

RCW 28A.230.710 Graduation pathway options. (1) Each student graduating from a public high school and earning a high school diploma must meet the requirements of at least one graduation pathway option established in this section. The graduation pathway options are intended to provide a student with multiple ways, including test-based, course-based, and performance-based options, to demonstrate readiness in furtherance of the student's individual goals for high school and beyond. For the purposes of this section, "demonstrate readiness" means the student meets or exceeds state learning standards addressed in the graduation pathway option. A student may choose to pursue one or more of the graduation pathway options under subsection (2) of this section, but any graduation pathway option used by a student to demonstrate career and college readiness must be in alignment with the student's high school and beyond plan.

(2) The following graduation pathway options may be used to demonstrate career and college readiness:

(a) Meet or exceed the graduation standard established by the state board of education under RCW 28A.305.130 on the statewide high school assessments in English language arts and mathematics as provided for under RCW 28A.655.070;

(b) Complete and qualify for college credit in dual credit courses in English language arts and mathematics. For the purposes of this subsection, "dual credit course" means a course in which a student qualifies for college and high school credit in English language arts or mathematics upon successfully completing the course;

(c) Earn high school credit in a high school transition course in English language arts and mathematics, an example of which includes a bridge to college course. For the purposes of this subsection (2)(c), "high school transition course" means an English language arts or mathematics course offered in high school where successful completion by a high school student ensures the student college-level placement at participating institutions of higher education as defined in RCW 28B.10.016. High school transition courses must satisfy core or elective credit graduation requirements established by the state board of education. A student's successful completion of a high school transition course does not entitle the student to be admitted to an institution of higher education as defined in RCW 28B.10.016;

(d) Earn high school credit, with a C+ grade or higher in AP, international baccalaureate, or Cambridge international courses in English language arts and mathematics; or earn at least the minimum scores outlined in RCW 28B.10.054(1) on the corresponding exams. The state board of education shall establish by rule the list of AP, international baccalaureate, and Cambridge international courses of which successful completion meets the standard in this subsection for English language arts and for mathematics;

(e) Meet or exceed the scores established by the state board of education for the mathematics portion and the reading, English, or writing portion of the SAT or ACT;

(f)(i) Complete a performance-based learning experience through which the student demonstrates knowledge and skills in a real-world context, providing evidence that the student meets or exceeds state learning standards in English language arts and mathematics. The performance-based learning experience may take a variety of forms, such as a project, practicum, work-related experience, community service, or cultural activity, and may result in a variety of products that can be evaluated, such as a performance, presentation, portfolio, report, film, or exhibit.

(ii) The performance-based learning experience must conform to state requirements established in rule by the state board of education addressing the safety and quality of the performance-based learning experience and the authentic performance-based assessment criteria for determining the student has demonstrated the applicable learning standards. The rules adopted by the state board of education to implement the graduation pathway option established in this subsection (2)(f) may allow external parties, including community leaders and professionals, to participate in the evaluation of the student's performance and must include at least one certificated teacher with an endorsement in each relevant subject area or with other applicable qualifications as permitted by the professional educator standards board.

(iii) To support implementation of the performance-based learning experience graduation pathway option, the state board of education, in collaboration with the office of the superintendent of public instruction, shall establish graduation proficiency targets and associated rubrics aligned with state learning standards in English language arts and mathematics.

(iv) Prior to offering the performance-based learning experience graduation pathway option in this subsection (2)(f) to students, the school district board of directors shall adopt a written policy in conformity with applicable state requirements;

(g) Meet any combination of at least one English language arts option and at least one mathematics option established in (a) through (f) of this subsection;

(h) Meet standard in the armed services vocational aptitude battery; and

(i) Complete a sequence of career and technical education courses that are relevant to a student's postsecondary pathway, including those leading to workforce entry, state or nationally approved apprenticeships, or postsecondary education, and that meet either: The curriculum requirements of core plus programs for aerospace, maritime, health care, information technology, or construction and manufacturing; or the minimum criteria identified in RCW 28A.700.030. Nothing in this subsection (2)(i) requires a student to enroll in a preparatory course that is approved under RCW 28A.700.030 for the purposes of demonstrating career and college readiness under this section.

(3) While the legislature encourages school districts to make all graduation pathway options established in this section available to their high school students, and to expand their graduation pathway options until that goal is met, school districts have discretion in determining which options under this section they will offer to students.

(4) School districts must annually provide students in grades eight through 12 and their parents or legal guardians with comprehensive information about the graduation pathway options offered by the school district and are strongly encouraged to begin providing this information to students in grade six. School districts must provide this information in a manner that conforms with the school district's language access policy and procedures as required under RCW 28A.183.040.

(5) The state board of education shall adopt rules to implement the graduation pathway options established in this section. [2024 c 66 s 5. Prior: 2023 c 349 s 2; 2023 c 271 s 10; 2021 c 7 s 3; 2019 c 252 s 201. Formerly RCW 28A.655.250.]

Intent—2023 c 349: "(1) In 2019 the legislature created a system of multiple graduation pathway options, which took effect beginning with the class of 2020. The legislature intended for the graduation pathways to be student-focused, adaptable, rigorous, and meaningful ways for students to demonstrate appropriate readiness in support of their individualized career and college goals.

(2) The legislature anticipated that school districts might face barriers to implementing the pathways and students might face barriers to accessing the pathway options. The legislature charged the state board of education with research on the first three years of implementation to identify barriers and provide recommendations for changes to the existing pathways and additional pathway options.

(3) While implementation of the graduation pathway options was significantly disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic, the research on early implementation identified access and equity barriers that would exist even without the pandemic. The research shows that the initial set of graduation pathway options do not meet the needs of all students. The research found some students completing pathways that do not align with their individual goals for after high school, in which case the pathway is not serving its intended purpose. Overall, students, families, and educators report a need for additional relevant and authentic options.

(4) The legislature recognizes that students can demonstrate readiness in multiple ways and recognizes the need to expand graduation pathways in order to provide options that are student-focused, individualized, relevant, and that support all student needs. Research shows that performance-based assessments are valid ways of measuring students' readiness for success in college and careers. Further, research shows that performance-based assessments are associated with increased student engagement, skill development, critical thinking, and postsecondary success. The legislature recognizes that a performance-based graduation pathway option supports the state's transition to mastery-based learning.

(5) Therefore, the legislature intends to create graduation pathway options that allow students to demonstrate their readiness in performance-based ways, in addition to the existing test-based and course-based options. Further, the legislature intends to create ongoing requirements to monitor the graduation pathway options implementation at both the state and local levels to ensure accountability and equitable offerings. In providing a wider variety of graduation pathway options, the state maintains its commitment to high standards for earning a meaningful high school diploma that prepares students for success in postsecondary education, gainful employment, civic engagement, and lifelong learning." [2023 c 349 s 1.]

Intent—2023 c 271: See note following RCW 28A.230.215.

Finding—Intent—Effective date—2021 c 7: See notes following RCW 28A.230.320.

Intent—2019 c 252: "The legislature intends to continue providing students with the opportunity to access a challenging learning environment and a meaningful diploma that supports every student in achieving his or her individualized career and college goals.

In an ongoing effort to create an educational system focused on individualized student learning that is culturally responsive to the needs of our diverse student population, the legislature must provide a system that allows each student to work with his or her teachers, parents or guardians, and counselors to identify the best ways to demonstrate appropriate readiness in furtherance of the student's career and college goals.

The legislature further recognizes that student-focused graduation pathways must be adaptable and allow students to change pathways as their goals shift. While standardized tests may be a graduation pathway option chosen by some to demonstrate career and college readiness, students should have other rigorous and meaningful pathway options to select from when demonstrating their proficiencies. The legislature, therefore, intends to create a system of multiple graduation pathway options that enable students to support their individual goals for high school and beyond." [2019 c 252 s 101.]