

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5189

As of January 13, 2025

Title: An act relating to supporting the implementation of competency-based education.

Brief Description: Supporting the implementation of competency-based education.

Sponsors: Senators Wellman, Dhingra, Harris, Nobles, Wilson, C. and Kauffman.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Early Learning & K-12 Education: 1/15/25.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction to adopt rules to authorize funding for students enrolled in competency-based education (CBE) programs and to create competencies aligned with state learning standards.
- Requires the State Board of Education (SBE) develop and recommend a process to identify and designate schools and school districts that are implementing CBE, and identify costs associated with this process.
- Directs the Washington Interscholastic Activities Association to review barriers related to students participating in CBE in its rule adoption process.
- Requires SBE, in consultation with other agencies, to develop or identify and recommend a format for a CBE high school transcript as part of, or as an alternative to the standardized high school transcript.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION

Staff: Elena Becker (786-7493)

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.

Background: Legislation Related to Competency-Based Education. In 2019, the Legislature directed the State Board of Education (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 also commonly known as competency-based education (CBE).

For the purpose of the work group, mastery-based learning was defined as a program model in which:

- students advance upon demonstrated mastery of content;
- competencies include explicit, measurable, and transferable learning objectives empowering 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 including application and creation of knowledge, and the development of important skills and dispositions.

The work group was directed to examine opportunities for increasing student access to relevant and robust mastery-based academic pathways aligned to personal career goals and postsecondary education. At the direction of the Legislature, the work group published recommendations for the profile of a graduate in 2022.

In 2021, the operating budget appropriated \$1.5 million in the 2022 fiscal year and \$3.5 million in the 2023 fiscal year to SBE for the implementation of mastery-based learning in school district demonstration sites. SBE was directed to require grant recipients to report on impacts and participate in a collaborative to share best practices.

Washington Interscholastic Activities Association. In Washington State, school boards may delegate control, supervision, and regulation of extracurricular activities to the Washington Interscholastic Athletics Association (WIAA), or any other voluntary nonprofit entity. Under state law, the WIAA, or any other voluntary nonprofit entity, may adopt rules and policies governing student participation, as well as penalties for rules violations subject to statutory requirements.

Standardized Transcripts. The standardized high school transcript used by school districts was developed at the direction of the Legislature by the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), in consultation with the public four-year institutions of higher education, the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges, and the Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board.

Summary of Bill: Definitions. Mastery-based learning has the same meaning as CBE.

Competencies are defined to mean the rigorous, shared expectations for learning encompassing knowledge, skills, and abilities across grade levels. Competencies are

broader than learning standards and may encompass multiple learning standards. Competencies are transparent, measurable, relevant, and transferable to multiple contexts.

CBE means education including the following elements:

- students are empowered daily to make important decisions about their learning experiences, how they will create and apply knowledge, and how they will demonstrate their learning;
- the assessment is a meaningful, positive, and empowering learning experience for students yielding timely, relevant, and actionable evidence;
- students receive timely, differentiated support based on their individual learning needs;
- students' progress is based on evidence of mastery, not seat time;
- students learn actively using different pathways and varied pacing;
- strategies to ensure equity for all students are embedded in the culture, structure, and pedagogy of schools and education systems; and
- rigorous, common expectations for learning, including knowledge, skills, and dispositions, are explicit, transparent, measurable, and transferable.

Funding for Competency-Based Education Programs. By September 1, 2025, OSPI is directed to adopt rules to authorize full-time enrollment funding for students enrolled in CBE programs identified by SBE in accordance with certain criteria. These rules must permit students to report full-time equivalent students in CBE programs for general apportionment funding.

Aligning Competencies. Utilizing guidance from the mastery-based learning collaborative, OSPI and SBE are directed to recommend a process for OSPI to create competencies aligned with the state learning standards, and identify costs associated with this process.

Competency-Based Education Designation. SBE must design and recommend a process to identify and designate schools and school districts implementing CBE according to the definition in this bill, and identify the costs associated with this process. These recommendations are due in December 2025.

Direction to Washington Interscholastic Athletics Association. WIAA is directed to consider barriers to students participating in CBE as a component of its rule adoption process.

Transcripts. Before the 2026-27 school year, OSPI must update the standardized high school transcript.

SBE is directed to work with a range of stakeholders to develop a format for a CBE high school transcript and recommend this format to OSPI before the 2026-27 school year. The stakeholder group must include four-year institutions, SBE, OSPI, the Washington Student Achievement Council, and the Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 11, 2024.

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

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