
Education Committee

ESSB 6264

Brief Description: Supporting the implementation of competency-based education.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Early Learning & K-12 Education (originally sponsored by Senators Wellman, Hasegawa, Nobles, Saldaña and Wilson, C.).

Brief Summary of Engrossed Substitute Bill

- Defines "competency-based education" and directs the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction to adopt rules authorizing full-time enrollment funding for students in qualifying competency-based education programs.
- Directs the State Board of Education (SBE) to develop and recommend a process for identifying and designating schools and school districts that are implementing competency-based education and to identify the costs associated with the process.
- Directs the SBE to update the standardized high school transcript and develop or recommend a format for a competency-based education high school transcript.
- Requires the Washington Interscholastic Activities Association to include in its rule adoption process, a review of whether the proposed rule would create potential barriers to interscholastic activities for students participating in competency-based education.

Hearing Date: 2/14/24

Staff: Ethan Moreno (786-7386).

Background:

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.

Program of Basic Education.

The state's program of basic education is defined in statute as that which is necessary to provide students with the opportunity to develop the knowledge and skills necessary to meet state-established high school graduation requirements. Those requirements are intended to allow students to have the opportunity to graduate with a meaningful diploma that prepares them for postsecondary education, gainful employment, and citizenship. The minimum components of the state's instructional program of basic education consist of education requirements (including requirements for instructional hours and days), transportation requirements, and the statewide salary allocations necessary to hire and retain qualified staff.

State funding allocations to school districts in support of the state's instructional program of basic education are provided according to a statutory funding distribution formula that posits three levels of prototypical schools (high school, middle school, and elementary school) with defined numbers of students. The allocations districts receive, which are provided through the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), are adjusted from the school prototypes and based on the actual number of annual average full-time equivalent students in each grade level at each of the district's schools. With some exceptions, the distribution formula is for allocation purposes only, meaning school districts have significant discretion over how the received moneys are used.

Mastery-Based Learning - Work Group and Enrollment Funding Pilot Program.

Legislation enacted in 2019 directed the State Board of Education (SBE) to convene and staff a 13-member temporary work group (MBL work group) to inform the Governor, the Legislature, and the public about barriers to mastery-based learning in Washington.

The 2019 legislation specified that under mastery-based learning:

- 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 along with the development of important skills and dispositions.

The MBL work group, which expired in 2022, was 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 MBL work group was also directed to issue a final report in 2021 that included recommendations for supporting implementation of mastery-based learning.

Legislation adopted in 2020 directed the OSPI to create and administer an innovative learning pilot program (pilot program) to authorize full-time enrollment funding for students participating in mastery-based learning programs. The pilot program concluded after the 2022-23 school year.

Mastery-Based Learning Collaborative.

The Mastery-Based Learning Collaborative (Collaborative) was created in accordance with recommendations of the MBL work group. The Collaborative is administered by the SBE and funded through the state's biennial operating budget. The 2022-23 State Omnibus Operating Appropriations Act (Operating Budget) included funding for the implementation of mastery-based learning in school district demonstration sites for the purpose of addressing learning recovery and other educational issues related to COVID-19. Funding in the 2024-25 Operating Budget included funding for demonstration sites in school districts and public schools, but without the previously stated learning recovery and COVID-19 purposes. The 2024-25 Operating Budget also requires the SBE to submit a report of findings and recommendation to the Governor and the education committees of the Legislature by December 31, 2025.

Standardized High School Transcript.

The standardized high school transcript used by school districts was developed at the direction of the Legislature by the Superintendent of Public Instruction, in consultation with the public four-year institutions of higher education, the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges, and the Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board.

Interscholastic Athletic and Extracurricular Activities.

Each school district board of directors may control, supervise, and regulate the conduct of interscholastic athletic and extracurricular activities for students of the district. Each school board also may delegate its control, supervision, and regulation to the Washington Interscholastic Activities Association (WIAA) or any other voluntary nonprofit entity.

The WIAA is a nonprofit organization and rule-making body that was formed in 1905 to create equitable playing conditions between high school sports teams in Washington. The WIAA consists of nearly 800 high schools and middle and junior high schools, both public and private, that have volunteered to abide by its policies.

Summary of Bill:

Definition of Competency-Based Education.

"Competency-based education" is defined as education that includes the following seven elements:

- students are empowered daily to make important decisions about their learning experiences, how they will create and apply knowledge, and how they will demonstrate their learning;
- assessment is a meaningful, positive, and empowering learning experience for students that yields timely, relevant, and actionable evidence;
- students receive timely, differentiated support based on their individual learning needs;
- students progress based on evidence of mastery, not seat time;
- students learn actively using different pathways and varied pacing;
- strategies to ensure equity for all students are embedded in the culture, structure, and pedagogy of schools and education systems; and

- rigorous, common expectations for learning, including knowledge, skills, and dispositions, are explicit, transparent, measurable, and transferable.

"Mastery-based learning" is specified to have the same meaning as "competency-based education."

Enrollment Funding.

The Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) must adopt rules by September 1, 2024, to authorize full-time enrollment funding for students in competency-based education programs identified by the State Board of Education (SBE) based on:

- school membership in the Mastery-Based Learning Collaborative (Collaborative) or the school having a current waiver from credit-based graduation requirements from the SBE under certain requirements; or
- A designation process of the SBE.

The rules must permit school districts to report full-time equivalent students in eligible competency-based education programs for general apportionment basic education funding.

Designation of Competency-Based Education Schools and School Districts.

The SBE must develop and recommend a process to identify and designate schools and school districts that are implementing competency-based education and identify costs associated with this process. This process must consider the extent to which competency-based education is being implemented in comparison to the seven elements in the definition of "competency-based education." Additionally, the OSPI must consult with the SBE regarding how the designation can be displayed on the Washington State report card website.

The OSPI, in consultation with the SBE, must develop and recommend a process for the OSPI to create competencies aligned with the state learning standards and identify costs associated with the alignment process. "Competencies" is defined to mean the rigorous, shared expectations for learning that encompass knowledge, skills, and abilities across grade levels. The definition further specifies that competencies are: broader than learning standards and may encompass multiple learning standards; and transparent, measurable, relevant, and transferable to multiple contexts.

The competencies creation and alignment process must incorporate relevant materials and guidance developed through the Collaborative. The OSPI must submit the recommendations and associated cost information to the SBE by December 1, 2025, and the SBE must include the recommendations and cost information in its Collaborative findings and recommendations report due to the Governor and the education committees of the Legislature by December 31, 2025.

Standardized High School Transcript - Update and Possible Alternative.

The Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI) is directed, before the 2025-26 school year, to update the standardized high school transcript (standardized transcript) used in public school districts. In meeting this requirement, the SPI must consult with the same entities specified for

the initial development of the standardized transcript and the SBE.

Before the 2025-26 school year, the SBE, in consultation with the public four-year institutions of higher education, the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges, the OSPI, the Student Achievement Council, and the Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board, must develop or identify and recommend to the OSPI a format for a competency-based education high school transcript that can be used by all public school districts as part of, or as an alternative to, the standardized transcript.

The OSPI must inform public school districts of updates to the standardized transcript and any alternatives.

Interscholastic Activities.

The Washington Interscholastic Activities Association is directed to include in its rule adoption process a review of whether the proposed rule would create any potential barriers related to students participating in competency-based education to ensure continued equitable access to interscholastic activities for those students.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available. New fiscal note requested on February 13, 2024.

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