
Education Committee

HB 1121

Brief Description: Concerning flexibility in high school graduation requirements.

Sponsors: Representatives Dolan, Goodman and Pollet; by request of State Board of Education.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires rules adopted by the State Board of Education (SBE) to allow school districts to waive up to two credits for individual students based on individual student circumstances, rather than unusual circumstances, and directs the Washington State School Directors' Association to revise and distribute a related model policy and procedure.
- Extends an appeal process that allows the Superintendent of Public Instruction to waive certain graduation requirements for qualifying students in all graduating classes rather than only for students in the graduating classes of 2014 through 2018.
- Directs the SBE to convene, staff, and lead a competency-based education work group of 21 or fewer members and to produce related reports by December 1, 2019, and December 1, 2020.
- Directs the SBE to provide a report to the Legislature on specific credit waiver provisions by December 1, 2021.

Hearing Date: 2/12/19

Staff: Ethan Moreno (786-7386).

Background:

Graduation Requirements and Selected Credit Waivers.

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

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.

Beginning with the graduating class of 2019, students must complete 24 credits in specified subject areas as determined by the State Board of Education (SBE). This 24-credit requirement may be delayed for up to two years if a requesting district is granted an extension waiver by the SBE. If a waiver is granted, the district's students are obligated to complete 20 credits.

In accordance with its duty to establish and enforce graduation requirements, the SBE is obligated to adopt rules implementing the 24-credit graduation requirement. The SBE rules must include authorizations for school districts to waive up to two credits for individual students based on unusual circumstances and in accordance with written policies adopted by the applicable school district board of directors.

In 2014, the Legislature directed the Washington State School Directors' Association (WSSDA), the state agency that provides advice and assistance to local school boards, to adopt a model policy and procedure that school districts may use in granting the waivers for unusual circumstances.

Limited Waiver Options for Certificates of Academic and Individual Achievement.

Legislation adopted in 2017 (chapter 31, Laws of 2017 3rd sp. sess., enacted as Engrossed Substitute House Bill 2224), established an expedited appeals process authorizing the Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI), following approval by the local school district, to waive requirements for the Certificates of Academic Achievements (CAAs) and the Certificates of Individual Achievements (CIAs) for qualifying students in the graduating classes of 2014 through 2018 who have not met standard on English language arts (ELA) assessments, mathematics assessments, or both.

Application of Pre-High School Credit to High School Requirements.

If requested by the student and his or her family, a student who completed high school courses before attending high school must be given high school credit that is applied to fulfilling high school graduation requirements. To qualify for this credit, the academic level of the course must exceed the requirements for grades 7 and 8, and other specified criteria must be met.

Summary of Bill:

Graduation Requirements - Selected Credit Waivers and Model Policy and Procedure.

Requirements directing rules of the SBE to include authorizations that allow school districts to waive up to two credits for individual students are modified to specify that the waiver must be based on individual student circumstances, rather than unusual circumstances, and in accordance with written school district policies and procedures adopted by the applicable school district board of directors. In addition to its existing rule adoption authority, the SBE is given express authority to update these and other rules related to graduation requirements.

Provisions directing the WSSDA to adopt a related model policy and procedure that school districts may use in granting the waivers are correspondingly revised to reflect that the waivers are to be based on individual student circumstances, rather than unusual circumstances. The WSSDA must distribute the updated model policy and procedure to all school districts that grant high school diplomas by June 30, 2020.

Limited Waiver Options for Certificates of Academic and Individual Achievement.

The expedited appeals process that allows the SPI, following approval by the local school district, to waive requirements for the CAAs and the CIAs for qualifying students is extended to all graduating classes. The waiver is also extended to students who have not met standard on the statewide high school science assessment, rather than only those who have not met standard on the ELA assessment, the mathematics assessment, or both.

Application of Pre-High School Credit to High School Requirements.

A student who completed high school courses before attending high school must be given high school credit for the qualifying course or courses without submitting a request for the credit. However, the student must decide before the end of the first term of his or her last year of high school whether to receive the high school credit. If the student chooses to receive the credit, the student must decide before the end of the first term of his or her last year of high school whether to have the credit issued as a grade or a pass/no pass credit.

Competency-Based Education Work Group.

By June 1, 2019, the SBE is directed to convene, staff, and lead a competency-based education work group. The stated purpose of the work group is to facilitate student access to relevant and robust pathways aligned to their personal goals for their career and further education, as reflected in their high school and beyond plans. The work group must coordinate the development of a competency-based pathway to the diploma, and the expansion of options for competency-based credit that meet graduation requirements.

The work group must include representatives from specified agencies and organizations, as selected by those agencies and organizations, and may not exceed 21 members. The SBE must coordinate work group membership to ensure member diversity, including racial, ethnic, gender, geographic, community-size, and expertise diversity.

The SBE must submit an interim report outlining preliminary findings and potential recommendations to the governor and the Legislature by December 1, 2019, and a final report detailing all findings and recommendations related to the work group's purpose and tasks by December 1, 2020.

Waiver Reporting Duties for the State Board of Education.

By December 1, 2021, the SBE must report to the Legislature on the data, successes, and challenges in implementing waivers based on individual student circumstances and the waiver-based expedited appeals process of the SPI.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date: This bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed, except for section 3 and section 4, relating to the expedited appeal process of the SPI and the competency-based education work group, which takes effect immediately.