

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 6521

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As of February 4, 2020

**Title:** An act relating to creating an innovative learning pilot program.

**Brief Description:** Creating an innovative learning pilot program.

**Sponsors:** Senators Wellman, Hunt, Mullet and Wilson, C.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Early Learning & K-12 Education: 1/31/20.

**Brief Summary of Bill**

- Directs the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction to establish an innovative learning pilot program to authorize full-time enrollment funding for students participating in approved mastery-based learning programs.

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION

**Staff:** Alex Fairfortune (786-7416)

**Background:** State Board of Education Waivers. The State Board of Education (SBE) has the authority to grant waivers from basic education program requirements, including credit-based high school graduation requirements. As of January 2019, 13 schools within 12 school districts have applied for a waiver from credit-based high school graduation requirements.

Mastery-Based Learning Work Group. Legislation passed in 2019—E2SHB 1599—directed SBE to convene and staff a mastery-based learning work group to inform the Governor, Legislature, and public about barriers to mastery-based learning. Mastery-based learning is a program model 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

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- 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 must consider:

- improvements in the high school and beyond plan as an essential tool for mastery-based learning;
- development of mastery-based pathways to earning 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 work group submitted an interim report to the Governor and Legislature in December 2019. A final report detailing all findings and recommendations is due to the same recipients by December 1, 2020.

**Summary of Bill:** By July 1, 2020, the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) must create and administer an innovative learning pilot program to authorize full-time enrollment funding for students participating in approved mastery-based learning programs.

A mastery-based learning program is defined as an educational program where students participate in project-based learning aligned to personal career goals and advance upon demonstrated mastery of content. Mastery-based learning programs include apprenticeships, internships, and off-campus programming that students attend as part of their project-based learning.

To participate in the pilot program, school districts must submit an application with the following components to OSPI:

- a description of the mastery-based learning program that the school district intends to implement and the number of students expected to participate;
- an explanation of the goals of the mastery-based learning program and how the school district intends to measure and assess attainment of the goals; and
- a description of the partnerships between the school district and community businesses and organizations that will enhance project-based learning opportunities.

OSPI must review submitted applications and approve up to five applicant school districts that demonstrate the capacity to operate a mastery-based learning program likely to result in meaningful project-based learning opportunities aligned to the personal career goals of students.

OSPI must also adopt rules to implement the pilot program, including:

- defining full-time enrollment standards for students based on regular participation in a mastery-based learning program rather than hours of seat time; and
- permitting participating school districts to report full-time equivalent students in an approved mastery-based program for general apportionment funding.

By December 1, 2022, OSPI must report to the Legislature the number of school districts that have applied to participate in the pilot program.

**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: Unfortunately, if students are not in a classroom learning the school does not get the full benefit of that student's cost for funding purposes. But for mastery-based programs to be meaningful experiences for children, it takes a lot of oversight, effort, and mentoring by the teacher. This pilot program will explore what is needed to fully fund mastery-based programs and would help support very exciting work to transform the education system. There are currently more districts operating mastery-based programs than are permitted under the pilot, so a possible amendment would be to align the pilot application process with current SBE waivers.

OTHER: Skill centers are mastery-based learning programs, so they should be included in this pilot. 12 out of 17 experience reductions in payments for the time it takes for students to move between home schools and skill centers.

**Persons Testifying:** PRO: Senator Lisa Wellman, Prime Sponsor; Rhett Nelson, OSPI; J. Lee Schultz, State Board of Education.

OTHER: Charlie Brown, Skills Centers Directors Association.

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