

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5087

As of February 7, 2019

Title: An act relating to establishing the world language competency grant program.

Brief Description: Establishing the world language competency grant program.

Sponsors: Senators Wellman, Hasegawa, Wilson, C. and Kuderer.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Early Learning & K-12 Education: 2/06/19.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Establishes the World Language Competency Grant Program to cover costs associated with world language proficiency tests for low-income students.
- Requires the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction to administer the grant program.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION

Staff: Benjamin Omdal (786-7442)

Background: World Language Credits and Graduation Requirements. The State Board of Education (SBE) is required under state law to establish high school graduation requirements. Beginning with the class of 2019, high school students in Washington must, in addition to other state and local requirements, complete a high school and beyond plan and earn 24 credits in order to graduate.

As part of these requirements, high school students in Washington must earn two credits of either world language or personalized pathway requirements. For students that have chosen a four-year degree pathway in their high school and beyond plan, students are advised to earn two credits in world languages. Personalized pathways are locally determined bodies of coursework identified in a student's plan that are deemed necessary to attain the post-secondary career or educational goals chosen by the student.

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 SBE allows high school credit to be awarded upon satisfactory demonstration of proficiency/competency, including world language credits. While credit approval decisions are made subject to written district policy, the SBE and Washington State School Directors Association (WSSDA) have issued a model policy for accepting competency-based world language credits.

Seal of Biliteracy. The Washington State Seal of Biliteracy is awarded to public high school graduates who have attained a high level of proficiency in speaking, reading, and writing in one or more world languages in addition to English. School districts are encouraged to award the seal to students who meet criteria established by the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI).

The criteria set by OSPI must permit students to demonstrate proficiency through multiple methods, including language proficiency tests and competency-based credits awarded under WSSDA's model policy. Currently, proficiency examinations exist for over 100 languages, and typically range in cost from \$60 to \$300 per test.

For the purposes of the Seal of Biliteracy, a world language other than English includes American sign language and Native American languages.

Summary of Bill: The World Language Competency Credit Grant Program is established. Grants under this program are to be provided to districts to cover costs associated with world language proficiency tests for low-income students. OSPI must administer the grant program.

For purposes of the grant program, a student is considered low-income if the student qualifies for free or reduced price meals.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: Supporting students in their dual language abilities sends a signal about the value of those skills. Assisting with the tests will help all students access these opportunities.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Lisa Wellman, Prime Sponsor; Marissa Rathbone, Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: No one.