

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1758

As Reported by House Committee On:
Education
Education Appropriations

Title: An act relating to expanding options for students to earn high school diplomas.

Brief Description: Expanding options for students to earn high school diplomas.

Sponsors: Representatives Quall, Hope, Wallace, Sullivan, Goodman, Kagi, Santos, Morrell, Hasegawa and Ormsby.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Education: 2/11/09, 2/17/09 [DPS];

Education Appropriations: 2/25/09, 2/26/09 [DPS(ED)].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Provides that individuals who enroll in a community or technical college and complete an Associate's Degree are awarded a high school diploma from the college, including students enrolled in Running Start.
- Provides that individuals who have completed at least the equivalent of 10th grade, enroll in a college, and complete a professional-technical certificate program of 45 or more credit hours are awarded a high school diploma from the college, including students enrolled in Running Start.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 13 members: Representatives Quall, Chair; Probst, Vice Chair; Priest, Ranking Minority Member; Hope, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Cox, Dammeier, Hunt, Johnson, Liias, Maxwell, Orwall, Santos and Sullivan.

Staff: Barbara McLain (786-7383)

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.

The State Board of Education (SBE) establishes minimum statewide high school graduation requirements. Current requirements include 19 credits of a specified distribution of courses, a high school and beyond plan, and a culminating project. Beginning with the graduating class of 2008, an additional state requirement for graduation from a public high school is achievement of a Certificate of Academic Achievement (CAA) or Certificate of Individual Achievement (CIA). Through the class of 2012, there is an exception to this requirement for students who did not successfully meet the state standard on the high school mathematics assessment. Local school districts may adopt additional requirements. School districts issue high school diplomas to students who satisfactorily complete all state and local graduation requirements.

Community and technical colleges are also authorized under state law to issue high school diplomas or certificates, based on rules adopted by the SBE. The current rules require individuals to meet the same credit requirements to earn a diploma from a college (also called a high school completion diploma) as are required for a diploma from a high school. For individuals over age 18, colleges have flexibility to award credit based on college courses, correspondence courses, independent study, testing, work experience, and other evidence of educational attainment. For individuals under 18 years, a high school principal must approve of the program of studies that will lead to the diploma. Students over the age of 21 are not required to earn a CAA or a CIA.

Community and technical colleges offer a wide range of certificate and degree programs, ranging from short-term certificates to multiple types of Associate's Degrees. Programs are subject to approval by the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges. Associate's degrees typically require two years or 90 credits. Professional-technical certificates requiring 45 or more credits, or equivalent clock hours, must include general education instruction along with technical instruction.

Students who are juniors or seniors in high school can earn both high school and college credit simultaneously by enrolling in a community or technical college and some four-year higher education institutions through the Running Start program. School districts redirect basic education funds to the college to pay the cost of attendance, and the student is not required to pay tuition. There are a number of laws requiring school districts to notify students about the Running Start program and other educational options.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

In addition to high school completion diplomas issued under rules adopted by the SBE, community and technical colleges are authorized to issue high school diplomas to:

1. individuals who enroll in the college and complete an Associate's Degree, including students enrolled in Running Start; and
2. individuals who have completed at least the equivalent of 10th grade, enroll in a college, and complete a professional-technical certificate program of 45 or more credit hours or equivalent clock hours, including students enrolled in Running Start.

School districts must include these options in various required notifications to students about available educational options.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

To earn a diploma based on a professional-technical certificate program, individuals must have completed at least the equivalent of 10th grade, rather than achieved the equivalent of 11th grade.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) It used to be that students could graduate from high school and move directly into a good job in the workforce. We realize now that this is not going to be sufficient for the long-term, and we encourage students to consider other options both while in high school and after high school. There are hundreds of technical programs, but Running Start students don't access them. This bill creates more options on the menu. No one can say that an Associate's Degree or a rigorous professional-technical program isn't the same for some students as a meaningful high school diploma.

Why couldn't students who complete Running Start just skip the extra requirements of a diploma? Much of what local high schools require is duplicative or unnecessary if a student earns an Associate's Degree. In some cases, even if someone has an advanced degree, an employer or a college will require proof of a diploma. This gives students other options and ways to show proficiency and skills. If an Associate's Degree or a professional-technical certificate aren't proof enough of advanced competency, then what is? These are genuine alternatives to the one-size-fits-all approach of a high school diploma. This could be a way to combat dropouts.

(With concerns) Options for students are supported, but there may be unintended consequences. Students could opt for what they perceive as an easier path to a diploma simply to avoid the assessment, culminating project, and the high school and beyond plan. It would be better to have the community colleges also meet the other requirements for a diploma.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: (In support) Representative Quall, prime sponsor; Lynette Anderson; and Wendy Rader-Konofalski, Washington Education Association.

(With concerns) Jerry Bender, Association of Washington School Principals.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION APPROPRIATIONS

Majority Report: The substitute bill by Committee on Education be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 14 members: Representatives Haigh, Chair; Sullivan, Vice Chair; Priest, Ranking Minority Member; Hope, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Anderson, Carlyle, Cox, Haler, Hunter, Kagi, Probst, Quall, Rolfes and Wallace.

Staff: Ben Rarick (786-7349)

Summary of Recommendation of Committee On Education Appropriations Compared to Recommendation of Committee On Education:

No new changes were recommended.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) The Washington Education Association supports this bill. It would create another avenue to graduation and utilizes the infrastructure that is already in place for preparing students for the workforce. There is no cost to this bill. This bill creates a pipeline for employment and doesn't require students to first fail the Washington Assessment of Student Learning.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Quall, prime sponsor; and Wendy Rader-Konofalski, Washington Education Association.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.