

# GRADUATION PATHWAY OPTIONS REPORT

*Summer 2020*

Prepared by



The Washington State  
**BOARD OF EDUCATION**

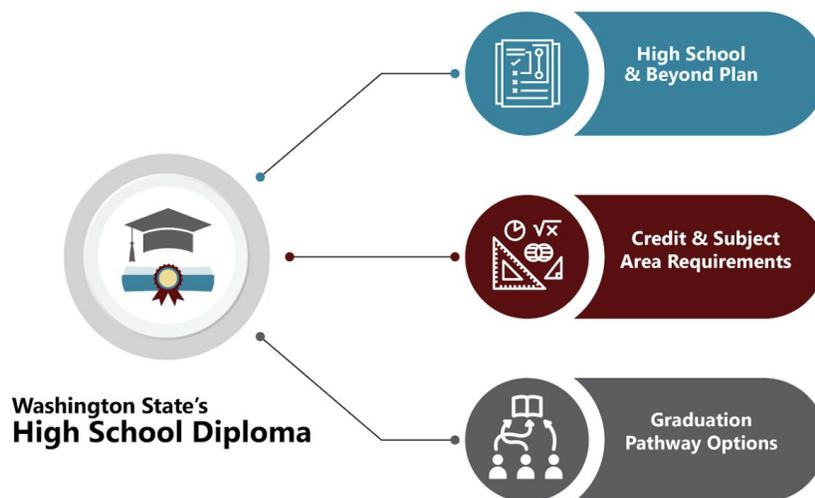
# Second Interim Graduation Pathway Options Report—July 2020

## Introduction

The Washington Legislature directed the State Board of Education (SBE) to provide an analysis of the equity and adequacy of new graduation pathway options through stakeholder outreach and engagement. This memo and the attached report, [Washington Graduation Pathway Options: Stakeholder Feedback Project, Year I](#), are responsive to the legislative directive to SBE to report to the education committees of the legislature:

Beginning August 1, 2019, the state board of education shall conduct a survey of interested parties regarding what additional graduation pathways should be added to the existing graduation pathways identified in RCW [28A.655.250](#) and whether modifications should be made to any of the existing pathways. Interested parties shall include at a minimum: Representatives from the state board for community and technical colleges and four-year higher education institutions; representatives from the apprenticeship and training council; associations representing business; members of the educational opportunity gap oversight and accountability committee; and associations representing educators, school board members, school administrators, superintendents, and parents. The state board of education shall provide a report to the education committees of the legislature by August 1, 2020, summarizing the information collected in the surveys. ([RCW 28A.655.260.](#))

The State Board of Education (SBE) contracted with Strobel Consulting to collect feedback from stakeholders on graduation pathway options. Graduation pathway options are a high school graduation requirement that were implemented for the Class of 2020 ([RCW 28A.655.250](#)) and are now one of three broad requirements students must complete to earn a Washington state diploma. Students demonstrate their knowledge, skills, and readiness for next steps after high school through graduation pathway options, subject area requirements, and a High School and Beyond Plan.



The State Board of Education has rule writing authority over graduation requirements and provides guidance to districts on rules. Districts, with the support and guidance of the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), as well as SBE, implement graduation requirements locally. OSPI also administers a waiver of part of the graduation requirements: the Expedited Assessment Appeal waiver (EAA), which was designed to waive the assessment graduation requirement, that was replaced by graduation pathway options. For the 2020 graduating class, the EAA helped students who did not meet an assessment or a pathway requirement.

Current graduation pathway options are:

- **State Assessment:** Meet or exceed the graduation scores in the Smarter Balanced Assessments (SBA) in English language arts (ELA) and mathematics or in WA-AIM (Washington Access to Instruction & Measurement).
- **Dual Credit:** Earn at least one high school credit in ELA and at least one high school credit in math in dual credit courses (Running Start, College in the High School, and/or Career and Technical Education dual credit courses).
- **AP/IB/Cambridge:** For both ELA and math, earn a 3 or higher on certain Advanced Placement (AP) exams or a 4 or higher on certain International Baccalaureate (IB) exams or an E on certain Cambridge International exams, or pass the course with at least a C+.
- **SAT/ACT:** Meet or exceed the graduation scores set by SBE in the math and ELA portions of the SAT or ACT.
- **Transition Course:** Pass a transition course in ELA and math (for example, a Bridge to College course) which allows a student to place directly into a credit-bearing college level course.
- **Combination:** Meet any combination of at least one ELA and one math option of those options listed in 1-5.
- **ASVAB:** Meet standard on the ASVAB (Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery) by scoring at least the minimum established by the military for eligibility to serve in a branch of the armed services.
- **CTE Sequence:** Complete a sequence of Career and Technical Education (CTE) courses.

(Students who meet the pathway requirement using ASVAB or the CTE Sequence do not need to separately meet an English requirement and a math requirement.)

This report is the second report on graduation pathway options to be submitted to the education committees of the Legislature. The first [graduation pathway option interim report](#) was submitted in January 2020, and summarized initial information about graduation pathway options based on a survey of districts as part of the Basic Education compliance process, as well as feedback from partner organizations and the public from various sources.

In addition to SBE surveys of stakeholders, statute also directs the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) to report on which graduation pathways are available to students at each school district, the number of students using each pathway for graduation, and to the

extent feasible, disaggregated student data on the use of each pathway. OSPI will report this information annually beginning in January 2021. SBE is directed to submit an additional report that uses OSPI data and survey results to review: 1) the graduation pathway options and make recommendations on changes to graduation pathway options or additional graduation pathway options; 2) barriers to school districts offering all pathways and recommendations for ways to eliminate or reduce these barriers; and 3) equitable access for students to all graduation pathway options, and recommendations for reducing barriers to equitable student access. This final report is due December 10, 2022. In addition, SBE plans on submitting an interim report in December 2021.

## The Impact of the COVID-19 Emergency on Graduation Pathway Options

The COVID-19 emergency has hugely affected K-12 education generally, and it has also disrupted the implementation of graduation pathway options. The tests that are part of six of the eight graduation pathway options were either cancelled or modified for remote delivery. The course-based options were affected the same way all high school courses were affected.

Many seniors in the Class of 2020 (the first graduation class that needed to meet a graduation pathway option) had previously met a graduation pathway option, through taking the Smarter Balanced state assessments as 10<sup>th</sup> graders, or through another pathway. But some seniors had not met a graduation pathway option. These students could use an Expedited Assessment Appeal (EAA), that essentially waives the graduation pathway requirement. Under current law, the Class of 2020 is the last class that may access the EAA. According to preliminary data from OSPI, 8,520 students in the Class of 2020 used the EAA in place of their pathway requirement: 3,503 English Language Arts waivers, and 7,929 math waivers (some students had waivers for both subjects). By comparison, the Class of 2019 had 678 waivers in English Language Arts and 2,198 waivers in math.

Emergency school closures started while the process of surveying and conducting focus groups for this report was still occurring. Much of the information collected was prior to the closures, but some of it was collected after some school districts had closed, and some was collected after all schools closed. The experience of students and educators concerning graduation pathway options was affected by emergency school closures, as well as the information gathered about their experiences.

The interpretation, discussions, and recommendations of the Board have been influenced by the shared experience of this emergency, and its impact on students and the educational system. The Board's attention to equity and on creating a system that can respond to the individual needs of students has been brought sharply into focus.

## Interim Graduation Pathway Option Considerations

Based on information in the attached report, feedback during stakeholder meetings such as OSPI's Reopening Workgroup and its Legislative Policy Subgroup, and Board discussion at a Board work session on June 17, 2020, and the regular Board meeting on July 9 and 10, 2020, the

Board identified possible changes to graduation pathway option policy. The Board is considering developing recommendations on the following approaches:

- **An individual student waiver for graduation pathway options.**
  - Members believe it is important to provide students affected by school closures the opportunity to complete a pathway. Members also believe that, given disruptions and unavailability in testing and course options in 2020 and perhaps in 2021, completing a graduation pathway option should not become an insurmountable barrier.
  - Graduation pathway waiver option for individual students may include an extension of the Expedited Assessment Appeal or a waiver to grant districts authority to allow individual student waivers
- **Addition of a portfolio or project-based pathway**
  - A locally developed and student directed portfolio or project-based pathway would align with mastery-based learning, support strategies such as work-based or project-based learning, and provide an option for students to demonstrate integrated learning over a broader set of learning standards and subject areas than English and math.
- **Greater flexibility in meeting credit requirements when a pathway option is met.**
  - This option would allow students who meet the core subject area requirements and a pathway option aligned with a robust high school and beyond plan to demonstrate readiness for civic engagement, careers, postsecondary education, and lifelong learning with fewer than the required 24 credits.
  - If such a pathway were added the legislature may want to consider adding completion of the 24-credit graduation requirements, including 17 core subject areas and seven flexible credits, as a pathway as well.
- **Career readiness pathway options**
  - Redefine the CTE pathway to include additional career training options (such as P-Tech and Career Launch-endorsed programs) and allow students to meet the pathway based on earning an industry recognized certificate (as identified by OSPI or the Workforce Board) regardless of coursework.
  - The Board is interested in further exploration of other robust career pathways that could focus on work-based learning, including aligning with the work of Career Connect Washington and the Work-Integrated Learning Advisory Committee.
- **Allowing students to demonstrate mastery in subjects other than English language arts and math in each of the pathways**
  - This could include dual credit courses and assessments in social studies, science, world language, and art as pathways.

## Next Steps

The Board will continue to:

- Work with Strobel Consulting on gathering stakeholder feedback for additional student cohorts.
- Work to expand the diversity of survey respondents to make sure the Board is hearing all voices, particularly the voices of student who are not served well by the system, including students of color, and students' parents or guardians.
- Use data from OSPI, surveys, and other stakeholder input to inform the Board's work and to develop recommendations that will be reported to the education committees of the Legislature in the next interim report in December 2021.
- Consider and explore policies for graduation pathway options that support students by providing equitable options in a changeable and unpredictable environment. Such considerations may provide a basis for SBE legislative priorities for a special session of the Legislature, if there is one, and in the 2021 session.