

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## ESSB 6264

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As Passed Senate, February 8, 2024

**Title:** An act relating to supporting the implementation of competency-based education.

**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 History:**

**Committee Activity:** Early Learning & K-12 Education: 1/25/24, 1/29/24 [DPS-WM].  
Ways & Means: 2/03/24, 2/05/24 [DPS (EDU), w/oRec].

**Floor Activity:** Passed Senate: 2/8/24, 45-4.

### Brief Summary of Engrossed First Substitute Bill

- Requires the State Board of Education (SBE) to develop and recommend a process to identify and designate schools and school districts that are implementing competency-based education (CBE) and identify costs associated with this process.
- Requires the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction to adopt rules to authorize funding for students enrolled by CBE programs and to create competencies aligned with state learning standards.
- Directs the Washington Interscholastic Activities Association to include in its rule adoption process a review of barriers related to students participating in CBE.
- Requires the SBE, in consultation with other agencies, to develop or identify and recommend a format for a CBE high school transcript as part of, or as an alternative to the standardized high school transcript.

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

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*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.*

**Majority Report:** That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6264 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill 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:** Benjamin Omdal (786-7442)

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## SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

**Majority Report:** That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6264 as recommended by Committee on Early Learning & K-12 Education be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Robinson, Chair; Mullet, Vice Chair, Capital; Nguyen, Vice Chair, Operating; Gildon, Assistant Ranking Member, Operating; Rivers, Assistant Ranking Member, Capital; Warnick, Assistant Ranking Member, Capital; Billig, Conway, Dhingra, Hasegawa, Hunt, Keiser, Muzzall, Pedersen, Randall, Saldaña, Torres, Van De Wege and Wellman.

**Minority Report:** That it be referred without recommendation.

Signed by Senators Wilson, L., Ranking Member, Operating; Schoesler, Ranking Member, Capital; Boehnke, Braun and Wagoner.

**Staff:** Trevor Press (786-7446)

**Background:** Mastery-Based Learning. Legislation passed in 2019—E2SHB 1599—directed the State Board of Education (SBE) to convene and staff a mastery-based learning work group to inform the Governor, Legislature, and public about barriers to mastery-based learning (MBL).

MBL is also commonly known as competency-based education. For the purpose of the work group, MBL was defined as 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
- learning outcomes emphasize competencies that include application and creation of knowledge and the development of important skills and dispositions.

The work group 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. At the direction of the Legislature, the work group published recommendations for the profile of a graduate to the SBE in 2022.

In 2021, the Omnibus Operating Appropriations Act appropriated \$1.5 million in the 2022 fiscal year and \$3.5 million in the 2023 fiscal year to the SBE for the implementation of MBL in school district demonstration sites. The SBE was directed to require grant recipients to report on impacts and participate in a collaborative to share best practices.

Washington Interscholastic Activities Association. In Washington State, school boards may delegate control, supervision, and regulation of extracurricular activities to the Washington Interscholastic Athletics Association (WIAA) or any other voluntary nonprofit entity. Under state law, the WIAA or any other voluntary nonprofit entity may adopt rules and policies that govern student participation, as well as penalties for rules violations upon coaches, school district administrators, school administrators, and students, as appropriate and subject to statutory requirements.

Standardized Transcripts. The standardized high school transcript used by school districts was developed at the direction of the Legislature by the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), 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.

**Summary of Engrossed First Substitute Bill: Definitions.** Definitions are provided for various terms in the context of the bill and the resulting statutory chapter.

Competencies are defined as the rigorous, shared expectations for learning that encompass knowledge, skills, and abilities across grade levels. Competencies are broader than learning standards and may encompass multiple learning standards. Competencies are defined as transparent, measurable, relevant, and transferable to multiple contexts.

Competency-based education (CBE) is defined as an education that meets the following 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.

For the purposes of the chapter, mastery-based learning has the same meaning as

competency-based education.

Designation of Schools, Creation of Competencies. The SBE must develop and recommend a process to identify and designate schools and school districts that are implementing CBE and identify costs associated with this process. OSPI shall consult with the SBE on how this designation can be displayed on the Washington State Report Card website.

OSPI, in consultation with the SBE, must develop and recommend a process for OSPI to create competencies aligned with state learning standards and identify costs associated with this process. The process must incorporate relevant materials and guidance developed through the MBL collective established in the 2021 Omnibus Operating Operations Act. OSPI must submit recommendations and associated costs to the SBE by December 1, 2025.

Funding for Students Enrolled in Competency-Based Education Programs. By September 1, 2024, OSPI must adopt rules to authorize full-time enrollment for students enrolled in CBE programs identified by the SBE based on school membership in the MBL collaborative, the school having a current waiver from credit-based graduation requirements granted by the SBE, or under the identification process developed by the SBE.

Rules adopted by OSPI must permit school districts to report full-time equivalent students in eligible CBE programs for general apportionment funding.

Washington Interscholastic Activities Association Rule Adoption. The WIAA must include in its rule adoption process a review of whether the rule would create any potential barriers related to students participating in CBE in order to ensure continued equitable access to interscholastic activities for those students.

Standardized Transcripts. Before the 2025-26 school year, the Superintendent of Public Instruction must develop and update a standardized high school transcript. The SBE is added to the groups with which the superintendent must consult.

Before the 2025-26 school year, the SBE, in consultation with various groups, must develop or identify and recommend to OSPI a CBE high school transcript that can be used by all public school districts as part of, or as an alternative to the standardized high school transcript. OSPI must inform public school districts of updates to standardized transcripts and the alternative transcript developed by the SBE.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

**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 on Original Bill (Early Learning & K-12 Education):** *The committee recommended a different version of the bill than what was heard.* PRO: Washington is a national leader in bringing mastery-based learning and competency-based education into the state's education system. CBE is an approach to learning that gives students agency in their education, allowing them to progress at their own pace. Students in these programs feel they are actually learning the information in their courses. This bill starts the process of some of the state-level changes necessary to better implement CBE. Improving the transcript process will make the system more nimble and better serve the students. CBE has been implemented for years in community and technical colleges. The current model solely determines funding based on student time spent on school. CBE helps to truly address the futures of students and engage them more fully than just seat time. MBL has led to immediate increases in student success in dual credit exams. More students should be able to access CBE across the state. There is a large demand in districts wanting to participate in CBE. The bill positions Washington as a national leader in CBE.

CON: CBE is an approach that is harmful to students. CBE is more likely to increase opportunity gaps for low-income students and those that do not have the same access to technology. CBE is a dangerous experiment that will further harm our students, teachers, and community.

OTHER: CBE should be implemented in ways that effectively work with the current system, including having the proper agencies lead different aspects of the bill. Work is currently ongoing in pilot programs; more time is necessary to conduct this work before moving forward with CBE.

**Persons Testifying (Early Learning & K-12 Education):** PRO: Senator Lisa Wellman, Prime Sponsor; Kimberly Headrick, Medical Lake School District; Melissa Beard, Council of Presidents; Alissa Muller, Washington State Board of Education; Troy Goracke, Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges; Carrie McKenzie, Washington State PTA.

CON: Julie Barrett, Conservative Ladies of Washington.

OTHER: Anna Hernandez-French, Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying (Early Learning & K-12 Education):**  
No one.

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony on First Substitute (Ways & Means):** PRO: This model of instruction should be taught in all levels of schooling. This model should be the gold standard for students with disabilities as it allows them to learn at their own pace.

CON: In 2019 the state defined mastery based learning and came up with a report. They recommended using this type of learning in combination with standard teaching practices.

Competency based education will widen the gap for students who are more likely to face barriers to accessing resources necessary for this type of learning. The fiscal note is incomplete and could result in high costs to taxpayers. Mastery based learning places a high priority on student agency.

**Persons Testifying (Ways & Means):** PRO: Senator Lisa Wellman, Prime Sponsor; Michelle Whitehead.

CON: Sarah Garriott; Mary Long, Conservative Ladies of Washington; Jennifer Heine-Withee, Resolution Fitness.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying (Ways & Means):** No one.