

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5902

As of January 24, 2022

Title: An act relating to the implementation of high school graduation credit requirements.

Brief Description: Concerning the implementation of high school graduation credit requirements.

Sponsors: Senator Wellman; by request of Superintendent of Public Instruction.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Early Learning & K-12 Education: 1/24/22.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Directs the State Board of Education to adopt graduation requirements for the class of 2022 and beyond with specified credit options.
- Specifies that rules adopted under this act shall not increase the overall required credit amount and does not alter graduation pathways.
- Requires that when selecting courses to meet these graduation requirements, each student's high school and beyond plan (HSBP) must be updated annually to assess progress toward identified goals.
- Revises current code by moving HSBP provisions to a separate section.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION

Staff: Benjamin Omdal (786-7442)

Background: High School Graduation Requirements. Washington state students must meet various requirements to graduate high school and receive a diploma. Currently, students must:

- complete 24 credits in specified subject areas as determined by the State Board of

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Education;

- complete a high school and beyond plan (HSBP);
- meet the requirements of at least one graduation pathway; and
- satisfy any local requirements.

Of the 24 credits, 17 credits are considered core credits. The remaining seven credits are considered flexible that are either an elective credit or meet the personalized pathway requirements. Personalized pathway requirements (PPRs) are up to three credits chosen by a student that are determined by the student's HSBP.

All students must take the following credits' worth of classes:

- four credits of English;
- three credits of mathematics;
- three credits of science, of which at least two must be in laboratory science;
- three credits of social studies;
- two credits of health and fitness;
- two credits of art, of which one may be a PPR;
- two credits of world languages, of which both may be a PPR;
- one career and technical education credit; and
- four elective credits.

High School and Beyond Plan. All high school students must have a HSBP. Each HSBP must be initiated in seventh or eighth-grade with a career interest and skills inventory. The plan must be updated to reflect high school assessment results, and must identify available interventions and academic support for students who are not on track to graduate.

All plans must include, among other items, an identification of career and educational goals, identification of dual credit opportunities, and a four-year plan for course taking. Decisions on whether a student has met HSBP requirements are made at the local level.

Student Learning Plans. In 2019, the Legislature passed legislation that directed school districts to provide the opportunity to access any combination of interventions, academic supports, or courses designed to support students who did not meet or exceed the standard on the high school assessments in English language arts or mathematics. The interventions, supports, and courses must be rigorous and consistent with the student's education and career goals identified in their HSBP.

The legislation also required districts to prepare student learning plans for eighth- grade students who were not successful on any or all of the content areas of the state assessment in the previous school year, or who are not on track to graduate due to credit deficiencies or absences. Student learning plans must contain certain information, including assessment results, credit deficiencies, attendance rates, academic progress, remediation strategies, and programs available to help meet graduation requirements.

These requirements go into effect on August 31, 2022.

Summary of Bill: Graduation Requirements. The State Board of Education shall adopt rules, to take effect beginning with the graduating class of 2022 that incorporate the following credit requirements for graduation:

- seven combined credits of social studies and English language arts, with no less than three credits in either subject;
- six combined credits of mathematics and science, with no less than two credits in either subject.

The adopted rules may not increase the overall credit amount required for graduation nor alter the graduation pathway options.

The rules must provide that the content of any credits beyond the first two credits in mathematics and science may be chosen by the student based on the student's interests and HSBP with the agreement of the student's parent or legal guardian, an agreement of the school counselor or principal, or in alignment with statute.

A student may not substitute a computer science course for a mathematics or science course if the substitution would prevent the student from obtaining the minimum mathematics and science credit requirements.

The rules shall take effect only if formally authorized and funded in the omnibus operating appropriations act or other enacted legislation.

High School and Beyond Plan and Student Learning Plans. Current statutory code is revised by moving HSBP provisions into a separate section.

HSBPs must be updated annually to account for students' changing interests, progress toward graduation and postsecondary goals, and to inform course-taking decisions for the following year. Extracurricular activities are added to the list of items to be included in the HSBP by the end of the 12th grade.

The section pertaining to student learning plans is repealed.

Appropriation: The bill contains a section or sections to limit implementation to the availability of amounts appropriated for that specific purpose.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 20, 2022.

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: This bill is about providing flexibility to high school students so that they can better tailor their education to their interests and career goals. Students are able to develop critical skills in multiple subject areas without the need for a rigid course design. The current system is actually not lined up with college admissions requirements, and not all students will be pursuing that route.

CON: Lower graduation requirements will hurt black students and students that are already disadvantaged by the system. Students could potentially choose options that would lead to negative postsecondary outcomes. The result of the bill would be students taking less English and math. Under this bill, disadvantaged students may have to do remedial work following high school. The bill would have a negative impact on students in foster care. Current requirements should be preserved in order to better set up students for academic success. School counselors are currently overwhelmed even without additional responsibilities.

OTHER: Some counselors have concerns about adding more responsibilities to counselors without increasing funding. This topic should be examined in the context of the work of the State Board of Education. Some principals have concerns over students taking less English or math, and that there could be negative outcomes further down the road if a student changes their mind on their pathways.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Lisa Wellman, Prime Sponsor; Chris Reykdal, OSPI.

CON: Steve Smith, Black Education Strategy Roundtable; Shirline Wilson, Education Reform Now Advocacy; Neil Strege, Washington Roundtable; Lynda Hall, Treehouse; Kia Franklin, Stand for Children; Juliet Schindler, College Success Foundation.

OTHER: Randy Spaulding, State Board of Education; Amy Brackenbury, Washington School Counselors Association; Roz Thompson, Association of Washington School Principals.

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