

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SHB 2743

As Passed House:
February 10, 2016

Title: An act relating to the issuance of a Washington state high school diploma.

Brief Description: Concerning the issuance of a Washington state high school diploma or a high school equivalency certificate.

Sponsors: House Committee on Education (originally sponsored by Representatives Reykdal, McBride, Rossetti, Santos and Pollet).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Education: 1/26/16, 1/28/16 [DPS].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 2/10/16, 64-32.

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Requires high school equivalency certificates issued by the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC) and the Superintendent of Public Instruction (Superintendent) to be issued as a Washington State high school diploma, provided that the recipient is at least 18 years of age or has completed 18 or more credits in a 24-credit graduation system adopted in accordance with a resolution of the State Board of Education.
- Requires the Superintendent and the SBCTC to develop recommendations for modifying state and school district graduation rate data collection and tabulation requirements and processes to reflect high school equivalency certificates issued as Washington State high school diplomas.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 13 members: Representatives Santos, Chair; Ortiz-Self, Vice Chair; Muri, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Bergquist, Griffey, S. Hunt, Kilduff, Kuderer, McCaslin, Orwall, Pollet, Rossetti and Springer.

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.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 6 members: Representatives Magendanz, Ranking Minority Member; Stambaugh, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Caldier, Hargrove, Hayes and Klippert.

Staff: Ashley Fisher (786-7296) and Ethan Moreno (786-7386).

Background:

High School Diplomas.

A person may receive a high school diploma (diploma) by graduating from a public or private high school, or by completing a High School 21+ program offered at a Washington community or technical college.

To earn a diploma from a public high school, students must earn high school credit in a variety of subjects, pass state tests or approved state test alternatives, and complete a High School and Beyond Plan (HSBP). Districts and tribal schools may add additional requirements to the state requirements.

Private schools must offer a curriculum in sufficient units to meet state graduation requirements. However, to receive a diploma, private school students do not need to take or meet standards on state assessments. Similarly, they are not required to complete a HSBP.

High School 21+ is a competency-based diploma available to adults aged 21 years and older. Students must demonstrate competency in reading, writing, and math in the context of science, history, government, occupational studies, and digital literacy. Students can demonstrate their knowledge in a variety of ways, including, a prior learning portfolio, high school and college transcripts, and work, life, and military experience.

High School Equivalency Certificate.

A high school equivalency certificate is a certificate issued jointly by the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC) and the Superintendent of Public Instruction (Superintendent). It indicates that the holder has attained standard scores at or above the minimum proficiency level on the high school equivalency test. In Washington, the General Education Development (GED) test is the high school equivalency test. The GED consists of four content areas: reasoning through language arts, mathematical reasoning, science, and social studies.

The State Board of Education adopts rules governing the eligibility of persons aged 16 to 18 to take a test and earn a high school equivalency certificate.

24-credit Graduation Requirement.

Beginning with the Class of 2019, a 24-credit graduation requirement (requirement) must be completed by graduating students at public high schools. Students in the Class of 2016 will begin to phase-in the requirement. The requirement is designed to keep all postsecondary options open to students by requiring students to take a certain amount of credits in a range of subject areas. Students who complete the requirement will meet admission requirements for entry into public four-year institutions, two-year institutions, apprenticeships, and professional or technical certificate or degree programs.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

High school equivalency certificates issued by the SBCTC and the Superintendent must be issued as Washington State high school diplomas, provided that the recipient is at least 18 years of age or has completed 18 or more credits in a 24-credit graduation system adopted in accordance with a resolution of the State Board of Education. For all other recipients, the certificate must be issued as a high school equivalency certificate.

The Superintendent, in collaboration with the SBCTC, is required to develop recommendations for modifying state and school district graduation rate data collection and tabulation requirements and processes to reflect high school equivalency certificates issued as Washington State high school diplomas. The recommendations must be submitted to the appropriate committees of the House of Representatives and the Senate by December 31, 2016.

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) There is a glass ceiling for students who graduate high school, versus those who get a GED. The difference between the two is \$4,000 dollars per year, and \$160,000 over a lifetime.

The GED test is aligned to common core standards. It is a competency-based assessment designed to ensure that students who go that route get the equivalent of what is expected of high school students today.

The GED has a gory meaning; in the marketplace it means you didn't earn a diploma. It is harder to access higher education programs with only an equivalency certificate. In the vein of data reporting, the community technical college system and the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction should develop a communication relationship that makes sense. School districts should get credit for encouraging students to continue.

(Opposed) None.

(Other) The State Board of Education has not had an extensive conversation on the subject. There are probably consequences beyond the basic conversation. It's an intriguing idea, but even with the increased rigor of the GED, there are additional questions to unpack.

Persons Testifying: (In support) Representative Reykdal, prime sponsor.

(Other) Ben Rarick, State Board of Education.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.