

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1509

As Reported by House Committee On: Education

Title: An act relating to credit requirements for high school graduation.

Brief Description: Concerning credit requirements for high school graduation.

Sponsors: Representatives Stonier, Harris, Dolan, Caldier, Ormsby, Volz, Stanford, McCaslin, Riccelli, Holy, Pollet, Taylor, Doglio, Shea, Sawyer, Peterson, Gregerson, Sells, Tharinger, Farrell, Orcutt and Santos.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Education: 2/6/17, 2/14/17, 2/16/17 [DP].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Eliminates, for the graduating classes of 2019 onward, the 24-credit graduation requirement and establishes a 21-credit requirement for graduation with delineated credit requirements by course type.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 13 members: Representatives Santos, Chair; Dolan, Vice Chair; Stonier, Vice Chair; Harris, Ranking Minority Member; Muri, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Caldier, Johnson, Kilduff, Lovick, McCaslin, Ortiz-Self, Steele and Volz.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 4 members: Representatives Bergquist, Hargrove, Senn and Slatter.

Minority Report: Without recommendation. Signed by 1 member: Representative Springer.

Staff: Ethan Moreno (786-7386).

Background:

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.

Graduation Requirements.

To qualify for graduation from a public high school in Washington, students must satisfy minimum course credit requirements, meet standards on required statewide assessments, complete a high school and beyond plan (HSBP), and satisfy any graduation requirements adopted by the local school district.

Minimum course credit requirements for students in the graduating classes of 2017 and 2018 obligate these students to complete 20 credits in specified subject areas. Unless a one- or two-year extension waiver is granted by the State Board of Education (SBE) to a requesting school district, students in the graduating class of 2019 and subsequent classes will be required to complete 24 credits in specified subject areas.

Administrative rules adopted by the SBE define high school credit as:

- successful completion, as defined by written district policy, of courses taught to the state's essential academic learning requirements (EALRs). If there are no state-adopted learning standards for a subject, the school district board of directors, or its designee, must determine learning standards for the successful completion of that subject; or
- satisfactory demonstration by a student of proficiency/competency, as defined by written district policy, of the EALRs.

Credits Required for Graduation.

Subject	Graduating Classes of 2017 and 2018	Graduating Class of 2019 Onward
English	4	4
Mathematics	3	3
Science	2	3
Social Studies	3	3
Arts	1	2
Health and Fitness	2	2
Occupational Education/ Career and Technical Education	1	1
World Languages or Personalized Pathway Requirements	0	2
Electives	4	4
Total Required Credits	20	24

Minimum Graduation Requirements and the Role of the State Board of Education.

With limited exceptions, the SBE is directed by statute to establish and enforce minimum high school graduation requirements or equivalencies for students. The SBE is also required to periodically reevaluate the graduation requirements and to report related findings to the Legislature. Proposed changes that have a fiscal impact on school districts, as identified by a

fiscal analysis prepared by the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), take effect only if formally authorized and funded by the Legislature.

In accordance with its duty to establish and enforce graduation requirements, the SBE is obligated to adopt rules to implement the 24-credit graduation requirement. As part of this obligation, the SBE is authorized to establish course distribution requirements consistent with the 24-credit graduation requirement.

Rules adopted by the SBE to implement the 24-credit graduation requirement must include authorization for a school district to waive up to two credits for individual students based on unusual circumstances. A district granting a waiver must do so according to written policies that were adopted by the applicable school district board of directors.

Summary of Bill:

Provisions governing the rules that the SBE must adopt to implement the 24-credit graduation requirement for the graduating classes of 2019 onward are modified to eliminate the 24-credit requirement and replace it with a 21-credit requirement. The credit and subject allocation requirements are shown below.

Courses	Required Credits
English	3
Mathematics	3
Science	2
Social Studies	3
Arts	1
Health and Fitness	2
Career and Technical Education	1
Electives	4
World Languages or Personalized Pathway Requirements	2
Total Required Credits	21

A two-credit waiver provision for students that applies to the 24-credit graduation requirement remains applicable for the 21-credit graduation requirement.

A provision specifying the general contents of the minimum instructional program of basic education that each school district must offer is modified to remove a reference to the 24-graduation credit requirement, and to eliminate the authority of the SBE to establish course distribution requirements for graduation credit requirements.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) School districts and counselors are struggling to make the logistics of the 24-credit system actually work for students. In an attempt to meet the 24-credit requirements, students have been taking high school courses in middle schools. As a result of the 24-credit system, the instructional periods have become so small that there are fewer minutes devoted to learning the content and meeting proficiency. The Legislature does a disservice to students if it does not allow them to have time for explorative learning. Opposition to legislation of this type will claim that it lowers standards, but allowing critical thinking and problem solving will actually increase standards and keep students in school. This bill places the graduation credit requirements in statute. Graduation requirements vary by year, but they should be static, understandable, and achievable. This bill stops moving the goal posts for graduating seniors.

Current high school juniors and seniors are required to complete 20 credits for graduation. Because of the 24-credit requirement, current freshmen and sophomores have decreased accessibility to career and technical education classes and other options. By moving to 21 credits, the state will still allow opportunities to explore career opportunities.

The federal No Child Left Behind Act indicated that all students should be prepared for college and university admission. Current graduation requirements have created a "college for all" environment. The state has an excess of college graduates who have amassed lots of debt, but not enough technical-skilled employees. The current graduation requirements do not work for all students. We need graduation options that work for students who are not bound for college. Technical skill workers earn family wage jobs.

The 24-credit requirement creates chaos in schools. If a student fails one class, the student is in danger of not graduating. The learning has been reduced, not increased, with shortened instructional periods. School districts have struggled to do the many things necessary to meet the requirements. This bill should be passed and control around graduation requirements should be returned to the local level. The Legislature will be cheered across the state if you pass this bill.

(Opposed) The 24-credit requirement is the result of a 10-year journey. The current requirements are a redesign of that framework. Students may have a two-credit waiver, applied liberally, with 17 core credits. The Legislature is urged see the 24 credit requirement through. The current framework is rigorous, but flexible.

There is no reason to change now that the state has set a high bar for all kids. Equity is an important component of the graduation requirements. Lowering the bar would be a slap in the face to educators that have worked to change their systems to meet 24-credit system. Around 85 percent of high schools are using the same schedule.

We have been working on these issues for a long time. There is a way to get to a place where the 24-credit structure does not pit a college-ready path against a career-ready path. Limiting credit requirements limits options for students later in life. The McCleary court found that the opportunity for 24-credits is part of basic education. The Legislature can change basic education, but must have a policy rationale to do so. Some people are concerned about the constitutionality of this bill.

(Other) The OSPI would like to work with sponsors to build a comprehensive approach to education. Students who are exposed to schools with the HSBP are more likely to graduate on time. There is a suggestion to modify the HSBP to create a plan and approach for students that connects a four-year course plan with alignment to high school offerings.

Persons Testifying: (In support) Representative Stonier, prime sponsor; Jene Jones, Washington Association of Career and Technical Education; Dennis Kampe, Retired Skills Center; and David Spring, Coalition to Protect Our Public Schools.

(Opposed) Ben Rarick, State Board of Education; Scott Seaman, Association of Washington School Principals; and David Powell, Stand for Children.

(Other) Danise Ackelson, Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.