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**SENATE BILL 5408**

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**State of Washington**

**68th Legislature**

**2023 Regular Session**

**By** Senators Lias, Gildon, Hunt, Kuderer, Mullet, Randall, Saldaña, Wellman, and C. Wilson

Read first time 01/17/23. Referred to Committee on Early Learning & K-12 Education.

1 AN ACT Relating to establishing the ninth grade success grant  
2 program; adding a new section to chapter 28A.175 RCW; and creating a  
3 new section.

4 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

5 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** The legislature finds that ninth grade is  
6 a pivotal year for students and that ninth grade success is one of  
7 the most predictive indicators of on-time graduation. Research  
8 indicates that students are more likely to fail a class in the ninth  
9 grade than in any other grade, but also shows that students who pass  
10 all their ninth grade classes are up to four times more likely to  
11 graduate.

12 The legislature further finds that targeted approaches have been  
13 shown to increase ninth grade on-track scores in schools. These  
14 approaches include establishing success teams that regularly review  
15 data regarding student attendance, behavior, and grades to identify  
16 when a student may be falling behind and intervene with strategic  
17 supports. Through coaching and collaboration these success teams also  
18 share best practices, evaluate outcome data, and progress towards  
19 creating a sustainable framework that can be implemented in  
20 subsequent school years.

1 The legislature acknowledges the impact of the ninth grade  
2 success team pilot program established in 2019, which resulted in  
3 four out of five school districts reporting immediate and sustained  
4 increases in their ninth grade on-track rates. The successful  
5 expansion of the program in the 2021-22 school year to 30  
6 participating schools also had positive outcomes, with 83 percent of  
7 schools increasing their baseline rates over the prior school year  
8 and 50 percent of schools reporting a double-digit increase. The  
9 legislature now intends to create a permanent ninth grade success  
10 grant program to expand access across Washington state.

11 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** A new section is added to chapter 28A.175  
12 RCW to read as follows:

13 (1) Subject to the availability of amounts appropriated for this  
14 specific purpose, the office of the superintendent of public  
15 instruction shall establish and administer the ninth grade success  
16 grant program. The purpose of the grant program is to fund the  
17 creation of ninth grade success teams that can identify and support  
18 incoming high school students who are at risk of not graduating. The  
19 office of the superintendent of public instruction may adopt rules  
20 for the grant program established under this section.

21 (2)(a) Beginning in the 2023-24 school year, the office of the  
22 superintendent of public instruction shall award grants to eligible  
23 public schools as defined in RCW 28A.150.010. When awarding grants  
24 under this section, the office of the superintendent of public  
25 instruction must prioritize schools with low ninth grade on-track  
26 scores as identified through the Washington school improvement  
27 framework and schools that have graduation rates below the statewide  
28 average. The office of the superintendent of public instruction must  
29 attempt to award grants to public schools in different geographic  
30 regions of the state.

31 (b) The office of the superintendent of public instruction may  
32 contract with a qualified nonprofit organization that has experience  
33 coaching school success teams to provide individualized coaching to  
34 grant recipients.

35 (3) Recipients may use grant funds for costs associated with  
36 establishing and operating a ninth grade success team program  
37 including, but not limited to:

38 (a) Providing additional compensation or stipends for success  
39 team members;

1 (b) Providing related professional development and training for  
2 success team members;

3 (c) Hiring substitute teachers during periods when success team  
4 members are performing program duties and training; and

5 (d) Providing student supports needed to help ninth grade  
6 students thrive.

7 (4) By June 30, 2024, and annually thereafter until 2029, the  
8 office of the superintendent of public instruction must report to the  
9 governor and the education committees of the legislature on the  
10 implementation of the grant program. The report must include:

11 (a) The number of grants awarded and which schools received an  
12 award, organized by geographic location;

13 (b) The demographics of the students served by recipient schools'  
14 ninth grade success teams, disaggregated by race, ethnicity, gender,  
15 and the following student groups: Students receiving free or reduced-  
16 price lunch, students receiving special education services, students  
17 receiving transitional bilingual instruction, students in foster  
18 care, and students experiencing homelessness;

19 (c) Data comparing each recipient school's ninth grade on-track  
20 scores before and after implementing ninth grade success teams;

21 (d) Longitudinal data on graduation rates for recipient schools,  
22 if available; and

23 (e) Recommendations for statutory improvements, resource needs,  
24 or opportunities for scalability.

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