

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 5408

---

---

As Reported by Senate Committee On:  
Early Learning & K-12 Education, February 8, 2023

**Title:** An act relating to establishing the ninth grade success grant program.

**Brief Description:** Establishing the ninth grade success grant program.

**Sponsors:** Senators Liias, Gildon, Hunt, Kuderer, Mullet, Randall, Saldaña, Wellman and Wilson, C..

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Early Learning & K-12 Education: 2/02/23, 2/08/23 [DP-WM].

**Brief Summary of Bill**

- Establishes the Ninth Grade Success Grant Program, which funds the creation of ninth grade success teams that can identify and support incoming high school students who are at risk of not graduating.

---

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

**Majority Report:** Do pass and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

Signed by Senators Wellman, Chair; Nobles, Vice Chair; Wilson, C., Vice Chair; Hawkins, Ranking Member; Dozier, Hunt, McCune, Mullet and Pedersen.

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

**Background:** In the 2019-21 biennial budget the Legislature appropriated \$125,000 a year to the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) to administer a pilot program to identify and support incoming high school students who were at risk of not graduating. Five school districts were selected to participate in the pilot program based on their Ninth Grade On-Track scores in the Washington School Improvement Framework and their higher than average enrollment of students classified as low-income or English

---

*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.*

language learners. Those districts were Ellensburg, Wapato, Moses Lake, Grandview, and Toppenish.

Pilot districts created success teams of educators composed of administrators, counselors, student support staff, and ninth grade teachers. Success teams regularly reviewed attendance, behavior, and grade data to deploy strategic supports to students showing early signs of falling behind. Each pilot district received \$21,000 in pilot program funds to pay for data systems, travel related to professional development, release time for educators to staff the success teams, and student supports.

In 2021, OSPI expanded the pilot project to 30 schools using \$3 million of funding provided by the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund.

**Summary of Bill:** OSPI must establish and administer the Ninth Grade Success Grant Program (grant program), subject to the availability of amounts appropriated for that purpose. The purpose of the grant program is to fund the creation of ninth grade success teams that can identify and support incoming high school students who are at risk of not graduating.

Beginning in the 2023-24 school year, OSPI must award grants to eligible public schools. When awarding grants, OSPI must prioritize schools with low ninth grade on-track scores identified through the Washington School Improvement Framework and schools that have graduation rates below the statewide average. OSPI must attempt to award grants to public schools in different geographic regions of the state.

Grant recipients may use grant funds for costs associated with establishing and operating a Ninth Grade Success Team Program, including but not limited to:

- providing additional compensation or stipends for success team members;
- providing related professional development and training for success team members;
- hiring substitute teachers during periods when success team members are performing program duties and training; and
- providing student supports needed to help ninth grade students thrive.

OSPI may contract with a qualified nonprofit organization that has experience coaching school success teams to provide individualized coaching to grant recipients.

By June 30, 2024, and annually thereafter until 2029, OSPI must report to the Governor and the education committees of the Legislature on the implementation of the grant program. The report must include:

- the number of grants awarded and which schools received an award, organized by geographic location;
- the demographics of the students served by recipient schools' ninth grade success teams, disaggregated by race, ethnicity, gender, students receiving free or reduced price lunch, students receiving special education services, students receiving

- transitional bilingual instruction, students in foster care, and students experiencing homelessness;
- data comparing each recipient school's ninth grade on-track scores before and after implementing ninth grade success teams;
  - longitudinal data on graduation rates for recipient schools, if available; and
  - recommendations for statutory improvements, resource needs, or opportunities for scalability.

**Appropriation:** The bill contains a section or sections to limit implementation to the availability of amounts appropriated for that specific purpose.

**Fiscal Note:** Requested on January 19, 2023.

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

**Effective Date:** Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony:** PRO: 9th grade is a distinct and critical transitional year. 9th grade is the first year when many students have to receive passing grades in core courses, so courses are some of the toughest they're going to take in their high school careers. Freshman have the lowest GPAs, the most missed classes, majority of failing grades, and more misbehavior referrals. Many times, students do not know how to ask for assistance or access the resources that may benefit their learning. Research shows that students who don't fail classes in 9th grade are 4 times more likely to graduate and succeed in their education. 4 out of 5 schools participating in the pilot program reported an immediate and sustained increase of 9th grade on track rates even with the disruption of the pandemic. One district saw a single year increase of 25% for 9th grade on track rates. Districts need at least 2 more years to know how the increased on-track rate will translate to an increased graduation rate. The pilot program strengthened staff and student relationships, helped staff use data to diagnose and develop interventions, and improved teacher practice beyond the 9th grade. Students who were farthest from equity were especially benefited by these targeted interventions. Mentorship is highly valuable for these young students to understand the complexity and importance of their high school education through student-adult connections and student-student connections. This should become an on-going effort to support student learning. The impacts of the 9th grade success program reverberate widely.

**Persons Testifying:** PRO: Senator Marko Liias, Prime Sponsor; Henterson Carlisle, Center for High School Success; Douglas Judge, Center for High School Success; Thomas Caudle, Lindbergh High School, Renton School District; Jose Rivera, Grandview School District; Holly Koon, Mt Baker HS; Julia Duncheon; Jennifer Wiley, Center for High School Success; Morgan Thomas, North Mason school District; Audrey Johnson, North Mason School District; Juliet Schindler, College Success Foundation.

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