
Education Committee

SHB 1162

Brief Description: Concerning high school graduation credit and pathway options.

Sponsors: House Committee on Education (originally sponsored by Representatives Stonier, Harris, Lekanoff, Hackney, Pollet, Dolan and Callan; by request of State Board of Education).

Brief Summary of Bill

- Reduces the number of credits required for high school graduation from 24 to 20, and applies the revised credit requirements to the graduating class of 2021 and subsequent classes.
- Establishes an additional graduation pathway option that enables students to meet graduation pathway requirements by completing a performance exhibition meeting specified criteria.

Hearing Date: 1/11/22

Staff: Ethan Moreno (786-7386).

Background:

Graduation Requirements—Overview.

To qualify for graduation from a public high school in Washington, students must satisfy course and credit requirements established by the State Board of Education (SBE), meet any locally established requirements, complete a high school and beyond plan (HSBP), and meet the requirements of at least one graduation pathway option.

Credits Required for Graduation and Waivers.

Beginning with the graduating class of 2019, students must complete 24 credits in specified

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subject areas as determined by the SBE. This 24 credit requirement is known as the career and college-ready graduation requirement. Graduating students must earn 17 core academic credits, four elective credits, and three locally-determined personalized pathway credits.

Rules adopted by the SBE to implement the career and college-ready graduation requirements must include authorizations for school districts to waive up to two credits for individual students based on the student's circumstances, provided none of the waived credits are identified as mandatory by the SBE. The waivers must be issued by school districts in accordance with written policies adopted by the applicable school district board of directors.

Additionally, legislation adopted in 2021 established an emergency waiver program and authorizes the SBE to permit public and private schools to grant individual student emergency waivers from credit and subject area graduation requirements, graduation pathway requirements, or both, due to a significant disruption from a local, state, or national emergency

Graduation Pathway Options.

Graduation pathway requirements were established through legislation enacted in 2019 and began application with the graduating class of 2020. The graduation pathway options, which are 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 school districts are granted discretion in determining which pathway options they offer.

Other Graduation-Related Duties of the State Board of Education.

The SBE is authorized to establish and enforce minimum graduation requirements. Duties related to this authorization obligate the SBE to reevaluate the graduation requirements for students enrolled in vocationally intensive and rigorous career and technical education (CTE) programs, particularly those programs that lead to a certificate or credential that is state or nationally recognized. The stated purpose of the evaluation is to ensure that students enrolled in

the programs have sufficient opportunity to earn a certificate of academic achievement (a discontinued graduation requirement), complete the program and earn the program's certificate or credential, and complete other state and local graduation requirements.

Summary of Bill:

Graduation Credits.

Beginning with the graduating class of 2021, graduating students must earn at least 20 credits (instead of 24), including the mandatory core subject credits and the personalized pathway requirements defined by the SBE. Although the number of credits required for graduation are reduced, school districts remain obligated to provide students with the opportunity to complete 24 credits.

Waiver provisions that allow school districts to waive up to two credits for individual students based on the student's circumstances are modified and apply only to students in the graduating classes of 2019 and 2020. However, the limitations of school districts to issue waivers to individual students through the provisions do not apply in circumstances where a school district is granted flexibility from state requirements under the emergency waiver program established in legislation from the 2021 legislative session.

Graduation Pathway Options.

Additional graduation pathway option is established. School districts may offer students the opportunity to meet graduation pathway options by completing a performance exhibition that includes: authentic evidence demonstrating industry or profession specific knowledge and skills in two or more subject areas; and opportunities to demonstrate proficiency in other state learning standards.

Prior to offering the graduation pathway to students, the board of directors of the school district must adopt a written policy in conformity with applicable state requirements that describes the school district's processes for:

- approving student requests to use the graduation pathway; and
- evaluating student performance exhibitions.

The SBE, prior to adopting rules to implement the performance exhibition pathway, must consult with states, schools in Washington and in other states, or both, that have successfully implemented exhibition or performance-based options that students may use to demonstrate knowledge and skills. The consultations must address, among other topics determined by the SBE, criteria that is or may be employed when constituting panels to evaluate student performance exhibitions.

School districts are directed to determine if there is disproportionality among specific student subgroups participating in and completing each graduation pathway option offered by the school district. If disproportionality is found, school districts must take appropriate corrective actions to ensure the pathway options are equitable.

Other Graduation-Related Duties of the State Board of Education.

Provisions mandating the SBE to reevaluate the graduation requirements for students enrolled in vocationally intensive and rigorous CTE programs are modified. The SBE is directed to reevaluate the graduation requirements for students enrolled in vocationally intensive and rigorous CTE programs, particularly those programs that lead to a high school diploma, instead of those that lead to a certificate or a state or nationally-recognized credential.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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