

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5265

As of January 27, 2021

Title: An act relating to the creation of a bridge year pilot program.

Brief Description: Creating a bridge year pilot program.

Sponsors: Senators Hunt, Das, Nguyen, Wellman and Wilson, C..

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Early Learning & K-12 Education: 1/27/21.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction to administer a bridge year pilot program that allows students in the graduating classes of 2021 and 2022 an additional year to take courses at the student's high school, an institution of higher education, or a combination.
- Establishes that students participating in the program shall be considered Running Start students for funding allocation and enrollment purposes.
- Allows bridge year students to participate in Running Start and College in the High School courses.
- Directs participating high schools to establish a bridge-year liaison who, in consultation with participating students, creates individual learning plans for participating students.
- Requires districts to expunge any D or F grade from a participating student's transcript if the student takes the same course during their bridge year and completes the course with a higher grade.
- Permits students in the pilot program to participate in extracurricular activities at their high school.

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.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION

Staff: Benjamin Omdal (786-7442)

Background: High School Graduation Requirements. Washington State students must meet various requirements in order to graduate high school and receive a diploma. Students must complete 24 credits in specified subject areas as determined by the State Board of Education. Students must also complete a High School and Beyond Plan and satisfy any local requirements.

In addition, students must meet the requirements of at least one graduation pathway in order to receive their high school diploma. These include:

- meeting or exceeding a set standard on statewide English language arts (ELA) and mathematics assessments;
- completing and qualifying for college credit in dual credit courses in ELA and mathematics;
- earning high school credit in a high school transition course in ELA and mathematics;
- earning high school credit with a C+ grade or receiving particular scores in advanced placement, international baccalaureate, or Cambridge international courses;
- meeting or exceeding set scores on the SAT or ACT;
- meeting standard in the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery; or
- completing a sequence of career and technical courses.

The Washington Interscholastic Athletics Association. In Washington State, school boards may delegate control, supervision, and regulation of extracurricular activities to the Washington Interscholastic Athletics Association (WIAA) or any other voluntary nonprofit entity. There are currently over 400 public and private high schools that are members of the WIAA, and approximately 400 middle and junior high schools as well.

The WIAA oversees athletics and fine arts competitions, including 120 state championship events in sports, debate, drama, and music. The WIAA does not receive financial support from tax dollars or from the state of Washington. Instead, the WIAA is primarily funded through ticket sales to events.

Running Start. Running Start allows eleventh- and twelfth-grade high school students to take courses at community colleges, technical colleges, and various four-year institutions of higher education. Upon completion of a course, students earn both high school and college credit.

Running Start students and their families do not pay tuition, but students must pay for college fees, purchase textbooks and other materials, and provide their own transportation to and from the institution. Since 2011, higher education institutions that are not community or technical colleges may charge up to 10 percent of tuition costs to students.

Institutions are reimbursed by local schools districts for costs of Running Start students. Current law requires districts reimburse the institutions at a per student rate allotted for basic education funding, with the districts retaining 7 percent of these funds. Vocational students are funded at an additional rate.

College-in-the-High-School Programs. College-in-the-High-School (CiHS) programs provide college level courses in high schools or high school environments to qualified students who are in or are eligible for enrollment in grades 10, 11, and 12. Students who participate in a CiHS program are able to earn both high school and postsecondary credit by completing postsecondary level courses with a passing grade. Programs are established in individual agreements between the schools and colleges or universities.

State funding for CiHS programs does not include funding for students who are in or eligible for enrollment in grade 10. For students in grades 11 or 12, funding is prioritized according to statute, with subsidies for eligible students.

Summary of Bill: Bridge Year Pilot Program. *Pilot Program.* The bridge year pilot program is established, to be administered by the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, with the purpose of providing students in the graduating classes of 2021 and 2022 an additional year to address learning loss and participate in extracurricular activities.

Students in the program may defer graduation from high school and earn credits at either the high school or postsecondary levels. Participating students are eligible to participate in CiHS and are considered Running Start students for the purposes of enrollment and funding allocations.

Participating school districts must designate a staff member as a bridge-year liaison who, in consultation with the student, shall develop an individual learning plan for each participating student. The plan must define academic and cocurricular goals for the bridge year and detail activities and strategies for accomplishing those goals. Credits taken by a student must form a coordinated sequence of academic content that prepares the student for high-skilled, high-wage, or in-demand occupations.

School districts participating in the pilot program shall expunge any D or F from a student's transcript if the student takes the same course during their bridge year and completes the course with a higher grade.

Student Eligibility. To participate in the bridge year program, a student must:

- meet all applicable graduation requirements;
- be 19 years of age or younger or turn 20 during the bridge year due to services provided pursuant to the student's individualized education program plan;
- take between 9 and 12 quarter credits, or the equivalent, during each term of the student's bridge year; and
- maintain a grade point average of at least 2.0.

During the first term of the student's bridge year, the student may take credits at the student's high school, an institution of higher education, or a combination. During the second term, the student must take credits at an institution of higher education.

Extracurricular Activities. A student who pursues a bridge year may participate in activities sanctioned by the WIAA. Students shall pay applicable athletic and activities fees and be subject to applicable codes of conduct or other policies.

The WIAA shall be requested to waive the applicable consecutive year eligibility rule. The WIAA shall confer with the National College Athletic Association or any other organization with authority over intercollegiate athletics to permit any student participating in a sport during a bridge year be eligible to declare as a college recruit and participate in intercollegiate athletics.

Nothing in the act supersedes the governance or eligibility rules established by a local, state, or national organization with bona fide authority over a particular extracurricular activity.

Insurers doing business in the state and issuing liability insurance policies to school districts must provide coverage for participating students as part of a school or district's liability insurance policy.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 18, 2021.

Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members: No.

Effective Date: The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect immediately.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: The bill provides for a more meaningful and fulfilling high school experience that students may have missed due to the pandemic. The expungement provision would help students overcome grades that may have suffered as a result of the pandemic. There are many different options to accelerate learning, and an individualized plan for academics would benefit students. Pairing social and emotional health with academics can provide a strong incentive for students and families.

OTHER: More work might be needed to make sure there are not any unintended consequences with respect to extracurricular participation. The WIAA does have an appeal process, but is willing to partner to refine the procedure.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Sam Hunt, Prime Sponsor; Katherine Mahoney, Office of the Superintendent Of Public Instruction.

OTHER: Mick Hoffman, WIAA.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: No one.