
Education Committee

SSB 6521

Brief Description: Creating an innovative learning pilot program.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Early Learning & K-12 Education (originally sponsored by Senators Wellman, Hunt, Mullet and Wilson, C.).

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Directs the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction to create and administer an innovative learning pilot program to authorize full-time enrollment funding for students participating in mastery-based learning programs.

Hearing Date: 2/24/20

Staff: Ethan Moreno (786-7386).

Background:

Basic Education—Instructional Hours and Funding.

Washington's instructional program of basic education (program of basic education) obligates districts to provide instruction of sufficient quantity and quality and give students the opportunity to complete graduation requirements that are intended to prepare them for postsecondary education, gainful employment, and citizenship. Instructional requirements for the state's program of basic education compel districts to provide a district-wide average of at least 1,080 instructional hours annually for students enrolled in grades nine through twelve. Students in kindergarten through grade eight must be provided at least 1,000 instructional hours annually.

For funding purposes, the number of instructional hours a student receives is expressed as a full-time equivalent (FTE) student. Districts are allocated funding for FTE students based on state prototypical school formulas. The amount provided per FTE student, and the number of hours needed to generate an FTE student, may depend on the setting of instruction, as funding requirements for general education settings differ from those for alternative learning experience settings or worksite learning settings.

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.

Credits Required for Graduation and Related Waivers.

Beginning with the class of 2019, graduating students must complete 24 credits in specified subject areas as determined by the State Board of Education (SBE). The SBE adopts rules to implement the 24-credit graduation requirement, and those rules permit school districts to apply for and receive waivers from the SBE's credit-based graduation requirements. Twelve school districts, representing 13 high schools, have applied for and are operating in accordance with waivers for credit unit graduation requirements granted by the SBE.

Mastery-Based Learning.

Legislation enacted in 2019 specifically addressed mastery-based learning, a type learning that enables students to advance upon demonstration of mastery rather than through required classroom instructional hours.

The 2019 legislation (Chapter 252, Laws of 2019, enacted as Engrossed Second Substitute House Bill 1599) directed the SBE to convene a work group to inform the Governor, the Legislature, and the public about barriers to mastery-based learning. The work group was directed to:

- examine opportunities to increase student access to relevant and robust mastery-based academic pathways aligned to personal career goals and postsecondary education; and
- review the role of the high school and beyond plan in supporting mastery-based learning; and
- consider various policy options related to mastery-based learning, including the expansion of mastery-based credits to meet graduation requirements.

The SBE, in implementing the work group and in collaboration with the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), must develop enrollment reporting guidelines to support schools operating with waivers that delay the requirement to implement the 24-credit graduation framework.

Under the 2019 legislation, the SBE must produce an interim report outlining preliminary findings and potential recommendations by December 1, 2019, with a final report due by December 1, 2020.

Summary of Bill:

The OSPI, by July 1, 2020, must create and administer an innovative learning pilot program (pilot program) to authorize full-time enrollment funding for students participating in mastery-based learning programs. The pilot program must be in effect through the 2022-23 school year.

A "mastery-based learning program" is defined as an educational program where:

- students advance upon demonstrated mastery of content;
- competencies include explicit, measurable, transferable learning objectives that empower students;
- assessments are meaningful and a positive learning experience for students;
- students receive rapid, differentiated support based on their individual learning needs; and

- learning outcomes emphasize competencies that include application and creation of knowledge along with the development of important skills and dispositions.

Participation in the pilot program is limited to school districts that have a waiver from the SBE for the credit unit graduation requirements for the 2019-20 school year. A school district that wishes to participate in the pilot program must submit the following information to the OSPI:

- affirmation that the district wishes to participate in the pilot program and a list of the schools with the SBE waiver that would participate in the pilot program;
- a description of the mastery-based learning program that the district intends to implement and the number of students that are expected to participate; and
- an explanation of the goals of the mastery-based learning program and how the district intends to measure and assess attainment of the goals.

The OSPI is authorized to adopt rules necessary for the effective and efficient implementation of the pilot program, including rules that define full-time enrollment standards for students based on regular participation in an approved mastery-based learning program rather than hours of seat time. The adopted rules must permit participating school districts to report full-time equivalent students in an approved mastery-based learning program for general apportionment funding.

By December 1, 2022, the OSPI, in collaboration with the SBE, must report to the Legislature regarding the efficiency, cost, and impacts of the funding model or models used under the pilot program.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect immediately.