

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SHB 1524

As Passed House:
February 25, 2011

Title: An act relating to recognizing the international baccalaureate diploma.

Brief Description: Recognizing the international baccalaureate diploma.

Sponsors: House Committee on Education (originally sponsored by Representative Orwall).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Education: 2/11/11, 2/17/11 [DPS].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 2/25/11, 82-16.

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Provides that students who complete specified requirements of an International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme are considered to have satisfied state minimum high school graduation requirements, except that they must still meet the state standard on required state assessments and study the United States and Washington Constitutions as required by law.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 19 members: Representatives Santos, Chair; Lytton, Vice Chair; Anderson, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Ahern, Angel, Billig, Dahlquist, Fagan, Finn, Haigh, Hargrove, Hunt, Klippert, Kretz, Ladenburg, Liias, Maxwell, McCoy and Probst.

Minority Report: Without recommendation. Signed by 2 members: Representatives Dammeier, Ranking Minority Member; Wilcox.

Staff: Barbara McLain (786-7383).

Background:

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Graduation Requirements. The State Board of Education establishes minimum statewide graduation requirements. Currently students must earn 19 credits in specified course areas, complete a culminating project, and prepare a high school and beyond plan. Beginning with the graduating class of 2012, 20 credits are required.

In addition, state law requires that students must meet the standard on the state reading and writing assessments, and take additional math classes if they do not meet the standard on the state mathematics assessment. Beginning with the graduating class of 2013, students must meet the standard on the state assessments in reading, writing, mathematics, and science for graduation. State law also requires all students to study the United States and Washington Constitutions as a prerequisite to graduation.

School districts may establish other local graduation requirements. High school diplomas are issued by school districts to students who meet state and local graduation requirements.

International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme (IB). The IB is designed as an academically challenging series of courses, student work, and examinations which are usually offered over a two-year period. Students must complete courses in six subjects: primary language, secondary language, individuals and societies, science, mathematics, and either the arts or a second course in one of the other subjects. Students must also complete a Theory of Knowledge course, produce an extended essay, participate in a Creativity, Action, and Service activity, and complete internally and externally-scored assessment tasks.

To earn an IB Diploma, students must also pass end-of-course examinations in each of their six courses. The IB examinations are offered twice a year. The results of the November examinations are issued in January; the results of the May examinations are issued in July.

There are 16 Washington high schools approved to offer the IB. More than 6,600 Washington students enrolled in the IB courses in 2009-10. However, not all students seek the full IB Diploma. Some enroll in the IB but do not complete all of the required components or examinations. According to the IB Organization, 339 Washington students earned the IB Diploma in 2008.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

Students who fulfill specified requirements toward completion of an IB Diploma are considered to have satisfied state minimum requirements for graduation from a public high school, except that:

1. the requirement for students to meet the standard on state assessments still applies to the IB students; and
2. laws requiring students to study the United States and Washington Constitutions as a prerequisite for graduation still apply to the IB students, but the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction may adopt a rule allowing the IB students to meet the prerequisite through non-credit based study.

School districts may require the IB students to complete additional local graduation requirements before issuing a high school diploma, but are encouraged to waive local requirements for students to pursue an IB Diploma.

To receive a high school diploma under the bill, students must:

- complete and pass all required IB courses, as scored at the local level;
- submit and pass all internal assessments, as scored at the local level;
- successfully complete all required projects and products, as scored at the local level; and
- complete the final examinations administered by the IB Organization in all required subjects.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) Schools have varsity sports; the IB is varsity math, science, and literature. It is a very rigorous program. Very few students enroll in the IB full-time, but those who do often have to attend school outside the regular school day in order to meet both state high school graduation requirements and the requirements of the IB. This is very hard on low-income students when they have to pay for extra coursework. The IB must be maintained as an option for all students.

The main goal of the bill is to preserve and increase access to the IB for underserved populations. Thanks to state and federal grants, low-income students pay only 10 percent of the examination costs, but a cost that goes unrecognized is the cost of additional coursework to meet local graduation requirements. Redundancies in high school graduation requirements pose barriers for those students seeking an IB Diploma. This bill would prevent students from having to repeat course content that they have already covered, and allow them to take enrichment classes such as music and the arts. There are a growing number of the IB students; they have enormous drive and endless dreams.

The IB is already sufficiently rigorous and recognized as college-level work by universities. It makes a lot of sense to acknowledge this by granting these students a high school diploma. If obstacles can be removed, there would be more students willing to enter the program and earn a top notch, internationally-recognized diploma. There are at least 17 other states engaged in a similar debate with proposed policies or legislation. At least four of them allow the IB Diploma to substitute for a state diploma. The IB Organization assures the rigor of the program and the breadth of the standards. The assessments are reliable and valid. Studies show the college readiness and college success of IB graduates. This bill will support a wonderful group of students.

(With concerns) It might be useful to do a crosswalk of the IB exams to the state assessments and allow the IB exams to be used as an alternative for graduation.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: (In support) Representative Orwall, prime sponsor; Chris Wilder, Mount Rainer High School and Northwest International Baccalaureate Association; Nancy Anderson and Barbara Baer, Skyline High School International Baccalaureate Parents' Group; Heidi Bennet, Seattle Parent Teacher Student Association; and Bob Poole, International Baccalaureate Organization.

(With concerns) Jerry Bender, Association of Washington School Principals.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.