
Education Committee

HB 2447

Brief Description: Defining a high school credit for graduation purposes based on the recommendations of the quality education council.

Sponsors: Representatives Dahlquist, Maxwell, Dammeier, Sullivan and Moeller.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Tasks the Washington State School Directors' Association, within available funds and in consultation with the State Board of Education (SBE), with adopting a model policy defining a high school credit for purposes of meeting state and local graduation requirements.
- Requires school districts to adopt a policy defining a high school credit by July 1, 2013, to submit a copy of the policy to the SBE, and to annually certify that the district has such a policy.

Hearing Date: 1/23/12

Staff: Cece Clynch (786-7195).

Background:

The Quality Education Council (QEC) was created by the Legislature as part of the major education reform bill passed during the 2009 session. Its purpose is to develop strategic recommendations for implementation of a new definition of Basic Education and the financing necessary to support it. The QEC members include four state representatives and four state senators (with equal representation among Democrats and Republicans), the Superintendent of Public Instruction, the Director of the Department of Early Learning, one appointee chosen by the Governor, and representatives from the State Board of Education (SBE) and the Professional Educator Standards Board.

In addition to guiding implementation of that 2009 legislation, the QEC must develop strategic recommendations and report these in an annual report to the Legislature. In its January 2011

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.

Report, the QEC identified "providing students the opportunity to graduate prepared for postsecondary education, employment and citizenship" as the second of six priorities. In the context of this particular priority, the QEC recommended that the Legislature should support the SBE's removal of the 150 hour definition of a credit and that the SBE should require all districts to certify that a policy defining a credit has been adopted.

Until recently, the SBE defined a high-school credit in terms of either seat-time or competency:

- 150 hours of planned instructional activities approved by the district; *or*
- satisfactory demonstration by a student of clearly identified competencies established pursuant to a process defined in written district policy.

In November of 2011 the SBE adopted a new rule defining a high-school credit. In so doing, the SBE removed the time-based requirement. Under this new rule, a credit means:

- successful completion, as defined by written district policy, of courses taught to the state's essential academic learning requirements; if there are no state-adopted learning standards for a subject, the local governing board, or its designee shall determine learning standards for the successful completion of that subject; *or*
- satisfactory demonstration by a student of proficiency/competency, as defined by written district policy, of the state's essential academic learning requirements.

According to the Implementation Task Force, a group of educational practitioners appointed by the SBE to recommend policy changes with respect to graduation requirements, a non-time based credit policy:

- places the focus on student-centered learning;
- allows districts more flexibility to meet credit requirements; and
- allows districts to determine, and individualize, how much course time is needed for students to meet the state's standards.

Summary of Bill:

By July 1, 2013 each school district, except a nonhigh district, must adopt a policy that defines a high school credit for purposes of meeting state and local graduation requirements, in accordance with the SBE's rules regarding credits.

The Washington State School Directors' Association, within available funds and in consultation with the SBE, must develop a model policy that districts may choose to adopt to satisfy the policy requirements. The policy may define a high school credit based on a seat-time definition, demonstrated competencies, or some combination, as long as the policy specifies the means by which the school district assures that students have gained the knowledge and skills necessary to earn a credit.

A district is required to submit a copy of its policy to the SBE. The SBE must require districts to certify annually to the SBE that the district has a policy to define a high school credit.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 19, 2012.

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