
SENATE BILL 5859

State of Washington

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2026 Regular Session

By Senators Wellman, Cortes, Hasegawa, Krishnadasan, Nobles, Slatter, and C. Wilson

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1 AN ACT Relating to expanding opportunities for competency-based
2 assessments in graduation pathway options; and amending RCW
3 28A.230.710.

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

5 **Sec. 1.** RCW 28A.230.710 and 2024 c 66 s 5 are each amended to
6 read as follows:

7 (1) Each student graduating from a public high school and earning
8 a high school diploma must meet the requirements of at least one
9 graduation pathway option established in this section. The graduation
10 pathway options are intended to provide a student with multiple ways,
11 including test-based, course-based, and performance-based options, to
12 demonstrate readiness in furtherance of the student's individual
13 goals for high school and beyond. For the purposes of this section,
14 "demonstrate readiness" means the student meets or exceeds state
15 learning standards addressed in the graduation pathway option. A
16 student may choose to pursue one or more of the graduation pathway
17 options under subsection (2) of this section, but any graduation
18 pathway option used by a student to demonstrate career and college
19 readiness must be in alignment with the student's high school and
20 beyond plan.

1 (2) The following graduation pathway options may be used to
2 demonstrate career and college readiness:

3 (a) Meet or exceed the graduation standard established by the
4 state board of education under RCW 28A.305.130 on the statewide high
5 school assessments in English language arts and mathematics as
6 provided for under RCW 28A.655.070;

7 (b) Complete and qualify for college credit in dual credit
8 courses in English language arts and mathematics. For the purposes of
9 this subsection, "dual credit course" means a course in which a
10 student qualifies for college and high school credit in English
11 language arts or mathematics upon successfully completing the course;

12 (c) Earn high school credit in a high school transition course in
13 English language arts and mathematics, an example of which includes a
14 bridge to college course. For the purposes of this subsection (2)(c),
15 "high school transition course" means an English language arts (~~or~~)
16 course, mathematics course, or competency-based assessment offered in
17 high school where successful completion by a high school student
18 ensures the student college-level placement at participating
19 institutions of higher education as defined in RCW 28B.10.016. High
20 school transition courses must satisfy core or elective credit
21 graduation requirements established by the state board of education.
22 A student's successful completion of a high school transition course
23 does not entitle the student to be admitted to an institution of
24 higher education as defined in RCW 28B.10.016;

25 (d) Earn high school credit, with a C+ grade or higher in AP,
26 international baccalaureate, or Cambridge international courses, or
27 in competency-based assessments in English language arts and
28 mathematics; or earn at least the minimum scores outlined in RCW
29 28B.10.054(1) on the corresponding exams. The state board of
30 education shall establish by rule the list of AP, international
31 baccalaureate, and Cambridge international courses, and competency-
32 based assessments of which successful completion meets the standard
33 in this subsection for English language arts and for mathematics;

34 (e) Meet or exceed the scores established by the state board of
35 education for the mathematics portion and the reading, English, or
36 writing portion of the SAT or ACT;

37 (f)(i) Complete a performance-based learning experience through
38 which the student demonstrates knowledge and skills in a real-world
39 context, providing evidence that the student meets or exceeds state
40 learning standards in English language arts and mathematics. The

1 performance-based learning experience may take a variety of forms,
2 such as a project, practicum, work-related experience, community
3 service, or cultural activity, and may result in a variety of
4 products that can be evaluated, such as a performance, presentation,
5 portfolio, report, film, or exhibit.

6 (ii) The performance-based learning experience must conform to
7 state requirements established in rule by the state board of
8 education addressing the safety and quality of the performance-based
9 learning experience and the authentic performance-based assessment
10 criteria for determining the student has demonstrated the applicable
11 learning standards. The rules adopted by the state board of education
12 to implement the graduation pathway option established in this
13 subsection (2)(f) may allow external parties, including community
14 leaders and professionals, to participate in the evaluation of the
15 student's performance and must include at least one certificated
16 teacher with an endorsement in each relevant subject area or with
17 other applicable qualifications as permitted by the professional
18 educator standards board.

19 (iii) To support implementation of the performance-based learning
20 experience graduation pathway option, the state board of education,
21 in collaboration with the office of the superintendent of public
22 instruction, shall establish graduation proficiency targets and
23 associated rubrics aligned with state learning standards in English
24 language arts and mathematics.

25 (iv) Prior to offering the performance-based learning experience
26 graduation pathway option in this subsection (2)(f) to students, the
27 school district board of directors shall adopt a written policy in
28 conformity with applicable state requirements;

29 (g) Meet any combination of at least one English language arts
30 option and at least one mathematics option established in (a) through
31 (f) of this subsection;

32 (h) Meet standard in the armed services vocational aptitude
33 battery; and

34 (i) Complete a sequence of career and technical education courses
35 that are relevant to a student's postsecondary pathway, including
36 those leading to workforce entry, state or nationally approved
37 apprenticeships, or postsecondary education, and that meet either:
38 The curriculum requirements of core plus programs for aerospace,
39 maritime, health care, information technology, or construction and
40 manufacturing; or the minimum criteria identified in RCW 28A.700.030.

1 Nothing in this subsection (2)(i) requires a student to enroll in a
2 preparatory course that is approved under RCW 28A.700.030 for the
3 purposes of demonstrating career and college readiness under this
4 section.

5 (3) While the legislature encourages school districts to make all
6 graduation pathway options established in this section available to
7 their high school students, and to expand their graduation pathway
8 options until that goal is met, school districts have discretion in
9 determining which options under this section they will offer to
10 students.

11 (4) School districts must annually provide students in grades
12 eight through 12 and their parents or legal guardians with
13 comprehensive information about the graduation pathway options
14 offered by the school district and are strongly encouraged to begin
15 providing this information to students in grade six. School districts
16 must provide this information in a manner that conforms with the
17 school district's language access policy and procedures as required
18 under RCW 28A.183.040.

19 (5) The state board of education shall adopt rules to implement
20 the graduation pathway options established in this section.

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