

SENATE BILL REPORT

SSB 5327

As Passed Senate, March 5, 2025

Title: An act relating to learning standards and graduation requirements.

Brief Description: Concerning learning standards and graduation requirements.

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

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Early Learning & K-12 Education: 1/28/25, 2/11/25 [DPS-WM].
Ways & Means: 2/24/25, 2/27/25 [DPS (EDU)].

Floor Activity: Passed Senate: 3/5/25, 46-3.

Brief Summary of First Substitute Bill

- Directs the State Board of Education to develop recommendations to ensure students have adequate opportunity to demonstrate competency of the high school computer science and financial education state learning standards, and consider how to incorporate the competencies into the framework of graduation requirements.
- Directs the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) to review and update the state computer science and financial education learning standards.
- Directs OSPI to integrate the third goal of basic education into the state learning standards to the maximum extent possible.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5327 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, K-12; Wilson, C., Vice

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.

Chair, Early Learning; Harris, Ranking Member; Cortes, Dozier, Hansen, Krishnadasan and McCune.

Staff: Elena Becker (786-7493)

SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5327 as recommended by Committee on Early Learning & K-12 Education be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Robinson, Chair; Stanford, Vice Chair, Operating; Trudeau, Vice Chair, Capital; Frame, Vice Chair, Finance; Gildon, Ranking Member, Operating; Torres, Assistant Ranking Member, Operating; Schoesler, Ranking Member, Capital; Dozier, Assistant Ranking Member, Capital; Boehnke, Braun, Cleveland, Conway, Dhingra, Hansen, Hasegawa, Kauffman, Muzzall, Pedersen, Riccelli, Saldaña, Wagoner, Warnick, Wellman and Wilson, C..

Staff: Trevor Press (786-7446)

Background: Learning Standards. The Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) is required to develop state learning standards based on the statutory goals of basic education. The third goal of basic education directs that students shall "think analytically, logically, and creatively, and ... integrate technology literacy and fluency as well as different experiences and knowledge to form reasoned judgments and solve problems."

Pursuant to this goal, in 2015, the Legislature directed OSPI to adopt computer science learning standards. The resulting learning standards include five core concepts:

- computing systems;
- networks and the Internet;
- data and analysis;
- algorithms and programming; and
- impacts of computing

The fourth goal of basic education addresses the importance of work and finance and how performance, effort, and decisions directly affect future career and educational opportunities. At the Legislature's direction, OSPI adopted financial education learning standards in 2016. The financial education learning standards are spending and saving, credit and debt, employment and income, investing, risk management and insurance, and financial decision making.

Graduation Requirements. The State Board of Education (SBE) is statutorily directed to establish, enforce, and periodically reevaluate minimum high school graduation requirements. To graduate from high school, Washington students must complete 24 credits in various subject areas, meet the requirements of at least one graduation pathway, complete a High School and Beyond Plan, and satisfy any local requirements.

Summary of First Substitute Bill: Review of Graduation Requirements. The SBE is directed to review graduation requirements and recommend adjustments to ensure students have adequate opportunity to demonstrate competency of the high school computer science and financial education learning standards. When developing the recommendations, the state board must consult with specific stakeholders and consider both credit and competency-based options. The SBE must provide a report with these recommendations to the Governor and the Legislature by December 31, 2026.

Review of Learning Standards. OSPI is directed to initiate a review and update of the computer science and financial education learning standards. OSPI is directed to inform the review of computer science standards with practices from other states and consultation with experienced nonprofits. When developing the standards for high school students, OSPI must identify any standards considered to be foundational for graduation purposes.

During periodic reviews of learning standards, OSPI is directed to integrate the third goal of basic education into the state learning standards to the maximum extent possible.

The SBE is directed to collect information from school districts, including:

- current high school courses and learning opportunities offered in computer science and financial education;
- how the district currently assesses or plans to assess competency of the computer science or financial education state learning standards; and
- what the district may need to implement the SBE's recommended adjustments to graduation requirements.

The SBE is directed to submit a summary of this information to the Legislature by December 31, 2025, including recommendations on actions the Legislature could take to assist school districts in meeting their identified needs.

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: Every person doesn't need to be a programmer, but everyone does need to have digital fluency. This bill makes sure those necessary skills are embedded throughout our graduation requirement framework.

Making computer science a graduation requirement is the only policy recommendation from

Code.org that Washington hasn't yet adopted. The Legislature has made it easier over the years for teachers to get the computer science endorsement, but we still don't have enough teachers with the endorsement. We need to keep scaling up computer science teachers, too.

The timeline in this bill aligns with the State Board of Education's Future Ready Graduation Requirement review. The data collection requirements will ensure high quality implementation.

CON: Washington students already struggle to meet existing standards and when additional graduation requirements are imposed students give up elective coursework in the arts and extracurriculars like sports.

Computer science uses a very different form of math than the calculus-based math that students currently learn. Learning to use technology comes from exposure to different operating systems, learning to identify online misinformation, and developing computer hardware repair skills, not from coding.

Persons Testifying (Early Learning & K-12 Education): PRO: Senator Lisa Wellman, Prime Sponsor; Lawrence Tanimoto, CSTA Washington; Chad Magendanz; Yazmin Carretero, State Board of Education.

CON: Steven Bock; Joy Gjersvold, Conservative Ladies of Washington.

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): CON: This bill is unrealistic given the current education system's struggle with basic literacy. It is suggested that adding this requirement would place excessive mental strain on students, who are already burdened with math and science. Coding is a difficult field to master and may be too challenging for high school students. Additionally, a clearer definition of computer science is needed in the bill to distinguish between coding and broader digital learning.

Persons Testifying (Ways & Means):

CON: John Axtell; Steven Bock, Computer/AI Programmer.

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