

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6424

As Amended by House, March 6, 2014

Title: An act relating to establishing a state seal of biliteracy for high school students.

Brief Description: Establishing a state seal of biliteracy for high school students.

Sponsors: Senators Roach, McAuliffe, Litzow, Fain, Bailey, Mullet, Hasegawa and Tom.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Early Learning & K-12 Education: 2/05/14, 2/06/14 [DP].

Passed Senate: 2/17/14, 48-0.

Passed House: 3/06/14, 69-27.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Litzow, Chair; Dammeier, Vice Chair; McAuliffe, Ranking Member; Rolfes, Assistant Ranking Member; Billig, Brown, Cleveland, Fain, Hill, Mullet and Rivers.

Staff: Susan Mielke (786-7422)

Background: The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), in consultation with the public four-year institutions of higher education, the State Board of Community and Technical Colleges, and the Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board, develops a standard high school transcript that must include a notation of whether the student has earned a certificate of individual achievement or a certificate of academic achievement.

The State Board of Education (SBE) establishes the state minimum high school graduation requirements. The current requirements do not require students to earn course credits in a world language. SBE proposed a 24-credit high school graduation framework that would require two credits of world language, although a student could substitute other course credits if the credits are associated with a student's post-secondary pathway as provided in the student's High School and Beyond Plan.

California and New York passed state legislation authorizing a state-level Seal of Biliteracy to recognize students who are proficient in English and another world language by high school graduation. The award is a notation that appears on the high school graduate's transcript or diploma, or both.

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.

Summary of Bill: The Washington State Seal of Biliteracy (Seal) is established to recognize public high school graduates who attained a high level of proficiency in speaking, reading, and writing in one or more world languages in addition to English.

OSPI must adopt rules establishing criteria for the award of the Seal, including requiring a student to demonstrate proficiency in English by meeting the state high school graduation requirements in English, and proficiency in one or more other world languages. For the purposes of awarding the Seal, world languages include American sign language and Native American languages.

School districts are encouraged to award the Seal to qualifying students using a notation on the student's high school diploma and transcript.

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: Ours is one of the only countries that does not require a second language for our students. While this bill recognizes students who speak another language other than English, it also highlights that most American students do not know a second language. To achieve the seal, the students must be proficient in their native language and another language. It will help students be even more proficient in their native language, including our native English speakers. Our students are capable of learning more than one language. It is important to learn how to properly speak my first language and to maintain the ability to communicate with family. As a student who is proficient in two languages, it is rewarding to help family and others by translating for them. Being bilingual is a marketable skill for students and will help them get a better job because this is a trade dependent state. A seal will help the colleges to recognize students who have language skills. This will help students who are learning English too.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Roach, prime sponsor; Elizabeth Richer, League of Education Voters; Dave Larson, Tukwila School District School Board Director; Miriam Prito, Yousef Bennour, Ana Karen Rodriguez, students.

House Amendment(s): Requires OSPI to submit a report to the Legislature that compares the number of students awarded the Seal in the previous two school years and the languages spoken by those students, to the number of students enrolled or previously enrolled in the transitional bilingual instruction program and the languages spoken by those students. OSPI must also report the methods used by students to demonstrate proficiency for the Seal, and describe how OSPI plans to increase the number of possible methods for students to demonstrate proficiency, particularly in world languages that are not widely spoken.