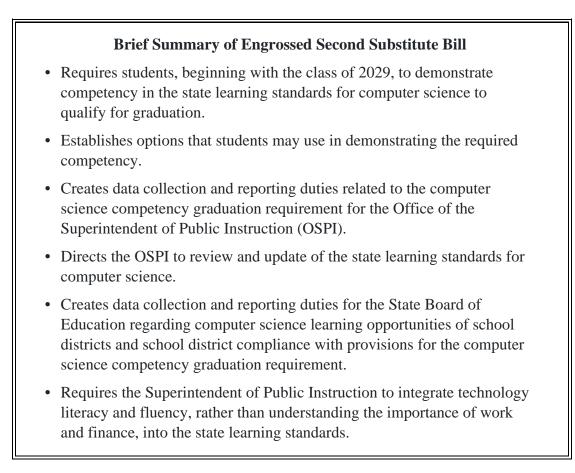## Education Committee

E2SSB 5849

Brief Description: Concerning a computer science competency graduation requirement.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Ways & Means (originally sponsored by Senators Wellman, Nobles, Boehnke, Frame, Hasegawa, Hunt, Kuderer, Nguyen, Shewmake, Trudeau and Wilson, C.).

Brief Summary of Engrossed Second Substitute Bill

- Requires students, beginning with the class of 2029, to demonstrate competency in the state learning standards for computer science to qualify for graduation.

- Establishes options that students may use in demonstrating the required competency.

- Creates data collection and reporting duties related to the computer science competency graduation requirement for the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI).

- Directs the OSPI to review and update of the state learning standards for computer science.

- Creates data collection and reporting duties for the State Board of Education regarding computer science learning opportunities of school districts and school district compliance with provisions for the computer science competency graduation requirement.

- Requires the Superintendent of Public Instruction to integrate technology literacy and fluency, rather than understanding the importance of work and finance, into the state learning standards.

Hearing Date: 2/15/24

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.

Staff: Ethan Moreno (786-7386).

Background:

Overview of Graduation Requirements.
As established in statute, the purpose of a high school diploma is to declare that a student is ready for success in postsecondary education, gainful employment, and citizenship, and is equipped with the skills to be a lifelong learner. To qualify for a high school diploma, public school students must satisfy credit and subject area requirements established by the Legislature and the State Board of Education (SBE), fulfill any locally established requirements, complete a High School and Beyond Plan, and meet the requirements of at least one graduation pathway option.

Although graduation requirements are largely developed at the state level and subject to frequent revisions, determinations about student compliance with requirements are made at the school district level.

Graduating students must complete 24 credits in specified subject areas as determined by the SBE. Although the SBE adopts rules to implement the credit requirements, the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) adopts the state's learning standards that guide the content of courses in accordance with four basic education learning goals in statute. Fourteen state learning standards have been adopted, including standards for mathematics, English language arts, science, social studies, and computer science.

The four basic education learning goals for school districts relate to the opportunity for every student to develop the knowledge and skills essential for practicing certain academic skills and concepts. The goals are as follows:
  • read with comprehension, write effectively, and communicate successfully in a variety of ways and settings and with a variety of audiences;
  • know and apply the core concepts and principles of mathematics; social, physical, and life sciences; civics and history, including different cultures and participation in representative government; geography; arts; and health and fitness;
  • think analytically, logically, and creatively, and to integrate technology literacy and fluency as well as different experiences and knowledge to form reasoned judgments and solve problems; and
  • understand the importance of work and finance and how performance, effort, and decisions directly affect future career and educational opportunities.

Statute provides that the first two goals are primary. To the maximum extent possible, the Superintendent of Public Instruction is directed to integrate goal four (understanding the importance of work and finance) and the knowledge and skill areas in the other basic education goals for school districts into the state learning standards.

Summary of Bill:

New Graduation Requirement—Computer Science Competency.
Student Requirements. Beginning with the graduating class of 2029, all graduating students must show competency in the state learning standards for computer science. Students may demonstrate this competency through:

- completion of a stand-alone computer science course aligned to the state learning standards;
- completion of a different subject matter course where the state learning standards for computer science are embedded with other learning standards; or
- a demonstration of competency of the foundational skills established in the state learning standards for computer science.

A demonstration of competency of the foundational skills could include completion of a competency examination or any option allowed by the rules of by the State Board of Education (SBE) that address mastery-based crediting. Any of the options used must include evidence that the student meets or exceeds the state learning standards for computer science.

Consideration of seat time or instructional hours is not required to demonstrate competency, and students must be allowed to present multiple types of evidence for the demonstration of competency.

Students in grade 12 who have not been able to show computer science competency because of a previous residence outside the state may have the requirement to demonstrate competency waived by their principal.

The computer science competency graduation requirement does not increase the number of high school credits required for graduation as established by the SBE.

Data Collection and Reporting. The OSPI must collect relevant disaggregated demographic data on the student completion of the computer science competency graduation requirement to assess whether the requirement has created any negative impacts on any class of students including, students who are currently struggling in school, low-income, persons of color, experiencing homelessness, or enrolled in a school or a school district with high rates of these students. Beginning December 1, 2029, and annually thereafter, the OSPI must submit a report to the education committees of the Legislature summarizing the collected data.

Review of State Learning Standards for Computer Science.
The OSPI must initiate a review and update of the state learning standards for computer science for students in kindergarten through grade 12. In performing this task, the OSPI must review computer science learning standards adopted by other states and consult with nonprofit organizations that have a demonstrated expertise in assisting states in developing computer science learning standards. In developing the state learning standards and supporting documents for grades 9 through 12, the OSPI must identify the standards considered to be foundational for graduation purposes.

Provisions directing OSPI's review and update of the state learning standards for computer science expire July 1, 2026.

School District Data Collection.
The SBE must collect information from school districts about the courses and other learning opportunities currently offered in computer science for high school students in their district, how the district assesses or plans to assess competency of the state learning standards for computer science, and what the district may need to ensure that students are ready for the computer science competency graduation requirement.

The data collection may be conducted concurrently with other oversight and monitoring activities conducted by the SBE. The SBE must report a summary of the information collected to the Legislature by October 31, 2025, and must include any recommendations for actions the Legislature could take to assist school districts in meeting needs identified by school districts, including whether the exploration of options for increasing the number of educators endorsed to teach computer science is necessary.

Provisions establishing the data collection and reporting duties of the SBE expire July 1, 2026.

State Learning Standards and Goals for School Districts.
Provisions directing the Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI), to the maximum extent possible, to integrate goal four (understanding the importance of work and finance) and the knowledge and skill areas in the other basic education goals of school districts into the state learning standards, are modified. Instead, the SPI, to the maximum extent possible, must integrate technology literacy and fluency from goal three and the knowledge and skill areas in the other goals into the state learning standards.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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