathway options are appropriate for the student must be made by the student's IEP team. The SPI, in consultation with the State Special Education Advisory Council, must develop guidelines for determining which types of multiple measures are appropriate for qualifying students, as well as the graduation pathway options that might be added to support the achievement of these students.

Data Collection and Reporting Requirements Related to the Graduation Pathway Options.

Reporting requirements related to the graduation pathways are established. The SPI must collect from each school district a list of the graduation pathways available to students and the number of students using each pathway for graduation purposes. Beginning January 10, 2021, the SPI must report this information annually to the education committees of the Legislature.

Beginning August 1, 2019, the SBE must survey delineated interested parties regarding the creation of additional graduation pathways and whether modifications should be made to any of the existing pathways. The SBE must provide a report to the education committees of the Legislature by August 1, 2020, that summarizes the information collected in the surveys.

Using the annual information reported by the SPI, beginning in January of 2021, the SBE must survey a sampling of school districts that are unable to provide all of the eight graduation pathway options for the purpose of identifying the types of implementation barriers of school districts. Using these survey results and the results from the surveys conducted by the SBE for its August 1, 2020 graduation pathways report, the SBE must review the graduation pathways, the suggested changes to those graduation pathways, and the options for additional graduation pathways, and provide a report to the education committees of the Legislature by December 10, 2022. This report must include the following:

- recommendations on whether changes to the existing pathways should be made and what those changes should be;
- the barriers school districts have to offering all of the graduation pathways and recommendations for ways to eliminate or reduce those barriers for school districts;
- information regarding whether all students have equitable access to all of the graduation pathways and, if not, recommendations for reducing the barriers students may have to accessing all of the graduation pathways; and
- provisions indicating whether additional graduation pathways should be included and recommendations for what those pathways should be.

Limited Waiver Options for Students in the Graduating Classes of 2019 and 2020.

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 two years to apply to eligible students in the graduating classes of 2019 and 2020.

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 based on unusual circumstances are modified to specify that the waiver must be based on a student's circumstances, and that none of the waived credits may be ones identified as mandatory by the SBE.

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 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 postsecondary 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.

Electronic Platforms for High School and Beyond Plans.

Beginning in the 2020-21 school year, each school district must ensure that an electronic HSBP platform is available to all students who are obligated to have an HSBP.

The Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), subject to specific legislative funding, is directed to facilitate the creation of a list of available electronic platforms for the HSBP. Platforms that are eligible to be included on the list must meet delineated requirements, and the OSPI is authorized to adopt and revise rules related to the development of the list.

Mandatory Academic Acceleration Policies.

The school district option of adopting an academic acceleration policy is reconstituted as a directive. By the 2021-22 school year, each school district board of directors must adopt an academic acceleration policy that satisfies specified requirements for high school students.

The mandatory academic acceleration policies of districts must require that students who meet or exceed the state standard on the grade eight or high school ELA or mathematics statewide student assessments automatically enroll in the next most rigorous level of advanced courses or program offered by the high school. School districts may adopt additional eligibility criteria for students to participate in an academic acceleration policy if the criteria does not create inequities among student groups in the advanced courses or programs.

Other changes to provisions governing academic acceleration policies are also specified. For example:

- references to assessments are updated to reflect revised terminology related to ELA and mathematics assessments;
- beginning in the 2021-22 school year, students who meet or exceed the state standard on the Washington comprehensive assessment of science are made eligible for enrollment in advanced science courses;
- school district notification requirements are modified; and
- opt-out provisions are altered to specify that districts must provide parents or guardians with an opportunity to opt their student out of the academic acceleration policy and instead enroll in an alternative course or program that aligns with the student's HSBP.

Mastery-Based Learning Work Group.

By August 1, 2019, the SBE is directed to convene and staff a work group to inform the Governor, the Legislature, and the public about barriers to mastery-based learning in Washington whereby:

- students advance upon demonstrated mastery of content;
- competencies include explicit, measurable, transferable learning objectives that empower students;
- assessments are meaningful and a positive learning experience for students;
- students receive rapid, differentiated support based on their individual learning needs; and
- learning outcomes emphasize competencies that include application and creation of knowledge and the development of important skills and dispositions.

The work group is directed to examine opportunities to increase student access to relevant and robust mastery-based academic pathways aligned to personal career goals and postsecondary education. The work group is also directed to review the role of the HSBP in supporting mastery-based learning and must consider:

- improvements in the HSBP as an essential tool for mastery-based learning;
- development of mastery-based pathways to the earning of a high school diploma;
- the results of competency-based pathways previously approved by the SBE; and
- the expansion of mastery-based credits to meet graduation requirements.

The SBE, in implementing the work group and in collaboration with the OSPI, must develop enrollment reporting guidelines to support schools operating with waivers that delay the requirement to implement the 24-credit graduation requirement.

The work group must include four legislators and representatives from specified agencies and organizations, as selected by those agencies and organizations. 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 of the work group 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.

Modifications to Statewide High School Science Assessment.

Requirements for the statewide high school assessment in science are modified to remove an 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.

Continued Application of Preexisting Graduation Requirements to Class of 2018 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 2018 and prior graduating classes.

Votes on Final Passage:

House	91	4	
Senate	48	0	(Senate amended)
House	96	0	(House concurred)

Effective: July 28, 2019
May 15, 2019 (Section 102)
August 31, 2022 (Section 203)