
Education Committee

HB 2538

Brief Description: Reducing certain requirements affecting school districts.

Sponsors: Representatives Santos and Maxwell; by request of Governor Gregoire.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Removes the High School and Beyond Plan graduation requirement for students completing specified programs.
- Makes changes to certain elements of the Learning Assistance Program plan that districts must submit to the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction.
- Limits the frequency of fiscal and performance audits on school districts when no findings of impropriety were found for the three-year period immediately preceding the audit period.

Hearing Date: 1/26/12

Staff: Cece Clynch (786-7195).

Background:

High School and Beyond Plan (Plan).

In order to graduate, the state requires students to earn 20 credits in specified course areas, pass state assessments or approved alternatives, complete a culminating project, and prepare a Plan.

The State Board of Education (SBE) established the Plan as a graduation requirement in 2000, effective for students in the graduating class of 2008. The Plan is a formal process designed to help students think about their future and select course work that will best prepare them for their post high school goals. Students create their Plans in cooperation with parents or guardians and school staff. Ideally, students write their plans in eighth or ninth grade and then continue to revise them throughout high school to accommodate changing interests or goals. Whether a

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student has met the requirements for a Plan is a decision made at the local level by the school district.

Dual Credit and Other Opportunities.

Running Start. Running Start students have the opportunity to study on a college campus while acquiring credits that count toward both high school and college graduation. If the student passes the college course, he or she receives the same amount of credit as any other college student taking the course.

Navigation 101. Navigation 101 is a life skills and planning curriculum for students in grades six through 12 that helps students make plans for life beyond high school.

Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID). The AVID is a college-readiness system designed to increase the number of students who enroll in four-year colleges. Although the AVID serves all students, it focuses on students in the academic middle. At the high school and middle level, the AVID students are enrolled in their school's toughest classes, such as Advanced Placement (AP), and receive support in an academic elective class, called AVID, taught within the school day by a trained AVID teacher. In the accelerated elective class, the AVID students receive support through a rigorous curriculum and ongoing, structured tutorials. The AVID elective teachers support the AVID students by providing academic training, managing their tutorials, working with faculty and parents, and helping students develop long-range academic and personal plans.

Career and Technical Education Programs (Program). There are a variety of Programs available. Skills Centers (Centers) are part of the K-12 system, operating as an extension for the high schools within a local region by providing high school students with job preparation skills. The primary purpose of the Centers is to give students the academic and work skills to successfully enter the job market or advanced educations/training. The Centers provide job training in programs that would be too expensive to offer at every high school. Instructors use competency-based, individualized instruction to help each student learn occupational, academic, and technical skills at a high level.

Tech Prep is a cooperative effort between K-12 schools, community and technical colleges, and the business community to develop applied integrated, academic and technical programs. These professional technical courses are taught on high school campuses by high school instructors. The instructors work with local colleges to assure the courses are taught at the college-level and articulate to the college program. Through Tech Prep articulation agreements, colleges award credit to students who successfully complete college-equivalent courses and programs with a "B" or better while still in high school.

International Baccalaureate (IB). The IB program 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 EOC examinations in each of their six courses.

Advanced Placement. The AP program allows students to take college-level courses while staying on their high school campuses. Students complete courses taught by high school teachers and take standardized examinations at the end of the course. Students may score from zero to five points. Minimum scores to qualify for college credit vary by college and by subject area.

Cambridge Advanced International Certificate of Education. High schools may seek approval from the University of Cambridge International Examinations, part of the University of Cambridge (Cambridge), as a Cambridge International Center to offer a program of study for the Cambridge Advanced International Certificate of Education (AICE). The AICE program involves the selection of subjects from three interdisciplinary curriculum areas: math and science; languages; and arts and humanities. The Cambridge courses emphasize higher order thinking skills, oral skills, writing skills, problem-solving skills, and teamwork and investigative skills.

At the end of ninth and 10th grade, students in the Cambridge program are able to take content area exams en route to earning a certificate at the end of 10th grade. At the end of the student's senior year, he or she can take the Cambridge AICE exams. Many colleges and universities award students advanced standing and academic credit for having passed the Cambridge AICE examinations.

Learning Assistance Program (LAP).

The LAP, in operation for many years, is designed to help students who need additional time and assistance to achieve basic skills in reading, mathematics, language arts and readiness skills. School districts apply to the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) for program funds, submitting a program plan to the agency. The OSPI must approve the districts' program plans before any funds are released.

The plans must include district and school-level data on reading, writing, and mathematics, as well as the processes to be used to identify underachieving students, and the components of accelerated learning plans for participating students. It must also describe how the school will use assessments and intentional instructional strategies, staff development plans, plans to coordinate resources, and school improvement plans to support underachieving students. Finally, the plan must include a program evaluation component.

School District Audits.

State law requires the State Auditor (Auditor) to examine the affairs of all local governments at least once in every three years, and examine the health and welfare benefit plans and self-insurance programs of local governments at least every two years. The auditor must establish an audit schedule.

During the 2009-2011 fiscal biennium, the Auditor is directed to conduct audits no more often than once every two years of local governments with annual general fund revenues of ten million

dollars or less and no findings of impropriety for the three-year period immediately preceding the audit period. The Auditor is not prohibited from conducting audits: to address suspected fraud or irregular conduct; at the request of the local government governing body; or as required by federal laws or regulations.

The state auditor conducts a variety of types of audits:

Accountability Audits. The Accountability Audits focus on areas of the highest risk for noncompliance, misappropriation or misuse of public resources. They evaluate the local government's compliance with state laws, regulations, and its own policies and procedures governing financial operations. Whether an accountability audit is conducted on one, two, or three year cycles depends upon:

- the size of the government or school district as measured by its revenues or enrollment;
- the significance of risks such as a pattern of past audit issues, significant management or operational changes, or concerns expressed by citizens or policy makers; and
- requests from the government for more frequent audits.

Audit Assessments. The Audit Assessments are a cost-effective approach for auditing small local governments. An assessment involves analyzing information to determine if there are indications of significant irregularities or misappropriations. If risks are identified, the Auditor may conduct an on-site audit. These assessments are performed on a one, two, or three year cycle, depending on the size of the government.

School districts with more than 8,000 full time equivalency (FTE) enrollment receive an annual accountability audit. Districts with fewer than 8,000 receive a biennial or triennial accountability audit. Districts with less than 100 FTE, or without a high school, are eligible for an audit assessment if there are no indicators of high risk. Such assessments are conducted annually. Districts receive a financial audit according to their accountability cycle unless a federal audit is required.

Federal Compliance Audits. The Federal Compliance Audits assess state and local governments' management of federal programs and compliance with federal requirements. Financial statement audits are conducted when audits are a requirement of receiving federal funds or issuing bonds. Districts that expend more than 500 thousand dollars in federal funds in any year must have a federal audit. All federal audits must include a financial audit. In 2011, 210 of the 295 school districts were required to have a federal audit.

Performance Audits. Citizens gave the Office of the State Auditor authority to conduct performance audits in November 2005 with the passage of Initiative 900. Performance audits have a broader focus on the organization's effectiveness and efficiency than more traditional financial audits. To date, the Auditor has conducted 30 performance audits and reviews of more than 80 state and local governments, programs and services.

Summary of Bill:

High School and Beyond Plans.

Students completing one of the following are not required to complete a Plan:

- Running Start program, and leaving high school with an associate degree.
- High School Navigation 101, AVID, or similar program focused on career planning and skill development in preparation for a targeted career.
- Career and technical education program resulting in a skill certificate.
- One year of college-level coursework.
- IB certificate program.
- At least four courses in any of the following programs, or at least four courses among the following programs: AP; engineering or biological sciences; IB; or Cambridge with college credit equivalency exams.

Learning Assistance Programs.

Districts are no longer required to include in the plan:

- how accelerated learning plans are developed and implemented for participating students;
- how assessments are used to inform instruction;
- how instructional strategies have been identified and implemented;
- how highly qualified staff are developed and supported;
- how other resources are coordinated with school improvement plans and the plan to support underachieving students; and
- how a program evaluation will be conducted to determine the direction for the following year.

Districts must instead include in the plan processes used for:

- setting achievement goals;
- communication with, and involvement of parents and guardians;
- district plan review, evaluation and adjustments;
- identifying and using assessments;
- supporting and developing skills of program instructional staff;
- coordination of other resources with school improvement plans and the district's strategic plan.

School District Audits.

Beginning with the 2012-13 school year, the Auditor is prohibited from conducting fiscal and performance audits on school districts more often than once every three years when there have been no findings of impropriety for the three-year period immediately preceding the audit period. The Auditor is not, however, prohibited from conducting audits:

- to address suspected fraud or irregular conduct;
- at the request of the local school district board of directors; or
- as required by federal laws or regulations.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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