
ENGROSSED SUBSTITUTE SENATE BILL 6141

State of Washington

66th Legislature

2020 Regular Session

By Senate Higher Education & Workforce Development (originally sponsored by Senators Randall, Hasegawa, Keiser, Stanford, Frockt, Wilson, C., and Sheldon; by request of Lieutenant Governor)

READ FIRST TIME 02/06/20.

1 AN ACT Relating to expanding access to higher education; amending
2 RCW 28A.230.090 and 28A.230.215; adding new sections to chapter
3 28B.77 RCW; adding a new section to chapter 28A.230 RCW; adding a new
4 section to chapter 28A.300 RCW; and creating new sections.

5 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

6 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** The legislature recognizes the increasing
7 importance of postsecondary education as a tool for economic
8 resilience and mobility, as well as the financial barriers many
9 students in our state face in pursuing postsecondary education. In
10 light of the 2019 expansion of the Washington college grant, it is
11 also important to share information about new financial aid
12 opportunities available to prospective postsecondary students. The
13 legislature also acknowledges Washington's low completion rate of the
14 free application for federal student aid in comparison with other
15 states, as well as other states' successes in increasing these rates
16 by expanding supports for students and their families. Research has
17 shown that increased completion of student aid applications in other
18 states has led to increases in high school graduation and college
19 matriculation, especially for students in underrepresented groups.
20 Given these facts, the legislature intends to undertake several
21 actions to improve financial aid awareness and to increase

1 coordination in this area among schools, districts, agencies, and
2 institutions of higher education.

3 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** A new section is added to chapter 28B.77
4 RCW to read as follows:

5 (1) The council shall adopt a centralized online statewide
6 calculator tool for the purposes of estimating federal Pell grant and
7 Washington college grant awards for all public four-year institutions
8 of higher education in Washington state.

9 (2) The tool must provide an estimate of state and federal aid
10 based on student and family financial circumstances.

11 (3) The calculator tool must be published on a web site managed
12 by the council.

13 (4) The financial aid calculator must be for estimation purposes
14 only and is not a guarantee of state aid. Neither this section nor
15 the estimates provided by the financial aid calculator constitute an
16 entitlement on the part of the state, and no institution, agency, or
17 their agents or employees may be held liable for any estimates
18 created through its usage.

19 (5) The financial aid calculator must be designed for anonymous
20 use and may not be used to collect or share any data.

21 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 3.** A new section is added to chapter 28B.77
22 RCW to read as follows:

23 (1) In collaboration with financial aid experts from public four-
24 year and two-year institutions of higher education, as well as
25 independent colleges in Washington state, the Washington student
26 achievement council shall develop clear, consistent definitions for
27 institutions of higher education to adopt regarding financial aid
28 package award letters.

29 (2) By July 1, 2021, all public four-year and two-year
30 institutions of higher education, as well as all independent colleges
31 in Washington state, must adopt uniform terminology and a
32 standardized template for financial aid award packages so that
33 students may easily compare them.

34 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 4.** A new section is added to chapter 28A.230
35 RCW to read as follows:

1 (1) (a) Beginning with the 2020-21 school year, all school
2 districts with a high school must provide a financial aid advising
3 day, as defined in section 5 of this act.

4 (b) Districts must provide both a financial aid advising day and
5 notification of financial aid opportunities at the beginning of each
6 school year to parents and guardians of any student entering the
7 twelfth grade. The notification must include information regarding:

8 (i) The eligibility requirements of the Washington college grant;

9 (ii) The requirements of the financial aid advising day;

10 (iii) The process for opting out of the financial aid advising
11 day; and

12 (iv) Any community-based resources available to assist parents
13 and guardians in understanding the requirements of and how to
14 complete the free application for federal student aid and the
15 Washington application for state financial aid.

16 (2) Districts may administer the financial aid advising day, as
17 defined in section 5 of this act, in accordance with information-
18 sharing requirements set in the high school and beyond plan in RCW
19 28A.230.090.

20 (3) The Washington state school directors' association, with
21 assistance from the office of the superintendent of public
22 instruction and the Washington student achievement council, shall
23 develop a model policy and procedure that school district board of
24 directors may adopt. The model policy and procedure must describe
25 minimum standards for a financial aid advising day as defined in
26 section 5 of this act.

27 (4) School districts are encouraged to engage in the Washington
28 student achievement council's financial aid advising training.

29 (5) The office of the superintendent of public instruction may
30 adopt rules for the implementation of this section.

31 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 5.** A new section is added to chapter 28A.300
32 RCW to read as follows:

33 (1) (a) Beginning with the 2020-21 school year, within existing
34 resources, and in collaboration with the Washington student
35 achievement council, the office of the superintendent of public
36 instruction shall coordinate a financial aid advising day with all
37 school districts with a high school.

38 (b) For the purposes of this section and section 4 of this act, a
39 "financial aid advising day" means a day or series of days between

1 September 1st and December 1st of each year that includes, but is not
2 limited to, dedicated time during regular school hours for staff to:

3 (i) Provide information to twelfth grade students on the free
4 application for federal student aid and the Washington application
5 for state financial aid;

6 (ii) As appropriate and whenever possible, assist twelfth grade
7 students in completing the free application for federal student aid
8 and the Washington application for state financial aid; and

9 (iii) In conjunction with the Washington student achievement
10 council, distribute information on the Washington college grant and
11 demonstrate the use of the college financial aid calculator created
12 in section 2 of this act.

13 (c) Each school district may choose the date or series of dates
14 on which to hold a financial aid advising day.

15 (2) The office of the superintendent of public instruction shall
16 coordinate with the Washington student achievement council whenever
17 possible to assist districts in facilitating opportunities outside of
18 regular school hours for parents to take part in seminars on
19 completing the free application for federal student aid and the
20 Washington application for state financial aid. Whenever possible,
21 districts shall provide spoken language interpreter services for
22 limited English-speaking families.

23 (3) Schools must allow students over the age of eighteen to opt
24 out and parents or guardians of students under the age of eighteen to
25 opt their student out of scheduled financial aid advising day
26 activities.

27 (4) A student may not be penalized for failing to complete
28 financial aid applications or for opting out of activities under
29 subsection (3) of this section.

30 (5) Educational staff, including instructional, administrative,
31 and counseling staff, may not be assessed or penalized on the basis
32 of students' completion of financial aid forms or students' decisions
33 to opt out under subsection (3) of this section.

34 (6) In the administration of the financial aid advising day,
35 personally identifiable student or family information must be
36 protected in accordance with state and federal privacy laws.

37 **Sec. 6.** RCW 28A.230.090 and 2019 c 252 s 103 are each amended to
38 read as follows:

1 (1) The state board of education shall establish high school
2 graduation requirements or equivalencies for students, except as
3 provided in RCW 28A.230.122 and 28A.655.250 and except those
4 equivalencies established by local high schools or school districts
5 under RCW 28A.230.097. The purpose of a high school diploma is to
6 declare that a student is ready for success in postsecondary
7 education, gainful employment, and citizenship, and is equipped with
8 the skills to be a lifelong learner.

9 (a) Any course in Washington state history and government used to
10 fulfill high school graduation requirements shall consider including
11 information on the culture, history, and government of the American
12 Indian peoples who were the first inhabitants of the state.

13 (b) Except as provided otherwise in this subsection, the
14 certificate of academic achievement requirements under RCW
15 28A.655.061 or the certificate of individual achievement requirements
16 under RCW 28A.155.045 are required for graduation from a public high
17 school but are not the only requirements for graduation. The
18 requirement to earn a certificate of academic achievement to qualify
19 for graduation from a public high school concludes with the
20 graduating class of 2019. The obligation of qualifying students to
21 earn a certificate of individual achievement as a prerequisite for
22 graduation from a public high school concludes with the graduating
23 class of 2021.

24 (c)(i) Each student must have a high school and beyond plan to
25 guide the student's high school experience and inform course taking
26 that is aligned with the student's goals for education or training
27 and career after high school.

28 (ii)(A) A high school and beyond plan must be initiated for each
29 student during the seventh or eighth grade. In preparation for
30 initiating that plan, each student must first be administered a
31 career interest and skills inventory.

32 (B) For students with an individualized education program, the
33 high school and beyond plan must be developed in alignment with their
34 individualized education program. The high school and beyond plan
35 must be developed in a similar manner and with similar school
36 personnel as for all other students.

37 (iii)(A) The high school and beyond plan must be updated to
38 reflect high school assessment results in RCW 28A.655.070(3)(b) and
39 to review transcripts, assess progress toward identified goals, and
40 revised as necessary for changing interests, goals, and needs. The

1 plan must identify available interventions and academic support,
2 courses, or both, that are designed for students who are not on track
3 to graduate, to enable them to fulfill high school graduation
4 requirements. Each student's high school and beyond plan must be
5 updated to inform junior year course taking.

6 (B) For students with an individualized education program, the
7 high school and beyond plan must be updated in alignment with their
8 school to postschool transition plan. The high school and beyond plan
9 must be updated in a similar manner and with similar school personnel
10 as for all other students.

11 (iv) School districts are encouraged to involve parents and
12 guardians in the process of developing and updating the high school
13 and beyond plan, and the plan must be provided to the students'
14 parents or guardians in their native language if that language is one
15 of the two most frequently spoken non-English languages of students
16 in the district. Nothing in this subsection (1)(c)(iv) prevents
17 districts from providing high school and beyond plans to parents and
18 guardians in additional languages that are not required by this
19 subsection.

20 (v) All high school and beyond plans must, at a minimum, include
21 the following elements:

22 (A) Identification of career goals, aided by a skills and
23 interest assessment;

24 (B) Identification of educational goals;

25 (C) Identification of dual credit programs and the opportunities
26 they create for students, including eligibility for automatic
27 enrollment in advanced classes under RCW 28A.320.195, career and
28 technical education programs, running start programs, AP courses,
29 international baccalaureate programs, and college in the high school
30 programs;

31 (D) Information about the college bound scholarship program
32 established in chapter 28B.118 RCW;

33 (E) A four-year plan for course taking that:

34 (I) Includes information about options for satisfying state and
35 local graduation requirements;

36 (II) Satisfies state and local graduation requirements;

37 (III) Aligns with the student's secondary and postsecondary
38 goals, which can include education, training, and career;

1 (IV) Identifies course sequences to inform academic acceleration,
2 as described in RCW 28A.320.195 that include dual credit courses or
3 programs and are aligned with the student's goals; and

4 (V) Includes information about the college bound scholarship
5 program, the Washington college grant, and other scholarship
6 opportunities;

7 (F) Evidence that the student has received the following
8 information on federal and state financial aid programs that help pay
9 for the costs of a postsecondary program:

10 (I) Information about the documentation necessary for completing
11 the applications; application timeliness and submission deadlines;
12 the importance of submitting applications early; information specific
13 to students who are or have been in foster care; information specific
14 to students who are, or are at risk of being, homeless; information
15 specific to students whose family member or guardians will be
16 required to provide financial and tax information necessary to
17 complete applications; and

18 (II) Opportunities to participate in sessions that assist
19 students and, when necessary, their family members or guardians, fill
20 out financial aid applications; and

21 (G) By the end of the twelfth grade, a current resume or activity
22 log that provides a written compilation of the student's education,
23 any work experience, and any community service and how the school
24 district has recognized the community service pursuant to RCW
25 28A.320.193.

26 (d) Any decision on whether a student has met the state board's
27 high school graduation requirements for a high school and beyond plan
28 shall remain at the local level. Effective with the graduating class
29 of 2015, the state board of education may not establish a requirement
30 for students to complete a culminating project for graduation. A
31 district may establish additional, local requirements for a high
32 school and beyond plan to serve the needs and interests of its
33 students and the purposes of this section.

34 (e)(i) The state board of education shall adopt rules to
35 implement the career and college ready graduation requirement
36 proposal adopted under board resolution on November 10, 2010, and
37 revised on January 9, 2014, to take effect beginning with the
38 graduating class of 2019 or as otherwise provided in this subsection
39 (1)(e). The rules must include authorization for a school district to
40 waive up to two credits for individual students based on a student's

1 circumstances, provided that none of the waived credits are
2 identified as mandatory core credits by the state board of education.
3 School districts must adhere to written policies authorizing the
4 waivers that must be adopted by each board of directors of a school
5 district that grants diplomas. The rules must also provide that the
6 content of the third credit of mathematics and the content of the
7 third credit of science may be chosen by the student based on the
8 student's interests and high school and beyond plan with agreement of
9 the student's parent or guardian or agreement of the school counselor
10 or principal.

11 (ii) School districts may apply to the state board of education
12 for a waiver to implement the career and college ready graduation
13 requirement proposal beginning with the graduating class of 2020 or
14 2021 instead of the graduating class of 2019. In the application, a
15 school district must describe why the waiver is being requested, the
16 specific impediments preventing timely implementation, and efforts
17 that will be taken to achieve implementation with the graduating
18 class proposed under the waiver. The state board of education shall
19 grant a waiver under this subsection (1)(e) to an applying school
20 district at the next subsequent meeting of the board after receiving
21 an application.

22 (iii) A school district must update the high school and beyond
23 plans for each student who has not earned a score of level 3 or level
24 4 on the middle school mathematics assessment identified in RCW
25 28A.655.070 by ninth grade, to ensure that the student takes a
26 mathematics course in both ninth and tenth grades. This course may
27 include career and technical education equivalencies in mathematics
28 adopted pursuant to RCW 28A.230.097.

29 (2)(a) In recognition of the statutory authority of the state
30 board of education to establish and enforce minimum high school
31 graduation requirements, the state board shall periodically
32 reevaluate the graduation requirements and shall report such findings
33 to the legislature in a timely manner as determined by the state
34 board.

35 (b) The state board shall reevaluate the graduation requirements
36 for students enrolled in vocationally intensive and rigorous career
37 and technical education programs, particularly those programs that
38 lead to a certificate or credential that is state or nationally
39 recognized. The purpose of the evaluation is to ensure that students
40 enrolled in these programs have sufficient opportunity to earn a

1 certificate of academic achievement, complete the program and earn
2 the program's certificate or credential, and complete other state and
3 local graduation requirements.

4 (c) The state board shall forward any proposed changes to the
5 high school graduation requirements to the education committees of
6 the legislature for review. The legislature shall have the
7 opportunity to act during a regular legislative session before the
8 changes are adopted through administrative rule by the state board.
9 Changes that have a fiscal impact on school districts, as identified
10 by a fiscal analysis prepared by the office of the superintendent of
11 public instruction, shall take effect only if formally authorized and
12 funded by the legislature through the omnibus appropriations act or
13 other enacted legislation.

14 (3) Pursuant to any requirement for instruction in languages
15 other than English established by the state board of education or a
16 local school district, or both, for purposes of high school
17 graduation, students who receive instruction in American sign
18 language or one or more American Indian languages shall be considered
19 to have satisfied the state or local school district graduation
20 requirement for instruction in one or more languages other than
21 English.

22 (4) Unless requested otherwise by the student and the student's
23 family, a student who has completed high school courses before
24 attending high school shall be given high school credit which shall
25 be applied to fulfilling high school graduation requirements if:

26 (a) The course was taken with high school students, if the
27 academic level of the course exceeds the requirements for seventh and
28 eighth grade classes, and the student has successfully passed by
29 completing the same course requirements and examinations as the high
30 school students enrolled in the class; or

31 (b) The academic level of the course exceeds the requirements for
32 seventh and eighth grade classes and the course would qualify for
33 high school credit, because the course is similar or equivalent to a
34 course offered at a high school in the district as determined by the
35 school district board of directors.

36 (5) Students who have taken and successfully completed high
37 school courses under the circumstances in subsection (4) of this
38 section shall not be required to take an additional competency
39 examination or perform any other additional assignment to receive
40 credit.

1 (6) At the college or university level, five quarter or three
2 semester hours equals one high school credit.

3 **Sec. 7.** RCW 28A.230.215 and 2019 c 252 s 504 are each amended to
4 read as follows:

5 (1) The legislature finds that fully realizing the potential of
6 high school and beyond plans as meaningful tools for articulating and
7 revising pathways for graduation will require additional school
8 counselors and family coordinators. The legislature further finds
9 that the development and implementation of an online electronic
10 platform for high school and beyond plans will be an appropriate and
11 supportive action that will assist students, parents and guardians,
12 educators, and counselors as the legislature explores options for
13 funding additional school counselors.

14 (2) Subject to the availability of amounts appropriated for this
15 specific purpose, the office of the superintendent of public
16 instruction shall facilitate the creation of a list of available
17 electronic platforms for the high school and beyond plan. Platforms
18 eligible to be included on the list must meet the following
19 requirements:

20 (a) Enable students to create, personalize, and revise their high
21 school and beyond plan as required by RCW 28A.230.090;

22 (b) Grant parents or guardians, educators, and counselors
23 appropriate access to students' high school and beyond plans;

24 (c) Employ a sufficiently flexible technology that allows for
25 subsequent modifications necessitated by statutory changes,
26 administrative changes, or both, as well as enhancements to improve
27 the features and functionality of the platform;

28 (d) Include a sample financial aid letter and a link to the
29 financial aid calculator created in section 2 of this act, at such a
30 time as those materials are finalized;

31 (e) Comply with state and federal requirements for student
32 privacy;

33 ~~((e))~~ (f) Allow for the portability between platforms so that
34 students moving between school districts are able to easily transfer
35 their high school and beyond plans; and

36 ~~((f))~~ (g) To the extent possible, include platforms in use by
37 school districts during the 2018-19 school year.

38 (3) Beginning in the 2020-21 school year, each school district
39 must ensure that an electronic high school and beyond plan platform

1 is available to all students who are required to have a high school
2 and beyond plan.

3 (4) The office of the superintendent of public instruction may
4 adopt and revise rules as necessary to implement this section.

5 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 8.** If any part of this act is found to be in
6 conflict with federal requirements that are a prescribed condition to
7 the allocation of federal funds to the state, the conflicting part of
8 this act is inoperative solely to the extent of the conflict and with
9 respect to the agencies directly affected, and this finding does not
10 affect the operation of the remainder of this act in its application
11 to the agencies concerned. Rules adopted under this act must meet
12 federal requirements that are a necessary condition to the receipt of
13 federal funds by the state.

--- END ---