

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6061

As of January 21, 2014

Title: An act relating to adoption of high school academic acceleration policies.

Brief Description: Requiring adoption of high school academic acceleration policies.

Sponsors: Senators Litzow, Dammeier, Hill, Becker and Braun.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Early Learning & K-12 Education: 1/20/14.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION

Staff: Eric Wolf (786-7405)

Background: Academic Acceleration Policy (Policy). In 2013, the Legislature passed 2SHB 1642, encouraging school districts to adopt the Policy, in which students who meet the state standard on the high school state assessment are automatically enrolled in the next most rigorous advanced course offered by the high school. Students who are successful in that course are then automatically enrolled in the next most rigorous course, with the objective that these students will eventually be automatically enrolled in dual-credit courses.

Under the Policy, school districts must notify students and parents about the Policy, and must provide parents an opportunity to opt out and enroll the student in alternative courses.

Students who meet the state standard on the high school statewide assessment test related to mathematics may be enrolled in advanced courses in mathematics. Students who meet the state standard on the high school statewide reading and writing assessments may be enrolled in advanced courses in English, social studies, humanities, and other related subjects.

Academic Acceleration Incentive Program. Additionally, 2SHB 1642 created the Academic Acceleration Incentive Program, subject to appropriated funding. Half of the appropriated funds are allocated on a competitive basis as one-time grants for high schools to expand the availability of dual-credit courses. To be eligible, a school district must have adopted the Policy. OSPI must give priority to high schools with a high proportion of low-income students and high schools seeking to develop new capacity for dual-credit courses. The first grants were awarded in October to 17 high schools in seven school districts, ranging in enrollments from 129 to over 2000 students. Grantees were selected from across the state in

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.

urban and rural settings. OSPI initiated a second round of grants in mid-November to accommodate districts that were just finalizing new or updated board policies making them eligible for the grant, and selected five high schools in four districts. A third round of grant applications is due to OSPI in mid-February.

The other half of the appropriated funds are allocated as an incentive award to school districts for each student who earned dual credit in specified courses offered by a high school in the previous year. The amount of the award for low-income students is 125 percent of the base amount. Each student counts once, even if they earned more than one credit. The award must go to the high school that generated it. The Legislature intends that funds be used to support teacher training, curriculum, exam fees, and other costs of dual-credit courses.

OSPI must include information on dual-credit exam pass rates and college credits awarded in the School Report Card. OSPI must also report to the Legislature by January 1 of each year on the demographics of students earning dual credits in the schools receiving Academic Acceleration grants or awards.

Summary of Bill: Adoption of Academic Acceleration Policies. All school districts must adopt an academic acceleration policy by September 1, 2014.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: Academic rigor should be the default for the state, and the state should push all students toward higher standards. This bill puts rigorous academics in the forefront, but still allows students and parents to opt out.

CON: Application of an academic acceleration policy should be a local control issue and left to individual school districts.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Mara Childs, WA State Board of Education.

CON: Marie Sullivan, WA State School Directors Assn.; Dan Steele, WA Assn. of School Administrators.