
SUBSTITUTE SENATE BILL 5841

State of Washington

69th Legislature

2026 Regular Session

By Senate Early Learning & K-12 Education (originally sponsored by Senators Boehnke, Dozier, and Nobles)

READ FIRST TIME 01/30/26.

1 AN ACT Relating to the completion of postsecondary financial aid
2 applications; and amending RCW 28A.230.215 and 28A.230.212.

3 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

4 **Sec. 1.** RCW 28A.230.215 and 2023 c 271 s 4 are each amended to
5 read as follows:

6 (1) The legislature finds that fully realizing the potential of
7 high school and beyond plans as meaningful tools for articulating and
8 revising pathways for graduation will require additional school
9 counselors and family coordinators. The legislature further finds
10 that the development and implementation of an online electronic
11 platform for high school and beyond plans will be an appropriate and
12 supportive action that will assist students, parents and guardians,
13 educators, school counselors, and other staff who support students'
14 career and college preparation as the legislature explores options
15 for funding additional school counselors.

16 (2) Beginning in the 2020-21 school year, each school district
17 must ensure that an electronic high school and beyond plan platform
18 is available to all students who are required to have a high school
19 and beyond plan.

20 (3) The office of the superintendent of public instruction shall
21 facilitate the transition to a universal online high school and

1 beyond plan platform that will ensure consistent and equitable access
2 to the needed information and support to guide students' educational
3 experience and ensure preparation for their postsecondary plans.

4 (a) By January 1, 2024, the office of the superintendent of
5 public instruction must develop a preliminary list of existing
6 vendors who can provide or build a platform that meets the criteria
7 outlined in subsection (4) of this section and that supports the high
8 school and beyond plan elements identified in RCW 28A.230.212 and has
9 the capabilities to support the new elements identified in section 5,
10 chapter 271, Laws of 2023. The office of the superintendent of public
11 instruction must submit the list of existing vendors and estimated
12 costs associated with statewide implementation of the universal
13 platform to the governor and the education policy and fiscal
14 committees of the legislature.

15 (b) Subject to the availability of amounts appropriated for this
16 specific purpose, the office of the superintendent of public
17 instruction must select the vendor that will be responsible for
18 developing the universal platform by June 1, 2024.

19 (c) By October 1, 2024, the office of the superintendent of
20 public instruction must develop an implementation plan including both
21 an estimated timeline and updated cost estimates, including the
22 technical assistance, technology updates, ongoing maintenance
23 requirements, and adjustments to the technology funding formula, and
24 statewide professional development that may be needed, for completing
25 full statewide implementation of the universal platform in all school
26 districts. In the implementation plan, the office of the
27 superintendent of public instruction may include a cost alternative
28 for educational service districts to host the universal platform for
29 school districts of the second class when such a district does not
30 have sufficient technology resources to implement and maintain the
31 universal platform.

32 (4) (a) In addition to the requirements outlined in RCW
33 28A.230.212, the universal platform must have the capability to be
34 routinely updated and modified in order to include the following
35 elements and capabilities to ensure equity in high school and beyond
36 plans implementation and engagement across the state that:

37 (i) Enable students to create, personalize, and revise their high
38 school and beyond plan;

39 (ii) Comply with all necessary state and federal requirements for
40 student privacy and allow for students to opt in or opt out of

1 portions of the universal platform related to third-party information
2 sharing;

3 (iii) Use technology that can quickly be adapted to include
4 future statutory changes, administrative changes, or both, as well as
5 integrate enhancements to improve the features and functionality;

6 (iv) Facilitate the automatic import of academic course, credit,
7 and grade data at a regular interval from the most commonly used
8 district student information system platforms and manual import from
9 less commonly used systems so that students' progress towards
10 graduation in the high school (~~(and)~~) and beyond plan is accurately
11 reflected at any given time;

12 (v) Allow for translation into the most common non-English
13 languages across the state in accordance with the model language
14 access policy and procedures as required under chapter 28A.183 RCW;

15 (vi) Include multiple and varied in-platform assessments with
16 viewable results that can inform career and postsecondary goals
17 including, but not limited to, personality, learning styles,
18 interests, aptitudes, and skills assessments;

19 (vii) Include a catalog containing meaningful, high quality
20 career exploration opportunities and resources beyond the traditional
21 college, career, and aptitude assessments that are submitted by
22 approved entities (community organizations, institutions of higher
23 education that are authorized to participate in state financial aid
24 programs under chapter 28B.92 RCW, and employers) and vetted by
25 state-selected approvers that allow students to register for or apply
26 to participate in the opportunities (programs, classes, internships,
27 preapprenticeships, online courses, etc.) or access the resources.
28 The universal platform should use completion data from these
29 opportunities to make recommendations to students to include in their
30 high school (~~(and)~~) and beyond plans;

31 (viii) ((A)) Provide a dedicated space in which to build a direct
32 connection to potential employers, including industry associations,
33 trade associations, labor unions, service branches of the military,
34 nonprofit organizations, and other state and local community
35 organizations so students can learn from experts in different
36 occupational fields about career opportunities and any necessary
37 education and training requirements;

38 (ix) ((A)) Provide a secure space for staff, parents or
39 guardians, and approved community partners who support students'
40 academic progress and career and college preparation, to make notes

1 that can inform staff efforts to connect students to academic and
2 career connected learning opportunities and develop support and
3 credit recovery plans for students, as needed;

4 (x) (~~(Accessibility)~~) Allow for accessibility options for
5 students needing accommodations including, but not limited to, visual
6 aids and voice dictation for students with limited literacy skills;

7 (xi) (~~(Indefinite)~~) Provide indefinite access for students to
8 their high school (~~(+and+)~~) and beyond plan, regardless of current
9 school affiliation or lack thereof, in both mobile and desktop
10 applications, that includes the capability to download and print
11 their plan in one document, without requiring students to access
12 multiple screens;

13 (xii) (~~(Inclusion of)~~) Use in-state labor market, apprenticeship,
14 and postsecondary education performance data, including employment
15 and earning outcomes, certificate and degree completion outcomes, and
16 demographics of enrolled students or employees, to inform students'
17 exploration and consideration of postsecondary options;

18 (xiii) ((A)) Has a dedicated space where students can store
19 additional evidence of their learning and postsecondary preparation,
20 such as videos, essays, art, awards and recognitions, screencasts,
21 letters of recommendation, industry certifications, microcredentials
22 or other mastery-based learning recognitions, and work-integrated
23 learning experiences. The universal platform should include the
24 ability for students and staff to provide access to this portfolio in
25 its entirety or in selected parts to relevant third parties,
26 including institutions of higher education that are authorized to
27 participate in state financial aid programs under chapter 28B.92 RCW,
28 branches of the military, potential employers, or preapprenticeship
29 opportunities;

30 (xiv) (~~(Access)~~) Allow access to data reporting features that
31 allow schools, districts, and state agencies to review data stored
32 within the universal platform, and allow data to be broken down by
33 demographic, socioeconomic, and other identified characteristics, for
34 the purposes of analyzing student use of the universal platform,
35 improving student access to the information, guidance, and
36 opportunities that can help them maximize their secondary education
37 experience and postsecondary preparation, and informing state-level
38 support for high school and beyond plan implementation;

39 (xv) ((A)) Provide a space for the student to indicate the
40 graduation pathway option or options the student has selected to

1 complete and how the selected option or options align with the
2 student's career and postsecondary education goals; (~~and~~)

3 (xvi) (~~The~~) Has the ability for school districts to customize
4 or add features unique to local needs and local graduation
5 requirements, including the capability to auto-align data with the
6 local school districts' graduation requirements or the ability to
7 enter those requirements manually; and

8 (xvii) Import financial aid application data maintained by the
9 Washington student achievement council to provide an easily
10 accessible way for students, parents, and authorized school staff to
11 view the student's progress and completion status of state and
12 federal financial aid applications.

13 (b) The office of the superintendent of public instruction must
14 also ensure that the universal platform will permit transition plans
15 required by RCW 28A.155.220 to be incorporated into the universal
16 platform in a manner that eliminates the need to create duplicate or
17 substantially similar transition plans in other electronic or
18 nonelectronic formats.

19 (5)(a) Within two years of completing the universal platform
20 development and alignment with the requirements in this section and
21 RCW 28A.230.212, school districts must provide students with access
22 to the adopted universal platform.

23 (b) The office of the superintendent of public instruction must
24 develop guidance and provide technical assistance and support for the
25 facilitation of statewide professional development for school
26 districts and partner organizations in using the universal platform.

27 (6) In carrying out subsections (3)(b) and (4) of this section,
28 the office of the superintendent of public instruction shall seek
29 input from the state board of education, educators, school and
30 district administrators, school counselors, career counseling
31 specialists, families, students, the Washington student achievement
32 council, institutions of higher education that are authorized to
33 participate in state financial aid programs under chapter 28B.92 RCW,
34 and community partners who support students' career and college
35 preparation. The office of the superintendent of public instruction
36 may partner with existing community and regional networks and
37 organizations who support students' career and college preparation in
38 the analysis, selection, and implementation of the universal
39 platform.

1 (7) As used in this section "universal platform" means the
2 universal online high school and beyond plan platform.

3 (8) The office of the superintendent of public instruction may
4 adopt and revise rules as necessary to implement this section.

5 **Sec. 2.** RCW 28A.230.212 and 2024 c 66 s 7 are each amended to
6 read as follows:

7 (1) Each student must have a high school and beyond plan to guide
8 the student's high school experience and inform course taking that is
9 aligned with the student's goals for education or training and career
10 after high school.

11 (2)(a) By grade seven, each student must be administered a career
12 interest and skills inventory which is intended to be used to inform
13 grade eight course taking and development of an initial high school
14 and beyond plan. No later than grade eight, each student must have
15 begun development of a high school and beyond plan that includes a
16 proposed plan for first-year high school courses aligned with
17 graduation requirements and secondary and postsecondary goals.

18 (b) For each student who has not earned a score of level 3 or 4
19 on the middle school mathematics assessment identified in RCW
20 28A.655.070 by grade nine, the high school and beyond plan must be
21 updated to ensure that the student takes a mathematics course in both
22 grades nine and 10. These courses may include career and technical
23 education equivalencies in mathematics adopted pursuant to RCW
24 28A.230.097.

25 (3) With staff support, students must update their high school
26 and beyond plan annually, at a minimum, to review academic progress
27 and inform future course taking.

28 (a) The high school and beyond plan must be updated in grade 10
29 to reflect high school assessment results in RCW 28A.655.061, ensure
30 student access to advanced course options per the district's academic
31 acceleration policy in RCW 28A.320.195, assess progress toward
32 identified goals, and revised as necessary for changing interests,
33 goals, and needs.

34 (b) Each school district shall provide students who have not met
35 the standard on state assessments or who are behind in completion of
36 credits or graduation pathway options with the opportunity to access
37 interventions and academic supports, courses, or both, designed to
38 enable students to meet all high school graduation requirements. The
39 parents or legal guardians shall be notified about these

1 opportunities as included in the student's high school and beyond
2 plan, preferably through a student-led conference, including the
3 parents or legal guardians, and at least annually until the student
4 is on track to graduate.

5 (c) For students with an individualized education program, the
6 high school and beyond plan must be developed and updated in
7 alignment with their school to postschool transition plan. The high
8 school and beyond plan must be developed and updated in a similar
9 manner and with similar school personnel as for all other students.

10 (4) School districts shall involve parents and legal guardians to
11 the greatest extent feasible in the process of developing and
12 updating the high school and beyond plan.

13 (a) High school and beyond plans must be provided to students and
14 their parents or legal guardians in a language the students and
15 parents or legal guardians understand and in accordance with the
16 school district's language access policy and procedures as required
17 under chapter 28A.183 RCW, which may require language assistance for
18 students and parents or legal guardians with limited English
19 proficiency.

20 (b) School districts must annually provide students in grades
21 eight through 12, and their parents or legal guardians, with
22 comprehensive information about the graduation pathway options
23 offered by the district and are strongly encouraged to begin
24 providing this information to students in grade six. School districts
25 must provide this information in a manner that conforms with the
26 school district's language access policy and procedures as required
27 under chapter 28A.183 RCW.

28 (5) School districts are strongly encouraged to partner with
29 student serving, community-based organizations that support career
30 and college exploration and preparation for postsecondary and career
31 pathways. Partnerships may include high school and beyond plan
32 coordination and planning, data-sharing agreements, and safe and
33 secure access to individual student's high school and beyond plans.

34 (6) All high school and beyond plans must, at a minimum, include
35 the following elements:

36 (a) Identification of career goals and interests, aided by a
37 skills and interest assessment;

38 (b) Identification of secondary and postsecondary education and
39 training goals;

40 (c) An academic plan for course taking that:

1 (i) Informs students about course options for satisfying state
2 and local graduation requirements;

3 (ii) Satisfies state and local graduation requirements;

4 (iii) Aligns with the student's secondary and postsecondary
5 goals, which can include education, training, and career preparation;

6 (iv) Identifies available advanced course sequences per the
7 school district's academic acceleration policy, as described in RCW
8 28A.320.195, that include dual credit courses or other programs and
9 are aligned with the student's postsecondary goals;

10 (v) Informs students about the potential impacts of their course
11 selections on postsecondary opportunities;

12 (vi) Identifies available career and technical education
13 equivalency courses that can satisfy core subject area graduation
14 requirements under RCW 28A.230.097;

15 (vii) If applicable, identifies career and technical education
16 and work-based learning opportunities that can lead to technical
17 college certifications and apprenticeships; and

18 (viii) If applicable, identifies opportunities for credit
19 recovery and acceleration, including partial and mastery-based credit
20 accrual to eliminate barriers for on-time grade level progression and
21 graduation per RCW 28A.320.192;

22 (d) Evidence that the student has received the following
23 information on federal and state financial aid programs that help pay
24 for the costs of a postsecondary program:

25 (i) The college bound scholarship program established in chapter
26 28B.118 RCW, the Washington college grant created in RCW 28B.92.200,
27 the Washington opportunity scholarship established in chapter 28B.145
28 RCW, and other scholarship opportunities;

29 (ii) The documentation necessary for completing state and federal
30 financial aid applications; application timeliness and submission
31 deadlines; and the importance of submitting applications early;

32 (iii) Information specific to students who are or have been the
33 subject of a dependency proceeding pursuant to chapter 13.34 RCW, who
34 are or are at risk of being homeless, and whose family member or
35 legal guardian will be required to provide financial and tax
36 information necessary to complete applications;

37 (iv) Opportunities to participate in advising days and seminars
38 that assist students and, when necessary, their parents or legal
39 guardians, with filling out financial aid applications in accordance
40 with RCW 28A.300.815; and

1 (v) A sample financial aid letter and a link to the financial aid
2 calculator created in RCW 28B.77.280; and

3 (e) By the end of grade 12, a current resume or activity log that
4 provides a written compilation of the student's education, any work
5 experience, extracurricular activities, and any community service
6 including how the school district has recognized the community
7 service pursuant to RCW 28A.320.193.

8 (7) Any decision on whether a student has met the state board of
9 education's requirements for a high school and beyond plan shall
10 remain at the local level, and a school district may establish
11 additional, local requirements for a high school and beyond plan to
12 serve the needs and interests of its students and the purposes of
13 this section.

14 (8) The state board of education shall adopt rules to implement
15 this section.

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