

GRADUATION PATHWAY OPTIONS REPORT

Summer 2020

Prepared by



The Washington State
BOARD OF EDUCATION

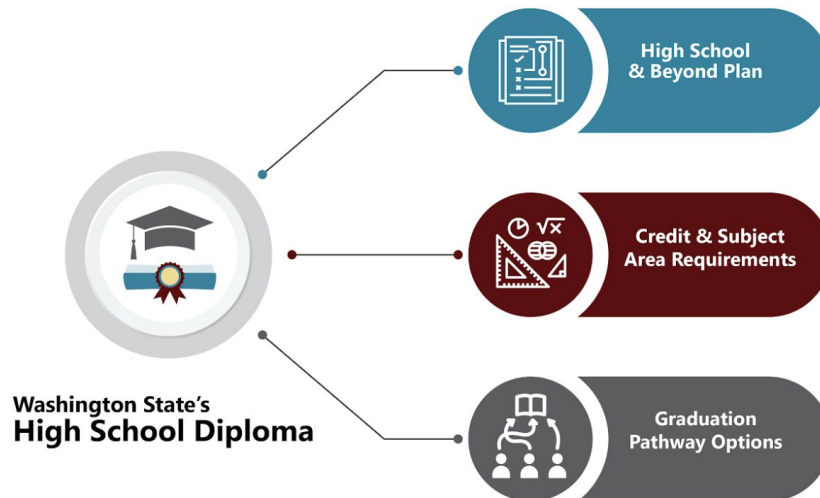
Second Interim Graduation Pathway Option Report—July 2020

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.



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 10th 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 colored 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 Recommendations

Based on information in the attached report, on Board discussion at a Board work session on June 17, 2020, and on member participation in meetings such as OSPI's Reopening Workgroup and its Legislative Policy Subgroup, the Board identified recommendations and policy directions for graduation pathway options.

- **Extension of the Expedited Assessment Appeal (EAA) or suspension of graduation pathway options as a graduation requirement for one to two years**
 - Members feel it is important to provide students affected by school closures the option to complete a pathway, but also felt that completing a graduation pathway option should not become an insurmountable barrier.

- The members want to use the duration of the suspension or extension of the EAA to build on graduation pathway options, strengthening the policy framework to make pathways more meaningful for students' high school experience and more supportive of student choices for after high school.
- **The addition of a portfolio or project-based pathway**
 - A 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.
- **Recognizing that the graduation requirements include three related components, combining subject area requirements with graduation pathway options, based on a robust high school and beyond plan**
 - This would allow for options such as flexibility in the total number of credits required provided a student completes the core subject area requirements and selected electives to meet a pathway requirement to demonstrate readiness for civic engagement, careers, postsecondary education, and lifelong learning.
 - If such a pathway were added the legislature may also want to consider adding completion of 24 credits, including the core subject area requirements with a minimum GPA as a pathway as well.
- **Career Readiness Pathway Options**
 - Redefine the CTE pathway to include additional career training options (such as P-Tech) 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.

Next Steps

The Board will continue to:

- Work with Strobel Consulting on gathering stakeholder feedback for additional student cohorts.
- 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.