
Education Committee

E2SSB 5243

Brief Description: Concerning high school and beyond planning.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Ways & Means (originally sponsored by Senators Wellman, Hunt, Kuderer, Nobles and Wilson, C.; by request of Superintendent of Public Instruction).

Brief Summary of Engrossed Second Substitute Bill

- Establishes new and revised requirements for High School and Beyond Plans (HSBPs) that are a prerequisite for graduating from a public high school.
- Prescribes duties for the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) related to transitioning to and adopting a universal online HSBP platform (universal platform).
- Establishes numerous requirements for the universal platform, including the capability to be routinely updated and modified to include specified elements and capabilities.
- Requires school districts to transition to the universal platform within two years of its adoption.
- Directs the OSPI, in consultation with the State Board of Education (SBE) and after selection of the vendor for the universal platform, to recommend additional policy changes for transitioning the HSBP and the universal platform into a more robust online learning platform.
- Requires the SBE, by August 1, 2025, to develop recommendations regarding how the HSBP could be modified to further support student choice and flexibility in meeting graduation requirements and preparing students for postsecondary education and training.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Hearing Date: 3/14/23

Staff: Ethan Moreno (786-7386).

Background:

Graduation Requirements.

To qualify for a high school diploma, public school students must satisfy credit and subject area requirements established by the Legislature and the State Board of Education (SBE), fulfill any locally established requirements, complete a High School and Beyond Plan (HSBP), and meet the requirements of at least one graduation pathway option.

Although graduation requirements are largely developed at the state level and subject to frequent revisions, determinations about student compliance with statewide requirements are made at the local level.

High School and Beyond Plans.

General Requirements. Each student must complete an HSBP. The purpose of the HSBP is 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.

The HSBP must be initiated for students during grades 7 or 8 and must contain specific, minimum elements prescribed in statute, including the identification of career and education goals, information about dual credit programs, a four-year plan for high school course taking, and certain scholarship and financial aid information. For students who are not on track to graduate, the HSBP must identify available interventions and academic support, courses, or both, that are designed to enable those students to meet graduation requirements. The HSBP must also be updated to reflect student results on statewide high school assessments and revised as necessary for changing interests, goals, and needs.

School districts are encouraged to involve parents and guardians in the process of developing and updating the HSBP, and the HSBP must be provided to the students' parents or guardians in their native language if that language is one of the two most frequently spoken non-English languages of students in the district.

In addition to statutory requirements, school districts may establish local HSBP requirements that serve the needs and interests of their students, but all determinations of whether a student has met the requirements for an HSBP remain at the local level.

Electronic Platform. Legislation adopted in 2019 required school districts, beginning in the 2020-21 school year, to ensure that an electronic HSBP platform is available to all students who are obligated to have an HSBP.

The 2019 legislation directed the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI),

subject to specific legislative funding, to facilitate the creation of a list of available electronic platforms for the HSBP. Platforms that are eligible for inclusion on the list must meet delineated requirements, including: enabling students to create and revise their HSBPs; granting parents, guardians, educators, and counselors appropriate access to students' HSBPs; and allowing for portability between platforms for students that transfer.

The Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction.

In addition to its constitutional charge of supervising all matters pertaining to public schools, the Superintendent of Public Instruction and its office has numerous and broad responsibilities prescribed in statute, including:

- making rules and regulations necessary for the administration of public education requirements;
- preparing courses of study and other materials and books for the discharge of education duties;
- fulfilling financial responsibilities, including distributing legislatively allocated funds to districts for the operation of the public school system, and awarding numerous state and federally funded grants; and
- satisfying numerous reporting and other duties assigned by the Legislature.

Summary of Bill:

High School and Beyond Plans.

General Requirements. New and revised requirements for HSBPs are established. For example, the modified requirements direct school districts to:

- involve parents and legal guardians to the greatest extent feasible in the process of developing and updating the HSBP;
- provide the HSBP to the student and the students' parents or legal guardians in a language the student and parents or guardians understand and in accordance with the school district's language access policy and procedures;
- annually provide students in grades 8 through 12 and their parents or legal guardians with comprehensive information about the graduation pathway options offered by the district in a manner that conforms with the school district's language access policy and procedures; and
- notify parents or legal guardians of students who have not met assessment standards or are behind in the completion of graduation requirements about opportunities for academic interventions, academic supports, and courses, preferably through a student-led conference that includes the parents or legal guardians and at least annually, until the student is on track to graduate.

School districts are also strongly encouraged to partner with student-serving, community-based organizations that support career and college exploration and preparation for postsecondary and career pathways. Partnerships may include HSBP coordination and planning, data sharing agreements, and safe and secure access to individual student's HSBPs.

Requirements governing the minimum elements that must be included in an HSBP are modified. For example, an academic plan for course taking, one of the required elements of an HSBP, must:

- inform students about the potential impacts of their course selections on postsecondary opportunities;
- identify, if applicable, career and technical education (CTE) and work-based learning opportunities that can lead to technical college certifications and apprenticeships
- identify available CTE equivalency courses that can satisfy core subject area graduation requirements; and
- include a sample financial aid letter and a link to a financial aid calculator.

Universal Online Platform.

The OSPI is directed to facilitate the transition to a universal online HSBP platform (universal platform) that will ensure consistent and equitable access to the needed information and support to guide students' educational experience and ensure preparation for their postsecondary plans.

Vendor List. By January 1, 2024, the OSPI must develop a preliminary list of existing vendors that can provide or build a universal platform that meets numerous, delineated requirements. The OSPI must submit the list of vendors and estimated costs associated with statewide implementation of the universal platform to the Governor and the education policy and fiscal committees of the Legislature.

Vendor Selection. Subject to funding requirements, the OSPI, by June 1, 2024, must select the vendor that will be responsible for developing the universal platform. The OSPI, however, may partner with existing community and regional networks and organizations who support students' career and college preparation in the analysis, selection, and implementation of the universal platform.

Implementation Plan. By October 1, 2024, the OSPI must develop an implementation plan that includes both an estimated timeline and updated cost estimates. The implementation plan must also include the technical assistance, technology updates, maintenance requirements, adjustments to the technology funding formula, and statewide professional development that may be needed for completing statewide implementation of the universal platform.

The plan may include a cost alternative for Educational Service Districts to host the universal platform for school districts of the second class when such a district does not have sufficient technology resources to implement and maintain the universal platform.

Platform Elements and Capabilities. In addition to the requirements established in provisions governing HSBPs, the universal platform must have the capability to be routinely updated and modified to include 16 specified elements and capabilities to ensure equity in HSBP implementation and engagement. Examples of these elements and capabilities include:

- enabling students to create, personalize, and revise their HSBP;
- complying with state and federal requirements for student privacy and allowing for

students to opt in or out of portions of the universal platform related to third-party information sharing;

- facilitating the automatic import of academic course, credit, and grade data at a regular interval from the most commonly used district student information system platforms, and manual import from less commonly used systems;
- allowing for translation into the most common non-English languages across the state in accordance with the model language access policy and procedures;
- having a catalog containing meaningful, high quality career exploration opportunities and resources beyond the traditional college, career, and aptitude assessments that are submitted by approved entities (community organizations, institutions of higher education that are authorized to participate in state financial aid programs, and employers) and vetted by state-selected approvers that allow students to register for or apply to participate in the opportunities (programs, classes, internships, preapprenticeships, online courses, etc.) or access the resources;
- having accessibility options for students needing accommodations including, but not limited to, visual aids and voice dictation for students with limited literacy skills;
- granting indefinite access for students to their HSBP, regardless of current school affiliation or lack thereof, in mobile and desktop applications; and
- enabling school districts to customize or add features unique to local needs and local graduation requirements, including the capability to auto-align data with the local school districts' graduation requirements or the ability to enter those requirements manually.

Mandatory Student Access. Within two years of the OSPI completing the universal platform development requirements and alignment with technical and substantive requirements for HSBPs, school districts must provide students with access to the adopted universal platform.

Guidance and Technical Assistance. The OSPI must develop guidance and provide technical assistance and support for the facilitation of statewide professional development for school districts and partner organizations in using the universal platform.

Stakeholder Input. In selecting a vendor and meeting other requirements related to the transition to the universal platform, the OSPI must seek input from agencies and persons with specified qualifications, including the SBE, educators, school and district administrators, school counselors, career counseling specialists, families, students, and the Student Achievement Council.

Transition to Online Learning Platform and Promoting Student Choice in Meeting Graduation Requirements.

After selection of the vendor for the universal platform, the OSPI, in consultation with the SBE, must report to the Governor and education committees of the Legislature recommendations for additional policy changes related to transitioning the HSBP and the universal platform into a more robust online learning platform that:

- can be used as early as grade 5;
- will provide greater student agency over student learning; and

- will provide opportunities for students to more meaningfully explore their strengths, interests, and future aspirations.

In addition to the HSBP minimum content elements, the recommendations should examine and incorporate the following elements:

- a way to begin student use of a learning plan that utilizes the universal platform no later than the grade 5, and includes ways to introduce career awareness and exploration opportunities in elementary grades as foundational support to students;
- strategies for students to share their interests and engage with peers and mentors for the purpose of obtaining ongoing feedback and access to activities and learning opportunities that connect to their goals;
- recommended calendar, schedule, and delivery options to ensure dedicated classroom time so that students are supported in engaging with and updating their plans multiple times per year;
- strategies that increase student and family engagement with the learning plan process, and encourages students to meaningfully explore their strengths, skills, and interests on an ongoing basis;
- ways the universal platform can support the implementation of recommendations of the SBE described below.

The SBE must develop recommendations regarding how the HSBP could be modified to further support student choice and flexibility in meeting graduation requirements and preparing students for postsecondary education and training, including increasing access to mastery-based learning and mastery-based crediting opportunities. The SBE must report the recommendations to the Governor and education committees of the Legislature by August 1, 2025.

Other Changes.

The list of entities that the OSPI must work with for purposes of identifying best practices that school districts may employ when complying with HSBP requirements is modified to include nonprofit and for-profit private institutions of higher education.

Provisions requiring school districts to prepare student learning plans meeting specified requirements for students who did not meet standard on high school assessments in English language arts or mathematics are repealed.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on March 13, 2023.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.