

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5146

As of February 20, 2019

Title: An act relating to flexibility in high school graduation requirements.

Brief Description: Concerning flexibility in high school graduation requirements.

Sponsors: Senators Wellman, Hunt and Wilson, C.; by request of State Board of Education.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Early Learning & K-12 Education: 1/25/19.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Revises rule requirements for the State Board of Education (SBE) to include new standards for when graduation credit requirements may be waived.
- Removes requirement that students or a student's family must make a request that credits completed prior to entering high school apply to graduation requirements.
- Requires that the expedited appeal process for assessment waivers include students who have not passed the science statewide student assessment.
- Requires that the SBE convene and lead a competency-based education work group.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION

Staff: Benjamin Omdal (786-7442)

Background: Waivers for Graduation Requirements. The SBE is required under state law to establish high school graduation requirements. In adopting rules on graduation requirements that took effect with the class of 2019, the SBE was required to include authorization for a school district to waive up to two credits for individual students based on unusual circumstances.

In addition, state law requires the Washington State School Directors' Association (WSSDA) adopt a model policy and procedure that districts may use for granting waivers based on

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unusual circumstances. The policy must take into consideration such circumstances as homelessness, limited English proficiency, medical conditions that impair a student's ability to learn, or disabilities, regardless of whether the student has an individualized education program or a Section 504 plan.

State Assessments. Since 2008, Washington state high school graduation requirements include that most students must meet the state proficiency standard on assessments for English language arts (ELA) and mathematics. In addition, current law requires the graduating Class of 2021 to meet the state proficiency standard on science assessment.

In 2017 the Legislature passed ESHB 2224 requiring the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) to implement an expedited appeal process for the classes of 2014 through 2018 for students who had not met the state standard on the English language arts statewide student assessment, the mathematics high school statewide assessment, or both.

Courses Taken Before High School. Students who complete high school courses before attending high school are given credit towards high school graduation requirements if the course exceeds the requirements for seventh and eighth grade and was either:

- taken with high school students and passed; or
- the course is similar or equivalent to a course offered at a high school in the district.

To receive credit for these courses, a student or the student's family must make a request.

Summary of Bill: Waivers for Graduation Requirements. Rules issued by the SBE must include authorization for a school district to waive up to two credits based on individual circumstances, in accordance with written school district policies and procedures. Individual student circumstances include, but are not limited to, circumstances such as homelessness, limited English proficiency, medical conditions that impair a student's ability to learn, disabilities, and other circumstances that directly compromise a student's ability to learn.

State Assessments. OSPI must implement an expedited appeal process for waiving specific requirements relating to eligible students who have not met the state standard on the ELA, math, science statewide assessment, or all three.

Courses Taken Before High School. A student must decide whether to receive credit for courses taken prior to entering high school, before the end of the first term of the student's last year. Additionally, the student must decide whether the credit will be graded or pass/no pass.

Competency-Based Education Work Group. The SBE shall convene and lead a work group to coordinate the development of a competency-based pathway to a high school diploma and the expansion of options for competency-based credits that meet graduation requirements. The work group must convene by June 1, 2019 and include education professionals and members from specific organizations and agencies. The work group must submit an interim report outlining preliminary findings and potential recommendations to the Governor and the Legislature by December 1, 2019, with a detailed report by December 1, 2020.

In addition, the SBE must report to the Legislature on the data, successes, and challenges in implementing two-credit waivers by December 1, 2021.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members: No.

Effective Date: The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect immediately.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: There is a greater need for flexibility in graduation requirements, and to make sure that these also apply to the class of 2019. Helping students take advantage of graduation procedures can bring about better equity. More can be done to streamline the process for the approval of credits for courses.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Ronda Litzenberger, Eatonville School District, Board Director, WSSDA Leg. Committee Member; Alicia Chua, Eatonville School District; Shayla Coleman, Eatonville School District; Jade McGuire, Eatonville School District; Randy Spaulding, State Board of Education; Harium Martin Morris, State Board of Education; Carey Morris, League of Education Voters; Simone Boe, Washington Education Association; Roz Thompson, Association of Washington School Principals; Maddy Thompson, Office of the Governor.

OTHER: Michelle Nims, Washington State PTA; Cody Eccles, Council of Presidents.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: No one.