

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 6521

---

As Reported by Senate Committee On:  
Early Learning & K-12 Education, February 5, 2020  
Ways & Means, February 11, 2020

**Title:** An act relating to creating an innovative learning pilot program.

**Brief Description:** Creating an innovative learning pilot program.

**Sponsors:** Senators Wellman, Hunt, Mullet and Wilson, C.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Early Learning & K-12 Education: 1/31/20, 2/05/20 [DPS-WM].  
Ways & Means: 2/10/20, 2/11/20 [DPS (EDU)].

**Brief Summary of First Substitute Bill**

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

---

### SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION

**Majority Report:** That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6521 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

Signed by Senators Wellman, Chair; Wilson, C., Vice Chair; Hawkins, Ranking Member; Holy, Hunt, McCoy, Mullet, Padden, Pedersen, Salomon and Wagoner.

**Staff:** Alex Fairfortune (786-7416)

---

### SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

**Majority Report:** Do pass.

Signed by Senators Rolfes, Chair; Frockt, Vice Chair, Operating, Capital Lead; Mullet, Capital Budget Cabinet; Braun, Ranking Member; Brown, Assistant Ranking Member, Operating; Honeyford, Assistant Ranking Member, Capital; Becker, Billig, Carlyle, Conway, Darneille, Dhingra, Hasegawa, Hunt, Keiser, Liias, Muzzall, Pedersen, Rivers, Schoesler, Van De Wege, Wagoner, Warnick and Wilson, L..

---

*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.*

**Staff:** Jeffrey Naas (786-7708)

**Background:** State Board of Education Waivers. The State Board of Education (SBE) has the authority to grant waivers from basic education program requirements, including credit-based high school graduation requirements. As of January 2019, 13 schools within 12 school districts have applied for a waiver from credit-based high school graduation requirements.

Mastery-Based Learning Work Group. Legislation passed in 2019—E2SHB 1599—directed SBE to convene and staff a mastery-based learning work group to inform the Governor, Legislature, and public about barriers to mastery-based learning. Mastery-based learning is a program model whereby:

- 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 and the development of important skills and dispositions.

The work group is directed to examine opportunities to increase student access to relevant and robust mastery-based academic pathways aligned to personal career goals and postsecondary education. The work group must consider:

- improvements in the high school and beyond plan as an essential tool for mastery-based learning;
- development of mastery-based pathways to earning a high school diploma;
- the results of competency-based pathways previously approved by the SBE; and
- the expansion of mastery-based credits to meet graduation requirements.

The work group submitted an interim report to the Governor and Legislature in December 2019. A final report detailing all findings and recommendations is due to the same recipients by December 1, 2020.

**Summary of Bill (First Substitute):** By July 1, 2020, the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) must create and administer an innovative learning 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.

To participate in the pilot program, school districts must have a waiver from the credit unit graduation requirements for the 2019-20 school year, granted by the State Board of Education. A district must also submit the following information to OSPI:

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

OSPI may adopt rules to implement the pilot program, including:

- defining full-time enrollment standards for students based on regular participation in a mastery-based learning program rather than hours of seat time; and
- permitting participating school districts to report full-time equivalent students in an approved mastery-based program for general apportionment funding.

For purposes of the pilot program, "mastery-based learning program" is 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.

By December 1, 2022, OSPI, in collaboration with the State Board of Education, 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.

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

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

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony on Original Bill (Early Learning & K-12 Education):** *The committee recommended a different version of the bill than what was heard.* PRO: Unfortunately, if students are not in a classroom learning the school does not get the full benefit of that student's cost for funding purposes. But for mastery-based programs to be meaningful experiences for children, it takes a lot of oversight, effort, and mentoring by the teacher. This pilot program will explore what is needed to fully fund mastery-based programs and would help support very exciting work to transform the education system. There are currently more districts operating mastery-based programs than are permitted under the pilot, so a possible amendment would be to align the pilot application process with current SBE waivers.

OTHER: Skill centers are mastery-based learning programs, so they should be included in this pilot. 12 out of 17 experience reductions in payments for the time it takes for students to move between home schools and skill centers.

**Persons Testifying (Early Learning & K-12 Education):** PRO: Senator Lisa Wellman, Prime Sponsor; Rhett Nelson, OSPI; J. Lee Schultz, State Board of Education.

OTHER: Charlie Brown, Skills Centers Directors Association.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying (Early Learning & K-12 Education):** No one.

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony on First Substitute (Ways & Means):** PRO: The current version of the bill would cap enrollment in the program at the 2019-20 level. We support an amendment that would allow a district to use the credit waiver from the prior school year. The purpose of this bill is to find a solution for the funding model for mastery-based learning. There are districts that would like to engage in mastery-based learning programs, but the current funding model does not equitably support these programs. The pilot program will help to answer some of the questions around funding mastery-based learning, such as the impact on skill centers.

**Persons Testifying (Ways & Means):** PRO: Katherine Mahoney, OSPI; Jeff Petty, Regional Director, Big Picture Learning.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying (Ways & Means):** No one.