
SUBSTITUTE SENATE BILL 6141

State of Washington

66th Legislature

2020 Regular Session

By Senate Higher Education & Workforce Development (originally sponsored by Senators Randall, Hasegawa, Keiser, Stanford, Frockt, Wilson, C., and Sheldon; by request of Lieutenant Governor)

READ FIRST TIME 02/06/20.

1 AN ACT Relating to expanding access to higher education; amending
2 RCW 28A.230.090 and 28A.230.215; adding new sections to chapter
3 28B.77 RCW; adding a new section to chapter 28A.230 RCW; adding a new
4 section to chapter 28A.300 RCW; and creating new sections.

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

6 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** The legislature recognizes the increasing
7 importance of postsecondary education as a tool for economic
8 resilience and mobility, as well as the financial barriers many
9 students in our state face in pursuing postsecondary education. In
10 light of the 2019 expansion of the Washington college grant, it is
11 also important to share information about new financial aid
12 opportunities available to prospective postsecondary students. The
13 legislature also acknowledges Washington's low completion rate of the
14 free application for federal student aid in comparison with other
15 states, as well as other states' successes in increasing these rates
16 by expanding supports for students and their families. Research has
17 shown that increased completion of student aid applications in other
18 states has led to increases in high school graduation and college
19 matriculation, especially for students in underrepresented groups.
20 Given these facts, the legislature intends to undertake several
21 actions to improve financial aid awareness and to increase

1 coordination in this area among schools, districts, agencies, and
2 institutions of higher education.

3 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** A new section is added to chapter 28B.77
4 RCW to read as follows:

5 (1) The council shall adopt a centralized online statewide
6 calculator tool for the purposes of estimating federal Pell grant and
7 Washington college grant awards for all public four-year institutions
8 of higher education in Washington state.

9 (2) The tool must provide an estimate of state and federal aid
10 based on student and family financial circumstances.

11 (3) The calculator tool must be published on a web site managed
12 by the council.

13 (4) The financial aid calculator must be for estimation purposes
14 only and is not a guarantee of state aid. Neither this section nor
15 the estimates provided by the financial aid calculator constitute an
16 entitlement on the part of the state, and no institution, agency, or
17 their agents or employees may be held liable for any estimates
18 created through its usage.

19 (5) The financial aid calculator must be designed for anonymous
20 use and may not be used to collect or share any data.

21 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 3.** A new section is added to chapter 28B.77
22 RCW to read as follows:

23 (1) In collaboration with the council of presidents, the
24 Washington student achievement council shall develop clear,
25 consistent standards for institutions of higher education to adopt
26 regarding financial aid package award letters.

27 (2) By July 1, 2021, all public four-year and two-year
28 institutions of higher education, as well as all independent colleges
29 in Washington state, must adopt uniform terminology and a
30 standardized template for financial aid award packages so that
31 students may easily compare them.

32 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 4.** A new section is added to chapter 28A.230
33 RCW to read as follows:

34 (1)(a) Beginning with the 2020-21 school year, all school
35 districts with a high school must provide a financial aid advising
36 day, as defined in section 5 of this act.

1 (b) Districts must provide both a financial aid advising day and
2 notification of financial aid opportunities at the beginning of each
3 school year to parents and guardians of any student entering the
4 twelfth grade. The notification must include information regarding:

5 (i) The eligibility requirements of the Washington college grant;
6 (ii) The requirements of the financial aid advising day;
7 (iii) The process for opting out of the financial aid advising
8 day; and

9 (iv) Any community-based resources available to assist parents
10 and guardians in understanding the requirements of and how to
11 complete the free application for federal student aid and the
12 Washington application for state financial aid.

13 (2) Districts may administer the financial aid advising day, as
14 defined in section 5 of this act, in accordance with information-
15 sharing requirements set in the high school and beyond plan in RCW
16 28A.230.090.

17 (3) The Washington state school directors' association, with
18 assistance from the office of the superintendent of public
19 instruction and the Washington student achievement council, shall
20 develop a model policy and procedure that school district board of
21 directors may adopt. The model policy and procedure must describe
22 minimum standards for a financial aid advising day as defined in
23 section 5 of this act.

24 (4) School districts are encouraged to engage in the Washington
25 student achievement council's financial aid advising training.

26 (5) The office of the superintendent of public instruction may
27 adopt rules for the implementation of this section.

28 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 5.** A new section is added to chapter 28A.300
29 RCW to read as follows:

30 (1)(a) Beginning with the 2020-21 school year, within existing
31 resources, and in collaboration with the Washington student
32 achievement council, the office of the superintendent of public
33 instruction shall coordinate a financial aid advising day with all
34 school districts with a high school.

35 (b) For the purposes of this section and section 4 of this act, a
36 "financial aid advising day" means a day or series of days between
37 September 1st and December 1st of each year that includes, but is not
38 limited to, dedicated time during regular school hours for staff to:

1 (i) Provide information to twelfth grade students on the free
2 application for federal student aid and the Washington application
3 for state financial aid;

4 (ii) As appropriate and whenever possible, assist twelfth grade
5 students in completing the free application for federal student aid
6 and the Washington application for state financial aid; and

7 (iii) In conjunction with the Washington student achievement
8 council, distribute information on the Washington college grant and
9 demonstrate the use of the college financial aid calculator created
10 in section 2 of this act.

11 (c) Each school district may choose the date or series of dates
12 on which to hold a financial aid advising day.

13 (2) The office of the superintendent of public instruction shall
14 coordinate with the Washington student achievement council whenever
15 possible to assist districts in facilitating opportunities outside of
16 regular school hours for parents to take part in seminars on
17 completing the free application for federal student aid and the
18 Washington application for state financial aid. Whenever possible,
19 districts shall provide spoken language interpreter services for
20 limited English-speaking families.

21 (3) Schools must allow students over the age of eighteen to opt
22 out and parents or guardians of students under the age of eighteen to
23 opt their student out of scheduled financial aid advising day
24 activities.

25 (4) A student may not be penalized for failing to complete
26 financial aid applications or for opting out of activities under
27 subsection (3) of this section.

28 (5) Educational staff, including instructional, administrative,
29 and counseling staff, may not be assessed or penalized on the basis
30 of students' completion of financial aid forms or students' decisions
31 to opt out under subsection (3) of this section.

32 (6) In the administration of the financial aid advising day,
33 personally identifiable student or family information must be
34 protected in accordance with state and federal privacy laws.

35 **Sec. 6.** RCW 28A.230.090 and 2019 c 252 s 103 are each amended to
36 read as follows:

37 (1) The state board of education shall establish high school
38 graduation requirements or equivalencies for students, except as
39 provided in RCW 28A.230.122 and 28A.655.250 and except those

1 equivalencies established by local high schools or school districts
2 under RCW 28A.230.097. The purpose of a high school diploma is to
3 declare that a student is ready for success in postsecondary
4 education, gainful employment, and citizenship, and is equipped with
5 the skills to be a lifelong learner.

6 (a) Any course in Washington state history and government used to
7 fulfill high school graduation requirements shall consider including
8 information on the culture, history, and government of the American
9 Indian peoples who were the first inhabitants of the state.

10 (b) Except as provided otherwise in this subsection, the
11 certificate of academic achievement requirements under RCW
12 28A.655.061 or the certificate of individual achievement requirements
13 under RCW 28A.155.045 are required for graduation from a public high
14 school but are not the only requirements for graduation. The
15 requirement to earn a certificate of academic achievement to qualify
16 for graduation from a public high school concludes with the
17 graduating class of 2019. The obligation of qualifying students to
18 earn a certificate of individual achievement as a prerequisite for
19 graduation from a public high school concludes with the graduating
20 class of 2021.

21 (c)(i) Each student must have a high school and beyond plan to
22 guide the student's high school experience and inform course taking
23 that is aligned with the student's goals for education or training
24 and career after high school.

25 (ii)(A) A high school and beyond plan must be initiated for each
26 student during the seventh or eighth grade. In preparation for
27 initiating that plan, each student must first be administered a
28 career interest and skills inventory.

29 (B) For students with an individualized education program, the
30 high school and beyond plan must be developed in alignment with their
31 individualized education program. The high school and beyond plan
32 must be developed in a similar manner and with similar school
33 personnel as for all other students.

34 (iii)(A) The high school and beyond plan must be updated to
35 reflect high school assessment results in RCW 28A.655.070(3)(b) and
36 to review transcripts, assess progress toward identified goals, and
37 revised as necessary for changing interests, goals, and needs. The
38 plan must identify available interventions and academic support,
39 courses, or both, that are designed for students who are not on track
40 to graduate, to enable them to fulfill high school graduation

1 requirements. Each student's high school and beyond plan must be
2 updated to inform junior year course taking.

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

8 (iv) School districts are encouraged to involve parents and
9 guardians in the process of developing and updating the high school
10 and beyond plan, and the plan must be provided to the students'
11 parents or guardians in their native language if that language is one
12 of the two most frequently spoken non-English languages of students
13 in the district. Nothing in this subsection (1)(c)(iv) prevents
14 districts from providing high school and beyond plans to parents and
15 guardians in additional languages that are not required by this
16 subsection.

17 (v) All high school and beyond plans must, at a minimum, include
18 the following elements:

19 (A) Identification of career goals, aided by a skills and
20 interest assessment;

21 (B) Identification of educational goals;

22 (C) Identification of dual credit programs and the opportunities
23 they create for students, including eligibility for automatic
24 enrollment in advanced classes under RCW 28A.320.195, career and
25 technical education programs, running start programs, AP courses,
26 international baccalaureate programs, and college in the high school
27 programs;

28 (D) Information about the college bound scholarship program
29 established in chapter 28B.118 RCW;

30 (E) A four-year plan for course taking that:

31 (I) Includes information about options for satisfying state and
32 local graduation requirements;

33 (II) Satisfies state and local graduation requirements;

34 (III) Aligns with the student's secondary and postsecondary
35 goals, which can include education, training, and career;

36 (IV) Identifies course sequences to inform academic acceleration,
37 as described in RCW 28A.320.195 that include dual credit courses or
38 programs and are aligned with the student's goals; and

1 (V) Includes information about the college bound scholarship
2 program, the Washington college grant, and other scholarship
3 opportunities;

4 (F) Evidence that the student has received the following
5 information on federal and state financial aid programs that help pay
6 for the costs of a postsecondary program:

7 (I) Information about the documentation necessary for completing
8 the applications; application timeliness and submission deadlines;
9 the importance of submitting applications early; information specific
10 to students who are or have been in foster care; information specific
11 to students who are, or are at risk of being, homeless; information
12 specific to students whose family member or guardians will be
13 required to provide financial and tax information necessary to
14 complete applications; and

15 (II) Opportunities to participate in sessions that assist
16 students and, when necessary, their family members or guardians, fill
17 out financial aid applications; and

18 (G) By the end of the twelfth grade, a current resume or activity
19 log that provides a written compilation of the student's education,
20 any work experience, and any community service and how the school
21 district has recognized the community service pursuant to RCW
22 28A.320.193.

23 (d) Any decision on whether a student has met the state board's
24 high school graduation requirements for a high school and beyond plan
25 shall remain at the local level. Effective with the graduating class
26 of 2015, the state board of education may not establish a requirement
27 for students to complete a culminating project for graduation. A
28 district may establish additional, local requirements for a high
29 school and beyond plan to serve the needs and interests of its
30 students and the purposes of this section.

31 (e) (i) The state board of education shall adopt rules to
32 implement the career and college ready graduation requirement
33 proposal adopted under board resolution on November 10, 2010, and
34 revised on January 9, 2014, to take effect beginning with the
35 graduating class of 2019 or as otherwise provided in this subsection
36 (1) (e). The rules must include authorization for a school district to
37 waive up to two credits for individual students based on a student's
38 circumstances, provided that none of the waived credits are
39 identified as mandatory core credits by the state board of education.
40 School districts must adhere to written policies authorizing the

1 waivers that must be adopted by each board of directors of a school
2 district that grants diplomas. The rules must also provide that the
3 content of the third credit of mathematics and the content of the
4 third credit of science may be chosen by the student based on the
5 student's interests and high school and beyond plan with agreement of
6 the student's parent or guardian or agreement of the school counselor
7 or principal.

8 (ii) School districts may apply to the state board of education
9 for a waiver to implement the career and college ready graduation
10 requirement proposal beginning with the graduating class of 2020 or
11 2021 instead of the graduating class of 2019. In the application, a
12 school district must describe why the waiver is being requested, the
13 specific impediments preventing timely implementation, and efforts
14 that will be taken to achieve implementation with the graduating
15 class proposed under the waiver. The state board of education shall
16 grant a waiver under this subsection (1)(e) to an applying school
17 district at the next subsequent meeting of the board after receiving
18 an application.

19 (iii) A school district must update the high school and beyond
20 plans for each student who has not earned a score of level 3 or level
21 4 on the middle school mathematics assessment identified in RCW
22 28A.655.070 by ninth grade, to ensure that the student takes a
23 mathematics course in both ninth and tenth grades. This course may
24 include career and technical education equivalencies in mathematics
25 adopted pursuant to RCW 28A.230.097.

26 (2)(a) In recognition of the statutory authority of the state
27 board of education to establish and enforce minimum high school
28 graduation requirements, the state board shall periodically
29 reevaluate the graduation requirements and shall report such findings
30 to the legislature in a timely manner as determined by the state
31 board.

32 (b) The state board shall reevaluate the graduation requirements
33 for students enrolled in vocationally intensive and rigorous career
34 and technical education programs, particularly those programs that
35 lead to a certificate or credential that is state or nationally
36 recognized. The purpose of the evaluation is to ensure that students
37 enrolled in these programs have sufficient opportunity to earn a
38 certificate of academic achievement, complete the program and earn
39 the program's certificate or credential, and complete other state and
40 local graduation requirements.

1 (c) The state board shall forward any proposed changes to the
2 high school graduation requirements to the education committees of
3 the legislature for review. The legislature shall have the
4 opportunity to act during a regular legislative session before the
5 changes are adopted through administrative rule by the state board.
6 Changes that have a fiscal impact on school districts, as identified
7 by a fiscal analysis prepared by the office of the superintendent of
8 public instruction, shall take effect only if formally authorized and
9 funded by the legislature through the omnibus appropriations act or
10 other enacted legislation.

11 (3) Pursuant to any requirement for instruction in languages
12 other than English established by the state board of education or a
13 local school district, or both, for purposes of high school
14 graduation, students who receive instruction in American sign
15 language or one or more American Indian languages shall be considered
16 to have satisfied the state or local school district graduation
17 requirement for instruction in one or more languages other than
18 English.

19 (4) Unless requested otherwise by the student and the student's
20 family, a student who has completed high school courses before
21 attending high school shall be given high school credit which shall
22 be applied to fulfilling high school graduation requirements if:

23 (a) The course was taken with high school students, if the
24 academic level of the course exceeds the requirements for seventh and
25 eighth grade classes, and the student has successfully passed by
26 completing the same course requirements and examinations as the high
27 school students enrolled in the class; or

28 (b) The academic level of the course exceeds the requirements for
29 seventh and eighth grade classes and the course would qualify for
30 high school credit, because the course is similar or equivalent to a
31 course offered at a high school in the district as determined by the
32 school district board of directors.

33 (5) Students who have taken and successfully completed high
34 school courses under the circumstances in subsection (4) of this
35 section shall not be required to take an additional competency
36 examination or perform any other additional assignment to receive
37 credit.

38 (6) At the college or university level, five quarter or three
39 semester hours equals one high school credit.

1 **Sec. 7.** RCW 28A.230.215 and 2019 c 252 s 504 are each amended to
2 read as follows:

3 (1) The legislature finds that fully realizing the potential of
4 high school and beyond plans as meaningful tools for articulating and
5 revising pathways for graduation will require additional school
6 counselors and family coordinators. The legislature further finds
7 that the development and implementation of an online electronic
8 platform for high school and beyond plans will be an appropriate and
9 supportive action that will assist students, parents and guardians,
10 educators, and counselors as the legislature explores options for
11 funding additional school counselors.

12 (2) Subject to the availability of amounts appropriated for this
13 specific purpose, the office of the superintendent of public
14 instruction shall facilitate the creation of a list of available
15 electronic platforms for the high school and beyond plan. Platforms
16 eligible to be included on the list must meet the following
17 requirements:

18 (a) Enable students to create, personalize, and revise their high
19 school and beyond plan as required by RCW 28A.230.090;

20 (b) Grant parents or guardians, educators, and counselors
21 appropriate access to students' high school and beyond plans;

22 (c) Employ a sufficiently flexible technology that allows for
23 subsequent modifications necessitated by statutory changes,
24 administrative changes, or both, as well as enhancements to improve
25 the features and functionality of the platform;

26 (d) Include a sample financial aid letter and a link to the
27 financial aid calculator created in section 2 of this act, at such a
28 time as those materials are finalized;

29 (e) Comply with state and federal requirements for student
30 privacy;

31 ~~((e))~~ (f) Allow for the portability between platforms so that
32 students moving between school districts are able to easily transfer
33 their high school and beyond plans; and

34 ~~((f))~~ (g) To the extent possible, include platforms in use by
35 school districts during the 2018-19 school year.

36 (3) Beginning in the 2020-21 school year, each school district
37 must ensure that an electronic high school and beyond plan platform
38 is available to all students who are required to have a high school
39 and beyond plan.

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

3 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 8.** If any part of this act is found to be in
4 conflict with federal requirements that are a prescribed condition to
5 the allocation of federal funds to the state, the conflicting part of
6 this act is inoperative solely to the extent of the conflict and with
7 respect to the agencies directly affected, and this finding does not
8 affect the operation of the remainder of this act in its application
9 to the agencies concerned. Rules adopted under this act must meet
10 federal requirements that are a necessary condition to the receipt of
11 federal funds by the state.

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