



Washington Office of Superintendent of  
**PUBLIC INSTRUCTION**

*Class of 2026 Graduation Toolkit:  
An Implementation Guide for  
Washington's Minimum  
Graduation Requirements*

**2025**

# CLASS OF 2026 GRADUATION TOOLKIT

An Implementation Guide for Washington's Minimum Graduation  
Requirements

**2025**

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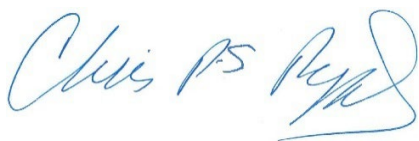
# WELCOME TO WASHINGTON STATE'S GRADUATION TOOLKIT FOR THE CLASS OF 2026!

The Class of 2026 Graduation Toolkit equips school counselors, career and graduation specialists, and school and district leaders with essential guidance on Washington's graduation requirements and available resources to help students navigate their path beyond high school. When educators have a clear understanding of these requirements and senior-year transition processes, they are better positioned to support students in planning for their future with confidence.

Washington continues to lead in developing innovative, flexible, and equitable pathways to prepare every student for a diverse and dynamic economy. The Graduation Pathway and High School and Beyond Plan requirements play a crucial role in this effort by providing structured support for career exploration, engagement in dual credit and work-based learning, and ensuring students gain the skills and experiences needed to thrive in an ever-changing job market.

As the Class of 2026 nears the completion of their K–12 journey, they do so in a world that continues to evolve. Strong connections between students' high school experiences and their postsecondary aspirations are crucial in helping them see how their education today leads to opportunities in the future. Fostering this sense of purpose and possibility plays a vital role in guiding students toward informed, meaningful post-graduation plans, and achieving their goals.

Thank you for your dedication to guiding and inspiring students through this pivotal stage in their lives!



Chris Reykdal  
Superintendent of  
Public Instruction

# GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS FOR THE CLASS OF 2026

## Laws and Rules for Class of 2026 Graduation Requirements

### High School and Beyond Plan

See:

- [Revised Code of Washington \(RCW\) 28A.230.212](#)
- [RCW 28A.230.215](#)
- [Washington Administrative Code \(WAC\) 180-51-220](#)

### Graduation Pathways

See:

- [RCW 28A.230.710](#)
- [WAC 180-51-230](#)

### Credit Requirements

See:

- [RCW 28A.230.090](#)
- [WAC 180-51-210](#)

## State Graduation Requirements

Completion of Washington state's minimum graduation requirements, as established by the State Legislature and the State Board of Education (SBE), signifies that a student is prepared to successfully transition into life post-high school. In 2019, the Legislature removed state testing as a requirement and instead approved multiple graduation pathways, which provide students with more options to demonstrate their preparation for their first step after high school.

Students fulfill the state graduation requirements that are in place for their expected graduation year (cohort), which is determined upon their entry into any public high school beginning their 9th grade year. Students needing more than four years to graduate must still meet the graduation requirements of their original graduation year cohort.

All students who entered 9th grade during the 2022–23 school year (Class of 2026) must meet all state and local requirements:

### 1. Develop a [High School and Beyond Plan \(HSBP\)](#)

All students, with the help of educators and students' families, if possible, must build a HSBP that shows how they will meet state and local graduation requirements and prepare for what they want to do following high school. A student's HSBP, which starts no later than 7th grade, is annually revised by students throughout middle and high school to adjust for changing interests and goals.

## 2. Complete a [Graduation Pathway](#)

Students will complete one or more graduation pathways to demonstrate their preparation for a meaningful first step after high school, which could include, but is not limited to, engaging in work, starting an apprenticeship, attending college, or joining the military. The graduation pathway(s) chosen by a student must be aligned with their HSBP.

## 3. Complete [High School Subject Area Requirements](#)

All students must complete specific course requirements, including any Personalized Pathway Requirement (PPR) courses, and other credit requirements established by their local districts. Through course completion and credit-earning opportunities aligned to the state's learning standards, students gain the needed communication and subject area knowledge and skills outlined in Washington's Goals of Basic Education ([RCW 28A.150.210](#)).

## Local Graduation Requirements

School districts may have other locally determined graduation requirements, such as additional credits, community service, or a senior project (see [RCW 28A.230.090](#)). Locally determined graduation requirements may vary within a single district between buildings and programs (see [RCW 28A.230.700](#)). While schools are expected to communicate all graduation requirements and to share information annually regarding all students' progress toward graduation (see [WAC 180-51-045](#)), students and their families should be made aware of all state and local graduation requirements when they begin high school.

Families and guardians should direct questions about graduation requirements to their student(s) and staff at the high school or school district office. To the greatest extent possible, districts should make information about graduation requirements accessible for all families, including families with limited English proficiency, and provide services to ensure individuals with communication disabilities can equitably access the same information.

# DEVELOP A HIGH SCHOOL AND BEYOND PLAN

The intention of the HSBP is to provide each student with a framework for engaging in annual career and college exploration and preparation. Through this process, students will be provided time each year to explore opportunities rooted in the following guiding questions:

- **Who am I?**
- **What can I become?**
- **How do I become that?**

Beginning in 7th grade, students work with school staff and their families, if possible, to create their own personalized plan that, through annual revision, results in the development of a strategy for transitioning to a meaningful first step following graduation. Beginning in the 2025–26 school year, Washington will begin a statewide transition to providing the HSBP through an innovative and engaging online platform called SchoolLinks. After the two years provided to facilitate this shift, all students will be using the SchoolLinks platform by the 2026–27 school year.

## Required HSBP Components

To fulfill the HSBP graduation requirement, as outlined in RCW 28A.230.212 and RCW 28A.230.215, the HSBP must contain, at minimum, the following specific components and information:

- Identification of **career goals**, aided by a **skills and interest inventory/assessment**.
- Identification of **educational goals** for middle school, high school and for any training or education after high school.
- A **course taking plan** that:
  - Fulfills state and local graduation requirements.
  - Aligns with the student’s career and educational goals.
  - Includes options for advanced coursework (see pages 18–19 for dual credit program details).
  - Documents chosen Graduation Pathway(s) (see pages 14–22 for details).
- A **resumé or activity log**.
- Evidence that the student has **received information on the College Bound program (CB) and state and federal financial aid programs** that help pay for college (see page 10 for details).

For students accessing special education services, the HSBP must be completed in addition to, and in alignment with, the student’s Individualized Education Plan (IEP) Transition Plan (see pages 9–10 and 24–25 for details).

## Required HSBP Development Processes

This section includes additional details about the required elements of a HSBP and outlines important processes and timelines that must be followed when developing a HSBP:

- Per [Senate Bill 5243 \(2023\)](#), the HSBP now must be started **by 7th grade** beginning with a **career and skill interest inventory**.
  - The results of the career assessment will be used to establish initial **career goals** and

**inform both 8th and 9th grade course-taking** that supports meaningful preparation for, and transition to, high school.

- The HSBP must include evidence that the student has received information about the **CB** program during middle school.
  - High school students in the CB program should be reminded throughout high school about the requirements to remain eligible.
  - For more detailed information on the CB program, go to the [Washington Student Achievement Council's \(WSAC\) website](#).
- The **HSBP must be updated annually** to reflect academic progress toward graduation (via a transcript review) and changing interests, goals, or needs. Additionally, at the **end of 10th grade**, the annual HSBP update must also:
  - Incorporate statewide assessment results in English Language Arts (ELA) and Math<sup>1</sup>.
  - Use 10th grade statewide assessments scores and other applicable data to inform 11th grade course taking, including the availability of advanced coursework aligned with the student's HSBP, per RCW 28A.230.212 and [RCW 28A.320.195](#).
    - The March through June Smarter Balanced Assessment (SBA) ELA and Math scores that arrive in the Centralized Reporting System (CRS) can be used for course selection evidence.
    - If official test scores are not available in time to use for class registration, unofficial SBA test scores that are available within 10 days of administering the test and high school score files that are available via the Washington Assessment Management System (WAMS) can be used to support this process.
- The HSBP must include identification of **available dual credit** and **career and technical education (CTE) programs**, including **eligibility for automatic enrollment in advanced math, ELA and/or science classes** under RCW 28A.320.195, as aligned with a student's HSBP.
  - [Dual credit courses](#) provide students with the potential to earn high school and college (100-level and higher) credit for the same course.
- For students with an IEP Transition Plan (which must be in effect when the student turns 16 years of age), **HSBPs must be developed and updated in alignment with the postsecondary goals within their transition plans** (RCW 28A.230.212).
  - HSBP activities and supports must also be provided **in a similar manner and with similar school personnel as for all other students**.
  - Students with an IEP Transition Plan may use their plan in support of, but not as a replacement for, their HSBP.
  - [OSPI's Secondary Transitions webpage](#) includes the following resources to support IEP teams, school counselors, or advisors with utilizing these two aligned documents to support students to be ready for their postsecondary goals:
    - [Guidelines for Aligning HSBPs and IEP Transition Plans](#) that describe essential elements and best practices.

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<sup>1</sup> Students' ELA and Math scores on the 10th grade statewide assessments are not considered *required* HSBP components. However, students' HSBP course taking plans **must** be updated to reflect their performance on the ELA and math tests relative to their junior year course selections. **Students without ELA and math scores must use other available data to inform their 11th grade schedule.**

- Examples of best practice IEP Transition Plans and aligned HSBP models (See: Appendix B: Sample HSBPs and IEP Transition Plans).
  - Student and educator checklists of relevant and required tasks to complete for postsecondary preparation and transition.
- Districts must involve parents and guardians **to the greatest extent feasible** in the process of developing and updating the HSBP.
- The plan must be provided to the student and the students' parents or guardians **in a language the student and parents or legal guardians understand** and in accordance with the school district's language access policy and procedures.
- School districts must annually provide students in 8th through 12th grade and their parents or legal guardians with **information about available graduation pathway options**.
  - Districts are strongly encouraged to begin providing this information starting in 6th grade, and to annually provide details about available dual credit options that meet the graduation pathway requirement and support students' postsecondary preparation.
- The HSBP must include evidence that the student has received **information on state and federal financial aid programs** that help pay for college, which includes:
  - Documentation needed for completing a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) or Washington Applications for Student Financial Aid (WASFA).
  - Application timelines and submission deadlines.
  - An explanation of the importance of submitting these applications early.
  - Specific information for students who have been or are in foster care and who are, or are at risk of, experiencing homelessness.
  - Information about when, where and how to receive assistance with completing financial aid applications.
    - Per [RCW 28A.300.815](#), districts are supposed to provide financial aid information and assistance with applications at a Financial Aid Advising Day during regular school hours between September 1st and December 1st each year.
    - Whenever possible, opportunities should be provided outside of school hours to support parents and guardians in completing financial aid applications.
  - More information and resources to support fulfilling this requirement are available on the [WSAC Plan Your Future webpage](#).
- For students not on track to graduate, the HSBP must also identify **interventions and academic supports and/or courses** that are available to help them fulfill high school graduation requirements. Possible courses may include available CTE equivalencies in academic core content areas, adopted pursuant to [RCW 28A.230.097](#) and as listed on OSPI's [Statewide Course Equivalencies webpage](#).
  - In accordance with WAC 180-51-220, a student's HSBP should reflect subject area requirements intended to be met, or that have been met, through mastery-based credit per [WAC 180-51-050](#) For more information on mastery-based credit, see [WAC 180-51-051](#).
- For students not earning a score of 3 or 4 on the 8th grade math statewide assessment, as identified in [RCW 28A.655.070](#), a school district must update the HSBP to ensure that the **student takes a math course in both 9th and 10th grades**.

- The math courses may include CTE equivalencies, as listed on OSPI's Statewide Course Equivalencies webpage.
- Districts are encouraged to inform students not earning a score of 3 or 4 on the middle school ELA or science statewide assessments of high school supports and courses that will address their learning needs.

# COMPLETE A GRADUATION PATHWAY

In combination with a robust career and college exploration and planning process that is guided by completion of the HSBP and engaging in quality instruction within the 24 required credits, completing a Graduation Pathway helps prepare students for their postsecondary goals. To graduate, [RCW 28A.655.250](#) requires all students to complete at least one graduation pathway, in alignment with their postsecondary goals documented within their HSBP.

All graduation pathways are intended for all students; however, districts are not required to offer all pathways. Per RCW 28A.655.250, “the legislature encourages school districts to make all pathway options available to their high school students, and to expand their pathway options until that goal is met, and districts have discretion in determining which pathway options under this section they will offer to students.”

## Use of “Pathway” in Multiple Contexts

What is the difference between graduation pathways, personalized pathways, and other “CTE-based” pathways related to graduation requirements? The following definitions should help clarify the multiple uses of this term:

- **Graduation Pathways**  
One of many performance-, course- or exam-based options students can complete to further demonstrate mastery of state learning standards and their completion of required steps or processes in preparation for a meaningful first step after high school.
- **Personalized Pathway Requirement (PPR)**  
Refers to three “flexible” credits (2.0 credits of World Language and the second 1.0 credit of Fine Art are the default suggestions) required for graduation. Students may choose to take “personalized pathway” classes other than these that can better prepare them for the postsecondary goals outlined in their HSBP.
- **Career Pathways or CTE Pathways**  
These terms may be used to describe ways in which schools are establishing options for students to take a series of courses (which may include both career-related and “core” academic subjects) designed to prepare students for success in a career cluster or CTE program area. These can be different than a CTE Sequence designed to meet the Graduation Pathway as described above (pages 13–16).
- **Guided Pathways**  
Washington’s community and technical colleges are using Guided Pathways that simplify career and course choices to help students make better course selections, minimize achievement gaps, and increase the number of students who graduate with a high-value certificate or degree. See the State Board of Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC) Guided Pathways webpage for more information.

## Class of 2026 Graduation Pathways Requirements

The section immediately following these brief overviews describes each pathway in greater detail. <sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For questions, please contact OSPI staff at [graduation.pathways@k12.wa.us](mailto:graduation.pathways@k12.wa.us) (data-based, technical questions) or [maria.muto@k12.wa.us](mailto:maria.muto@k12.wa.us) (advising support and general pathway questions). Find more detailed information on [SBE'S Graduation Pathway Options webpage](#).

### CTE Sequence

- Complete a sequence of state approved CTE courses earning 2.0 or more credits that either includes a dual credit course and/or provides access to or leads to an industry recognized credential.
- Complete a state-recognized Core Plus program that results in a Core Plus Certificate.
- Complete 2.0 or more CTE high school credits earned through a college approved Professional-Technical/Workforce program.

### Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB)

- Score for Class of 2026 = 31 (Check the SBE website by September 1st annually for update.)

### ELA and Math Courses, Exams or Learning Experience

Students **must** complete both an ELA and math option, and may combine any options below:

- College Admissions Exams (with or without Writing):

#### Minimum Scores Needed for the Classes of 2017 Through 2026

Exam	ELA	Math
ACT	N/A	16
ACT with Writing	14	16
SAT	410	430

- Dual Credit ELA and math courses (1.0 credit total for ELA and/or math):
  - Advanced Placement (AP)/International Baccalaureate (IB)/Cambridge International (CI): Earn at least a C+ (each term) in [state-approved course](#).
  - College in the High School (CiHS), CTE Dual Credit, and Running Start: Earn high school credit in ELA and/or math (the courses must be approved locally to count as a math and/or ELA course).
- Dual Credit exams (for state-approved courses, see page 19).
  - AP = 3 or higher | CI = E or better | IB = 4 or higher
- Performance-based learning experience (district must adopt rules to offer this pathway).
  - Must provide evidence that the student meets or exceeds certain state learning standards in ELA and/or math.
  - Additional information is on the SBE's [Performance-based Pathway Webpage](#).
- State assessments:
  - SBA: ELA = 2548; Math = 2595
  - Washington Access to Instruction & Measurement (WA-AIM): ELA = 104; math = 103
- Transition courses (1.0 credit total for ELA and/or math):
  - Bridge to College (BTC) courses are state approved (the full 1.0 credit of a BTC course must be completed within a single academic year)
  - Local placement agreements between districts and sponsoring colleges allow students to place into college (100-level) courses through high school course-taking.

# GRADUATION PATHWAYS

## Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB)

Taking the ASVAB exam helps students understand their skills and aptitudes in eight topic areas, several of which are not tested by other standardized exams. Participants are given access to a national career exploration website and can use it and other resources to explore career options within military service or in civilian jobs that match their skills. Districts offering this pathway are encouraged to participate in the [ASVAB Career Exploration Program](#).

By earning the minimum score on the Armed Forces Qualification Test (AFQT) portion of the ASVAB, as posted on the SBE website no later than September 1st each year, students demonstrate their readiness to enter the military or a related career and take a meaningful next step after high school. The AFQT tests, which are the sections of the ASVAB exam required for eligibility to serve in a branch of the armed services, include arithmetic reasoning, mathematics knowledge, paragraph comprehension, and word knowledge. There is no separate math and/or ELA component to this graduation pathway. To meet this pathway requirement, students must take the ASVAB while in high school. They may either meet the minimum score the year they take the ASVAB, or the score established by any military branch on a later date prior to the student graduating or turning 21 years of age.

For students choosing to follow the ASVAB Graduation Pathway, the school must inform students about the following:

- The minimum AFQT eligibility score required by each branch of the military.
- The eligibility requirements of specific military occupations, as listed on the SBE's website and available through the ASVAB Career Exploration Program.
- Student scores and personal information may be shared with the Department of Defense.
- The process to opt out of sharing their scores with the military recruiters.

Pursuant to the rules set by SBE in WAC 180-51-230, students who meet the SBE-determined eligibility score on the AFQT section of the ASVAB will have met the requirement for the ASVAB Graduation Pathway. Students also do not have to meet other minimum requirements for military enlistment, nor do they have to enlist or provide their scores to the military for purposes of recruitment.

## CTE Sequence

The CTE Sequence Graduation Pathway is one of the more flexible of the graduation pathways. Like

### Important Notes

**The military has age and other restrictions concerning the acceptance of the ASVAB. Students considering a military career should look into military entrance requirements.**

**For the Class of 2025, the minimum AFQT score is 31. Staff should check the SBE website for an update after September 1st each year for the minimum score required for the current graduation class.**

the ASVAB Graduation Pathway, there is no separate math and/or ELA requirement. By building upon what has been in place to guide the development of CTE programs, schools can provide pathway options that represent an even broader range of interests and post-high school goals. Students engaging in a CTE Sequence Graduation Pathway should complete coursework that is aligned with their career and/or postsecondary goals as outlined in their HSBP.

**Note:** This year’s Graduation Toolkit update once again seeks to increase awareness and explicit understanding of the three options available for students to meet the CTE Sequence Graduation Pathway. Additional details for each option are described following the chart and the text below.

**CTE Sequence Graduation Pathway: Three Completion Options**

Option 1	Option 2	Option 3
Complete a state or locally approved sequence of state approved CTE courses earning 2.0 or more high school credits that either includes a dual credit course and/or provides access to or leads to an industry recognized credential.	Complete a state-recognized Core Plus program that results in a Core Plus Certificate and uses the appropriate course designation code in CEDARS.	Complete at least 2.0 high school credits earned through college-level Vocational (CTE) coursework in aligned Professional-Technical or workforce education courses.

**Option 1:** Complete at least a 2.0-credit sequence of high school courses relevant to the student’s postsecondary goals for entry into postsecondary education, apprenticeship or the workforce, as saved in their HSBP. Sequences are state and locally approved, and meet the following criteria:

- Consists of a sequenced progression of technically intensive and rigorous courses.
- Leads to workforce entry, a state or nationally approved apprenticeship, or postsecondary education or training in a related field.
- Exists in a single CTE program area, or in more than one program area, if approved both locally and by OSPI through the local application submission process.
  - The list of OSPI approved and available CTE Sequence Graduation Pathways spanning more than one program area can be found on OSPI’s [CTE webpage](#).
- At least one course in the 2.0 credit sequence includes the ability to earn, or leads to earning, a state/nationally recognized certificate/credential and/or provides students the opportunity to earn college credit.
  - Only OSPI approved CTE courses count towards the 2.0 credit sequence.
  - OSPI works with education and industry partners to refine, expand and maintain a comprehensive [list of qualifying industry-recognized credentials](#) that align with federal Perkins reporting requirements. This list is restricted to only credentials that can be earned while students are enrolled.
    - Only credentials on the state approved list meet the requirements for earned credentials; districts can determine locally which courses are aligned with and lead to postsecondary credentials.
  - College credit may be earned through any approved dual credit program and should be reported using the corresponding CEDARS course designation code as

- listed in the [CEDARS Data Manual](#) (Course Catalog File D, Element 07).
- Satisfying the CTE Sequence Graduation Pathway does not require a student to take a preparatory CTE course as explained in [RCW 28A.700.030](#).

**Option 2:** Complete the curriculum requirements of a Core Plus Program of Study that results in the attainment of a Core Plus Certificate and utilizes the appropriate course designation code in the CEDARS Data Manual (Element D07). This ensures students have the opportunity to develop sufficient skill sets to earn either dual credit or an industry recognized credential, which leads to the workforce, apprenticeship or postsecondary education.

There are three state approved programs and corresponding CIP codes:

- [Aerospace](#)/Advanced Manufacturing (CEDARS designation code V/G, respectively)
  - CIP codes: 140102, 150613, 480000, 480503, 480506, 480511
- [Construction](#) (CEDARS designation code W)
  - CIP codes: 460000, 460100, 480701
- [Maritime](#) (CEDARS designation code U)
  - CIP codes: 460290, 470000, 470605, 470616, 480000, 480503, 480508

**Option 3:** Complete at least 2.0 high school credits by taking 100-level or above Vocational courses through CiHS or CTE Dual Credit in partnership with Washington’s community and technical colleges. Vocational courses are restricted to college **workforce** and/or **professional-technical** programs that meet the following requirements:

- Leads to workforce entry, state or national approved apprenticeships, and aligned credential and degree opportunities.
- Provides students the opportunity to earn college credit and may also result in or lead to attainment of an industry recognized credential.
- Courses have SBCTC approved Workforce Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP) codes that must align with a state or locally approved CTE Sequence Graduation Pathway as determined by the district.

Posted on OSPI’s CTE webpage for [CIP Codes](#) is a link to a Workforce CIP Codes document that includes a reference list of SBCTC approved college Workforce CIP codes and corresponding courses that can be taken through Running Start or an Open Doors program to meet the CTE Sequence Graduation Pathway requirement. Schools must use this approved CIP code list to review and approve student access to the college-based vocational courses that can meet the CTE Sequence Graduation Pathway requirements. School counselors should work with their CTE Director and the college’s Running Start Coordinator to confirm students have signed up for a course on this list if they are choosing to use it as a CTE Sequence Graduation Pathway.

## Local CTE Sequence Graduation Pathway Approval Process

If the sequence of courses outlined in Option 1 in the chart above spans more than one CTE program area **the sequence must go through a statewide approval process and be approved** by:

- A local school board or designee, and/or a district or State-Tribal Education Compact (STEC) CTE advisory committee (established under [RCW 28A.150.500](#)).

**AND**

- OSPI through submission of the Local CTE Sequence Graduation Pathway form found in the Graduation Alternatives application in [Education Data System Administration \(EDS\)](#).
  - OSPI should respond within 45 days. If the district does not receive a timely response, the sequence is deemed approved. If not approved, OSPI must provide a written explanation.
  - Once approved, a Local CTE Sequence Graduation Pathway may be implemented by other districts by submitting the Local CTE Sequence Graduation Pathway form for adoption.

## **CTE Sequences in Alternative Learning Environments (ALE)**

Schools offering ALE courses or programs can also offer CTE courses; however, courses must be taught by a CTE certificated teacher and be approved by OSPI's CTE Department through the course approval process to be counted toward this graduation pathway. Based on current funding rules, ALE courses are not eligible for enhanced CTE funding.

To offer the CTE Sequence Graduation Pathway through ALE courses, connect with the district or STEC CTE Director for more information on what courses and/or sequences have been approved. For districts/STECs choosing to prioritize offering CTE Sequence Graduation Pathways in ALE, the options may include:

- Forgo the enhanced CTE funding to offer a CTE sequence through ALE.
- Use an in-person, seat-time based model for the CTE course sequence.
- Create policies and systems allowing for students to co-enroll across multiple school settings such as an alternative school, high school, and/or a skill center.

## **CTE Sequences in Open Doors Youth Reengagement Programs**

Open Doors programs can also offer CTE courses, however, the courses must be taught by a CTE certificated teacher and approved by OSPI's CTE Department through the course approval process to be counted toward this graduation pathway. Based on current funding rules, Open Doors programs are not eligible for enhanced CTE funding. Furthermore, Open Doors students may not attend CTE courses at the local high school.

To offer the CTE Sequence Graduation Pathway through Open Doors, connect with the district or STEC CTE Director for more information. For districts/STECs choosing to prioritize offering CTE Sequence Graduation Pathways in Open Doors, the options may include:

- Hire a CTE certified teacher to directly offer a CTE sequence through Open Doors.
- Support student's co-enrollment in a skills center that offers an approved CTE sequence.
- Support students to enroll in an Open Doors program that partners with a community or technical college or Running Start where the student can complete at least 2.0 high school credits earned through college-level Vocational (CTE) coursework in aligned professional-technical or workforce courses. See page 16 for more information.

## **Combination of Graduation Pathways (ELA and Math)**

Students may choose to meet their graduation pathway requirement with a combination of at least one ELA and at least one math graduation pathway option, as described in the Graduation Pathways information within pages 18–22 of this toolkit.

## College Admission Exam Score for ELA and/or Math

Students may demonstrate their mastery of ELA and/or math learning standards and readiness for postsecondary education options by using a college admission exam score graduation pathway. Exam scores from the American College Testing (ACT), ACT with Writing, or Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) may be used. Students should check with their four-year college(s) of interest to see if an ACT or SAT score is required to recommended for admission.

Students must meet or exceed the minimum scores set by the SBE on an approved college admission exam in ELA or math as follows:

### Minimum Scores Needed for the Classes of 2017 Through 2026

Exam	ELA	Math
ACT	N/A	16
ACT with Writing	14	16
SAT	410	430

## Dual Credit Courses for ELA and/or Math

Students who complete an approved dual credit course in ELA or math with a qualifying grade (if required) may use the course(s) to meet a Dual Credit Graduation Pathway. Eligible courses must be offered through AP, CI, IB, CTE Dual Credit, CiHS, Running Start, or Open Doors.

For AP/CI/IB dual credit courses, students must earn at least a 1.0 high school credit with a grade of C+ or higher each term to use the course to satisfy a graduation pathway. Students do not need to take or pass the corresponding exam to use this course-based Dual Credit Graduation Pathway. CiHS/CTE Dual Credit/Running Start/Open Doors students must earn at least 1.0 high school credit in a course offering the potential for the award of college credit (100-level or higher) based on criteria established by the local school district and the institution of higher education. Students do not have to pay course fees, nor take the steps necessary to accept college credit on their official college transcript, to meet this graduation pathway.

The courses must be credited by the high school as English or math credit. However, the courses do not have to count for college level credit in math or English. Once locally approved, the dual credit course may be used to meet the student's graduation pathway.

**Note:** Students participating in dual credit may accelerate their completion of high school credit requirements, affording them additional schedule flexibility. [RCW 28A.230.740](#) and WAC 180-51-050 establish that five quarter or three semester credit hours "at the college or university level" (100-level or above) shall equal 1.0 high school credit. This applies to college-level courses offered through Running Start, CiHS, CTE Dual Credit, and Open Doors Youth Reengagement. For college-level courses delivered at the high school, the credit conversion should be applied equitably for all students completing the course, regardless of whether they intend to enroll for CiHS or request CTE Dual Credit college credit. For more information, consult the program-specific FAQs available on the Dual Credit Programs webpage. and the Credit Conversion Guidance posted in the Dual Credit Resources callout box on the Course-Based Dual Credit webpage.

## Dual Credit Exam Scores for ELA and/or Math (AP/CI/IB)

AP/CI/IB dual credit courses can also provide participants with the potential to earn high school and college credit for the same class by meeting the minimum score on a corresponding exam. Students meeting standard on approved ELA and/or math exams for AP/CI/IB courses can meet the exam-based Dual Credit Graduation Pathway via the following exam scores:

- Scoring a 3 or higher on an approved AP exam.
- Scoring an "E" or better on an approved Advanced or Advanced Subsidiary (A/AS) CI exam.
- Scoring a 4 or higher on an approved IB exam.

The following section includes the AP/CI/IB exams that are approved by the SBE, as options for both the course- and exam-based Dual Credit Graduation Pathways:

### Advanced Placement Courses and Exams

#### *ELA:*

African American Studies, Comparative Government and Politics, English Language and Composition, English Literature and Composition, European History, Human Geography, Macroeconomics, Microeconomics, Psychology, Research, and Seminar, United States History, United States Government and Politics, and World History.

#### *Mathematics:*

Statistics, Calculus AB, Calculus BC, Computer Science A, Computer Science Principles, Precalculus

### Cambridge International Exams (A/AS)

#### *ELA:*

Classical Studies, English Language, Drama, Economics, Geography, Literature and English, English General Paper, Global Perspective and Research, History, Law, Psychology, Sociology, and Thinking Skills.

#### *Mathematics:*

Computer Science, Further Mathematics or Mathematics

### International Baccalaureate Exams

#### *ELA:*

Language A: Language and Literature, Language A: Literature, Literature and Performance, Business Management, Digital Society (*replacing Informational Technology in a Global Society*), Economics, Geography, Global Politics, History, Philosophy, Psychology, Social and Cultural Anthropology, and World Religions.

#### *Mathematics:*

Computer Science, Mathematics: Analysis and Approaches, and Mathematics: Applications and Interpretation.

# Performance-Based Learning Experience for ELA and/or Math

The Legislature passed [House Bill \(HB\) 1308](#) in 2023, creating a new performance-based graduation pathway option. **Unlike other pathways, school districts must adopt a local policy that meets state requirements before offering the performance-based pathway option.** The [Washington State School Directors Association](#) (WSSDA) has a model policy and procedure available, policy #2415. The performance-based pathway allows students to show what they know and can do in “real-world,” hands-on ways that align with their individual goals for life after high school. This student-centered pathway is intended to be customizable, with the aim of being relevant and engaging to the student. It can be combined with other ELA and math pathway options. For example, a student could pass the state assessment in ELA and then complete a performance-based pathway in math.

According to the SBE’s Performance-based Pathway Tools and Resources, there is a lot of flexibility inherent in this option since the learning experience:

- May take a variety of forms.
  - Examples: project, practicum, work-related experience, community service, cultural activity
- May result in a variety of student work that can be evaluated.
  - Examples: performance, presentation, portfolio, report, film, exhibit, etc.
- May, or may not, be done as part of a class where the student also earns credit in the class or through use of the mastery-based learning policy.

Students must provide evidence they have met or exceeded certain state learning standards, including the required performance-based pathway focus standards in one or both subjects, and in alignment with the postsecondary goal(s) documented in their HSBP. For most students, completing a performance-based pathway will take a minimum of a high school semester. Their process should begin no earlier than 9th grade with submitting a proposal or signing a learning contract that describes:

- A postsecondary goal-aligned learning experience that meets state requirements (WAC 180-51-230 (7)(f)) for safety,
- The intended product resulting from the learning experience, which demonstrates the meeting or exceeding of learning standards in ELA and/or math, and
- The state learning standards in ELA and/or math that will be addressed, including the required focus standards and any additional locally identified focus standards appropriate for the individual student’s performance-based pathway project.

To successfully complete a performance-based pathway, students must submit a product resulting from the learning experience that:

- Demonstrates the student met or exceeded the ELA and/or math focus standards identified in the student’s proposal or learning contract, and
- Includes a reflection identifying the connection between the student’s learning and their preparation for their postsecondary goal(s) and a self-evaluation of the skills and learning gained through the experience.

Evaluation of a student’s performance-based pathway must employ the rubrics and proficiency-targets provided in the [Performance-based Pathway Tools and Resources](#). In alignment with WAC 180-51-230, an evaluation of the student’s product must be completed by:

- A certificated teacher endorsed in the relevant subject area, and/or
- With other qualified staff permitted by the Professional Educator Standards Board (PESB), or
- With an evaluation panel that includes at least one of the staff listed above, and may also include other evaluators such as community leaders or other professionals.

The SBE’s [Performance-based Pathway webpage](#) posts links to implementation guidance, sample rubrics, task models, checklists, a list of ELA and math focus standards, and video guidance on using the rubrics and evaluating performance-based pathways. Educators can use these resources to help students design their projects and manage their work, and to guide those involved with evaluating students’ work.

## Statewide Assessment Scores in ELA and/or Math

Washington’s statewide assessments provide students with one measure of their skill development and give schools important information on where to reassess and improve instruction. All students, regardless of which graduation pathway they intend to complete, are expected to take the appropriate SBA in ELA and math during 10th grade, and to incorporate their results into their HSBP. For some students, the SBA or WA-AIM may also serve as their graduation pathway, which can be met by either:

- Achieving the high school graduation cut score, as set by the SBE, on the on-grade level SBA:
  - ELA = 2548
  - Math = 2595
- For students with the most significant cognitive disabilities who qualify per their IEP, achieving the high school graduation cut score on the on-grade level WA-AIM assessment:
  - ELA = 104
  - Math = 103

## Transition Course for ELA and/or Math

For this graduation pathway, the definition of a transition course includes an ELA or math course offered in high school that satisfies core or elective credits for high school graduation and, based on the grade (see Note), allows the student to place directly into a credit-bearing, college-level ELA or math course (100-level or above) at participating colleges per [RCW 28B.10.016](#). Districts may offer actual Bridge To College (BTC) courses that were created in partnership with SBCTC, or per RCW 28A.230.710 (2)(c), districts may create a locally approved transition course using their own local placement agreements with institutions of higher education that allow students to place into college (100-level) courses through high school course-taking. BTC math courses are ideal for students who have completed Algebra II or its equivalent but may have struggled to master the content and want to be better prepared for college-level math.

- Successful completion for this graduation pathway is defined as **passing the course** and earning at least a **1.0 high school credit** in ELA or math. Per agreed upon data system business rules, BTC courses must be completed within a single school year.

**Note:** To earn college-level course placement (100-level or higher) at any community and technical college in Washington, students enrolled in an **official BTC course** must earn a B grade or better for the final term (Math) or any term (ELA) along with completing the course and earning 1.0 credit. See the OSPI's [Bridge To College Frequently Asked Questions](#), OSPI's [BTC website](#), or SBCTC's [BTC website](#) for more information.

### **Graduation Pathways and Earning the Seal of Biliteracy**

**For students seeking to earn the Seal of Biliteracy, WAC 392-410-350 removed the requirement for students to have met standard on the SBA in ELA. Students can be considered as having met the ELA standard for the Seal of Biliteracy by meeting any of the graduation pathway options outlined in RCW 28A.655.250, including the ASVAB and CTE Sequence Graduation Pathways, even though they do not specifically require demonstrating proficiency on ELA and math learning standards.**

**Note: Earning the Seal of Biliteracy does not mean a student has met a Graduation Pathway in ELA.**

See WAC [392-410-350](#) for more information.

# MEET STATE AND LOCAL SUBJECT AREA CREDIT REQUIREMENTS

The specific credit requirements for the Class of 2026 are described in WAC 180-51-210. Districts may require additional credit(s) or other non-credit requirements. Students and families should check with high school staff for additional information about local graduation requirements.

## Class of 2026 Cohort: Students entering 9th grade from July 2022 through June 2023

Subject	Number of Credits	Additional Information
English	4	N/A
Math	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Algebra 1 or Integrated Math 1</li> <li>Geometry or Integrated Math 2</li> <li>3rd credit of Math based on HSBP*</li> </ul>
Science	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>At least two lab sciences</li> <li>Third credit of Science based on HSBP*</li> </ul>
Social Studies	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1.0 credit US History and Government</li> <li>0.5 credit Contemporary World History, Geography, and Current World Problems</li> <li>0.5 credit of Civics (standalone course beginning with Class of 2024)</li> <li>1.0 credit of Social Studies elective</li> <li>Washington State History (can be for no credit)****</li> </ul>
Fine, Visual, or Performing Arts	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1.0 credit of Art can be substituted for another course, in alignment with the student's HSBP, as part of the student's PPR**</li> </ul>
World Language	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1.0 or 2.0 credits of World Language can also be substituted for other courses in alignment with the student's HSBP, as part of the student's PPR**</li> </ul>
Career & Technical Education	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>May meet the definition of an exploratory course as described in the <a href="#">CTE program standards</a> and <a href="#">RCW 28A.700.010</a></li> </ul>
Health and Fitness	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>0.5 credit of Health</li> <li>1.5 credits of Physical Education (PE)***</li> </ul>
Electives	4	N/A
Total Credits	24	N/A

## Credit Chart Key

\* The 3rd credits of math and science are chosen by students based on their postsecondary goals as documented in their HSBP and approved by a parent/guardian. If a parent/guardian is unavailable to approve their student's course decision, a school counselor/principal can approve students' courses per WAC 180-51-210.

- Per [\(SB\) 5299 \(2021\)](#), students may use a computer science course to meet their 3rd year math or science, if in alignment with their HSBP. See the [SBE's Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQ\) webpage](#).

\*\* PPR course substitutions empower students to better prepare for a specific post-high school career or educational outcome based on their HSBP. The flexibility of these 3.0 credits allows students to take other relevant preparatory courses that support their postsecondary goals. Any courses waived using this flexibility should be documented in the student's HSBP or their cumulative file to ensure future understanding of how all credits were completed.

\*\*\* Students must earn credit for Physical Education (PE). Students may be **excused from participation** (per [RCW 28A.230.050](#)) in the fitness portion of the requirement. Students may be excused from PE (but not Health). Excused students shall be required to demonstrate mastery in the knowledge portion of the physical education requirement, in accordance with written district policy. Such policies should ensure alignment with health and physical education learning standards as well as alternative means of engaging in physical activities, as directed in [RCW 28A.210.365](#).

- PE and Health credits are mandatory core or foundational credits, and therefore are not eligible to be waived through the waiver for individual student circumstances (see pages 27–28).
- If a student is **excused** from PE course(s), the up-to-1.5 credits of PE earned through demonstration of competency/mastery, per written district policy (see [WAC 180-51-051](#) for what the policy must include), must appear on the student's transcript, coded in CEDARS with the appropriate designation (the "Z – non-instructional course designator"), to indicate how the PE credits were earned.
- It is strongly recommended that every high school student take a minimum .5 credit PE course in 9th or 10th grade.
- For more information on PE excused from participation, please see the PE section of the [Class of 2026 Graduation Toolkit FAQ](#).

\*\*\*\* The Washington State History (WSH) requirement may be met by a non-credit bearing middle school or high school course or a for-credit high school course. Per WAC 180-51-210, WSH may be waived locally for students who meet one of the following requirements:

- Successfully completed a state history course in another state.
- Are in 11th or 12th grade and did not complete a WSH course because of previous residence outside the state.
- Experienced an emergency that prevented the student from having the opportunity to complete the course.

# Additional Flexibility with Graduation Requirements

## Supporting Students Receiving Special Education Services

Students receiving special education services will meet their graduation requirements, including subject area credit requirements and graduation pathway options, as directed by their IEP team. Students must not be restricted from accessing graduation pathways nor completing required HSBP activities based on their disability. A student's graduation pathway(s) and postsecondary goals are documented in both their IEP Transition Plan and aligned HSBP.

IEP teams determine needed special education services, in conjunction with grade-level core instruction, to help students access a graduation pathway that is available to all students and aligns to the student's postsecondary goals. As part of the annual IEP review, IEP teams revise the IEP and transition plan and provide additional supports if needed to help students satisfy graduation requirements, make progress in their IEP goals, and demonstrate preparation for their post-high school plan as documented in their aligned HSBP and transition plan.

IEP teams are not able to create new graduation pathways nor to waive HSBP or graduation requirements (courses, pathways, or HSBP) for students receiving special education services. To support students with disabilities in meeting graduation requirements, IEP teams may utilize the following strategies for meeting a student's unique learning needs:

### *Comparable Content Course Substitutions*

State laws and rules in [RCW 28A.155.045](#) and [WAC 180-51-115](#) acknowledge the critical role of the IEP team in determining the most appropriate high school credit substitution and assessment options for students receiving special education services.

According to a January 2020 change to WAC 180-51-115, "A student with an IEP must be provided necessary accommodations to progress in the general curriculum toward meeting state and local graduation requirements. In **limited circumstances**, when **determined necessary by the IEP team** due to the unique needs resulting from the student's disability, a graduation credit and subject area requirement may be **substituted with comparable content course work**, as identified in the IEP team course of study and aligned to the student's HSBP."

The intention of comparable content course substitutions is to empower educators to support all students to access and make progress in **grade-level** learning standards through tailoring the depth, breath, and complexity of the learning. It is not intended to be a way to make coursework less rigorous.

- This WAC change applies to any course decisions made beginning July 1, 2020. See the [SBE's graduation requirements FAQ](#) (question #10) for details.

### *Continued Educational Support up to the Age of 22*

Students receiving special education services who have not yet met their high school graduation requirements and earned a high school diploma after four years are eligible for a free and

appropriate public education through the school year the student turns 22 (see note). This includes students under 22 who have earned a high school equivalency certificate.

[WAC 392-172A-02000](#) makes the distinction between meeting graduation requirements **and** graduating with a diploma precisely because the IEP team is responsible for determining a student's graduation plan, including any needed transition services, and determining the anticipated graduation date.

Federal and state regulations do not require a school district to graduate a student with a disability who has met state and local graduation requirements. The IEP team determines what is in the best interest of the student for continuing their secondary education beyond completion of graduation requirements.

If the IEP team determines and documents that a student receiving special education services needs additional time to satisfy graduation requirements or needs additional special education services, the student is still entitled to a free appropriate public education (FAPE) and can continue to be claimed for basic and special education apportionment through the school year the student turns 22.

As an example, an adult student could have met the graduation pathway requirement and state and local subject area credit requirements for graduation but could continue as an adult student to access IEP and transition services if those are determined by the IEP team to still be needed as part of the student's graduation plan. While there is sometimes a belief that a district must hold back a required credit, this practice is unnecessary if the IEP team determines IEP and transition services are still needed.

See page 29 for additional information on the graduation ceremony participation options for students receiving continued services beyond their original graduation cohort year. See the [Tips from the Special Education Division: Secondary Transition Services and Supports](#) to learn more about secondary transition guidance and best practices for adult students.

**Note:** In May 2025, [Substitute Senate Bill 5253](#) was signed into law. SSB 5253 provides that students with disabilities are eligible for a free appropriate public education (FAPE) from age 3 through the school year in which the student turns 22 years of age.

OSPI will be engaging in rulemaking to update state regulations. OSPI will also be working to update guidance documents that reference the age of eligibility.

See [Questions and Answers: Providing Special Education Services Until Age 22](#) for the most up-to-date information. This Q&A will be updated as more information becomes available.

## **Supporting Highly Mobile Students with Partial Credit Practices**

In 2017 and 2021, the Legislature amended RCW 28A.320.192 and renewed efforts to eliminate barriers and facilitate the on-time grade level progression and graduation of students experiencing certain challenges. There is nothing in state or federal law that would prohibit a district from applying these practices to any student impacted by circumstances resulting in partial credit for

work completed and need additional support to meet their credit requirements.

This RCW requires districts to adopt credit consolidation, partial credit, and course waiving practices to facilitate the on-time graduation of highly mobile students, including youth experiencing homelessness, students in Foster Care (subject to a dependency proceeding), At-Risk Youth (ARY), Children in Need of Services (CHINS), and students who are in, or have been released from, an institutional education facility. Districts must award a minimum of one credit for students who passed a General Education Development (GED) test and who were in an institutional education setting. Local policy can go beyond this minimum to award one credit per GED subject area test.

School districts must provide students in or released from an institutional education facility with access to world language proficiency tests, American sign language proficiency tests, and GED tests. The practices outlined in this legislation can help school counselors, graduation specialists, registrars, and other record-keeping staff piece together mobile students' academic records in a more cohesive way. An Implementation Guide for supporting highly mobile students via partial credit practices is posted on OSPI's Homeless Education webpage.

The 2017 and 2021 changes to RCW 28A.320.192 enable Washington school districts to be more fair, equitable, and creative with transferring in partial credits in order to support progress toward graduation for our most highly mobile students. These strategies honor what students have done, increasing the likelihood that they will see hope for reaching their goals and engage more readily in completing their remaining graduation requirements.

## High School Transcript Developer User Guides and FAQ

The following documents are available on the OSPI [High School Transcript webpage](#) to support staff understanding of current rules related to transcription of required graduation requirements, and are posted on OSPI's Transcript webpage:

- The High School Transcript Developer User Guide for Students with Graduation (Spring 2022).
- The High School Transcript Developer User Guide Special Edition (July 2021).

### Transcription of Competency-based Crediting and GPA

**When students are awarded mastery-based credit (WAC 180-51-051) according to the district's policy, the recommended practice for transcription is not to change previously transcribed records but to create a new record. Recording the student's repeated attempt and success more accurately represents the student's academic history. To best align with the intent of mastery-based credit in statute, only the highest mark/grade earned for a class/course reflected more than once by the award of mastery-based credit should be included in the calculation of grade point averages. The old course and grade still show, but the credits earned, and credits attempted are reported as zero and do not count in the GPA calculation (WAC 180-51-051).**

## Transcribing Credit Earned Prior to High School

Students who enroll in a high school credit-bearing course and pass the course, thus earning high school credit before attending high school, must have that credit **automatically** transcribed on their high school transcript. This policy change pertains to high school level courses completed in middle school beginning in the 2019–20 school year, as described in [WAC 180-51-030](#).

For advanced learners completing college-level coursework prior to entering high school, RCW 28A.230.740 stipulates that five quarter or three semester hours of college-level coursework equals one high school credit.

Students and their parent/guardian may also request that the credit earned before high school not be transcribed, or be transcribed with a **nonnumerical grade**, such as “pass.” Nonnumerical grades are not included in the student’s high school grade point average, but the course still applies to meeting high school graduation requirements.

Students and their family have until the end of the 11th grade to **opt out** or **request a nonnumerical grade** for credit earned before attending high school.

OSPI recommends districts adopt a policy and procedure for consistently and efficiently administering this requirement, including the number of times students can opt out and back in, and how non-numerical grade requests will be administered.

## Two-Credit Academic Waiver for “Individual Student Circumstances”

In 2019, local school boards should have adopted policies in line with RCW 28A.230.212, which changed the criteria for which high school credits may be waived (up to two credits total) based on “a student’s circumstances.” This allows a student to graduate with 22 or 23 credits, rather than 24 credits. None of the waived credits can be any of the **17 mandatory “core” credits**, as identified by the SBE (WAC 180-51-210). Waived credits may include the flexible **electives** or any of the **PPR** credits. See the [infographic](#) of required credits on the SBE’s Graduation Requirements webpage for more information.

# GRADUATION CEREMONIES

School districts, directed by their own school board policies, establish practices for determining who participates in graduation ceremonies. **The state has no authority over graduation ceremonies.**

Most school districts allow students to participate in graduation ceremonies only if they can demonstrate that they have fulfilled all graduation requirements prior to the ceremony. However, some districts do make exceptions on a case-by-case basis to minimize barriers faced by students in unique circumstances.

Diploma-seeking students participating in dual credit programs—including Running Start—should not be restricted from participating in ceremonies or being considered for graduation ceremony honors or awards. Likewise, students who have **met** graduation requirements but are postponing actually graduating to participate in summer quarter Running Start should not be restricted from participating in graduation ceremonies. Families should consult with their student’s high school and/or district about the graduation ceremony policy.

## Kevin’s Law and Graduation

If determined appropriate by a student’s IEP team, Kevin’s Law ([RCW 28A.155.170](#)) allows students who will continue to receive special education services between the ages of 18 and through the school year in which the student turns 22 years of age (see pages 25-26) to participate in the graduation ceremony and activities after four years of high school attendance with their age-appropriate peers, even if all state and local graduation requirements are not yet met.

The law requires each school district to adopt a policy and develop procedures to determine which students can participate in graduation ceremonies after four years, even if they will remain in school beyond four years.

Students who participate in the graduation ceremony will receive a certificate of attendance, which is not a high school diploma. Students will receive a diploma when they complete their graduation

### Tribal Regalia & Cultural Significance

**RCW 28A.600.500<sup>1</sup> affirms the inherent rights assured through tribal sovereignty and expressly provides that school districts must allow American Indian and Alaska Native K–12 and higher education students who are members of federally recognized tribes to wear traditional tribal regalia and objects of cultural significance at graduation ceremonies and related events. School districts are required to update relevant policies or procedures in accordance with this law if necessary.**

**During the 2025 Legislative Session [EHB 1393](#) established that students must be permitted to wear items or objects of cultural significance with or attached to their gown at official graduation ceremonies and events.**

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<sup>1</sup> See [RCW 28A.600.500](#)

requirements **AND** the IEP team has determined that no additional special education services, including transition services, are needed. The receipt of a diploma would end the student's eligibility for special education services.

# STUDENTS NEEDING MORE TIME TO GRADUATE

Students who have not yet met their high school graduation requirements nor earned a high school diploma after four years are eligible for a free public education through the school year in which they turn 21 years old. This includes students under the age of 21 who have earned a high school equivalency certificate, but does not include students with an IEP who may access services until they turn 22 (see pages 25-26).

## Free Options

The free options available for students who are not graduating after four years of high school and want to meet their high school graduation requirements include:

1. **Stay enrolled in high school:** Through the school year in which they turn 21 years old (or through the school year in which the student turns 22 years of age for students with an IEP), all students are eligible to attend their resident high school and may have the option of transferring to another high school or alternative high school in the district or using the choice transfer process to enroll in another district's high school.
2. **Continue Running Start:** Students who participated in Running Start during their 11th and/or 12th grade years, including taking their first class(es) during summer quarter of senior year, but did not finish all classes required for high school graduation may still be eligible to take college courses that specifically meet remaining high school credit requirements and count toward a high school diploma. With the expansion to a 1.40 full-time equivalent (FTE) maximum as passed in [HB 1316 \(2023\)](#), a student enrolled in Running Start for more than one senior school year is limited to **63** total college credits for their **combined senior years**. The expectation for students staying at the college to continue Running Start is that they are working toward their high school diploma, not solely toward an associate degree. Please note that while this is a tuition-free option, students may be responsible for costs associated with college fees, textbooks, and transportation.
3. **Enroll in a skills center:** Students may have the option of spending part or all of their school day at a local skills center. Contact the area skills center directly to learn more.
4. **Enroll in another school or program that is a better fit:** Many districts have an alternative, online, and/or credit recovery program to provide students a different setting in which to finish their education. OSPI maintains a list of [approved statewide online public school programs](#).
5. **Enroll in an Open Doors Youth Reengagement Program:** Open Doors serves students who want a GED, high school diploma, community college credits toward their diploma, an industry certificate or associate degree, and/or employability skills. This flexible education model is only available to students who are severely credit deficient and over 16 years old but not yet 21 years old as of September 1st of the school year. OSPI maintains a list of

districts that offer Open Doors on OSPI's [Open Doors webpage](#).

6. **Enroll in a school district high school completion program:** School districts may contract with community colleges to offer tuition-free high school completion programs to students still enrolled in their resident school district Career Education Options (CEO) programs. Upon completion of the program, students would receive a high school diploma from either the college or the district.

## At-Cost Options

The at-cost options available for students who are not yet graduating after four years of high school and still want to earn a high school diploma include:

1. **Enroll in a community/technical college high school completion program:** Check first to see if the college offers either Open Doors or high school completion through a district partnership (CEO) for free. All of Washington's community colleges offer high school completion programs, providing students with a high school diploma from the college. Students must withdraw from their resident high school to enroll in these programs. Students may be charged \$25 tuition and other applicable fees. Students 16–18 years of age must have a signed release from their resident school district to enroll.
2. **Pursue a high school equivalency certificate:** Check first to see if there is an Open Doors program to access GED preparation for free.

Students 16 years and older may earn a high school equivalency certificate or GED by passing required tests through a high school completion program. Students under 19 years will need a release to take the GED signed by their resident school district and a parent if under 18 years. Our community and technical colleges are official GED testing centers.

Students pay fees for the assessment(s) and may need to pay nominal tuition and fees for preparation courses. Students who earn a GED are considered dropouts for high school accountability purposes; however, students under 21 years old who have a GED are still eligible to fulfill their high school graduation requirements and earn a diploma.

3. **Enroll in a public two- or four-year college:** Washington's public colleges do not require students to have a high school diploma in order to enroll, although a diploma and completion of all credits designated as college academic distribution requirements (CADRs) significantly increases the chances of admission to the state's four-year universities. Students who do not have a diploma or GED must pay full tuition and fees, and may not be eligible for certain federal, state, and private financial aid. More information on CADRs can be found on [WSAC's College Admissions webpage](#) under "Public Colleges."

# **SBA SCORES AND COMMUNITY AND TECHNICAL COLLEGES' PLACEMENT AGREEMENTS**

Completing Washington's SBA in math and ELA provides students a moment-in-time opportunity to evaluate their current skills and knowledge in relation to their educational goals and then determine what steps they should take to be prepared for further education or training after high school. Washington's public four-year institutions believe there are multiple high-quality pathways to a degree and support early assessment efforts in high school that provide students and families with information to best guide them in their future course choices.

High school students who score a college-ready level of 3 or 4 on the SBA may use that score to demonstrate their readiness to enroll in college-level courses at Washington's public community and technical colleges. More information about this [college placement agreement](#) is available from the SBCTC.

There is currently no corresponding college course placement agreement for SBA scores with Washington's public four-year colleges and universities, although students may choose to inform colleges of their scores as part of the admissions process.

# APPENDICIES

## Appendix A: Resources

### HSBP Resources

Resource Description	Resource Link
<p>OSPI’s High School and Beyond page provides resources and information related to High School and Beyond plans and its required components.</p>	<p><a href="#">OSPI HSBP Webpage</a></p>
<p>Part of the <a href="#">OSPI-WSAC Graduation Webinar Series</a>, this webinar explored current practices and resources around HSBP implementation and engagement; Individualized Education Program (IEP) alignment; and provided resources to support HSBP Implementation.</p>	<p><a href="#">High School and Beyond Planning: Strategies to Increase Student, Staff, Family, and Community Engagement</a></p>
<p>The HSBP and the IEP Transition Plan both support a student’s smooth transition from school to adult life. IEPs should be developed to align with HSBPs developed by students, so that a comprehensive plan is in place that addresses the students’ needs and meets all federal, state, and local requirements.</p>	<p><a href="#">Guidelines for Aligning High School and Beyond Plans and IEP Transition Plans</a></p> <p>*Includes case studies, webinars and a variety of resources</p>
<p>WSAC’s 12th Year Campaign boosts college and financial aid application rates in Washington by helping those working with high school seniors and their families to complete applications for college admissions and financial aid. This page contains information and resources designed to help schools and partners host a successful financial aid advising day.</p>	<p><a href="#">WSAC 12th Year Campaign</a></p>
<p>The CB is an early commitment of state financial aid to eligible students who are enrolled in middle school or 9th grade and meet the pledge requirements. The CB covers average tuition at public college rates, some fees, and a small book allowance at over 65 colleges, universities, and technical schools in Washington. This page contains information for students, families, school counselors, and anyone interested in the CB.</p>	<p><a href="#">CB Resources</a></p>
<p>ReadyWA provides HSBP-related resources that help students and families understand their educational journey, where their career pathway can take them, and the skills and knowledge they need to reach their goals.</p>	<p><a href="#">ReadyWA</a></p>

## Graduation Pathways Resources

Resource Description	Resource Link
This resource details the available options for students to complete the Graduation Pathway graduation requirement.	OSPI <a href="#">Graduation Pathways One-Pager</a> SBE <a href="#">Graduation Pathways One-Pager</a>
OSPI webpage with detailed information about state tests.	<a href="#">OSPI State Testing Webpage</a>
The SBE created this one-pager to provide early information on the performance-based graduation pathway. Additional information and updates are available on their <a href="#">Performance-based Pathway webpage</a> .	<a href="#">Performance-Based Pathway One-Pager</a>  <a href="#">Performance-Based Pathway Resource Packet</a>
Part of the <a href="#">OSPI-WSAC Graduation Webinar Series</a> , this webinar explored options for building new, or expanding on, existing Graduation Pathways; promising strategies and resources for career/college preparation; and provided resources and support around graduation pathways.	<a href="#">Graduation Pathways: Building Pathways to Careers and College That Serve All Students (PDF)</a>
Part of the <a href="#">OSPI-WSAC Graduation Webinar Series</a> , this webinar reviewed <a href="#">HB 1599 (2019)</a> (Multiple Pathways to Graduation); provided an overview of graduation pathways; explored graduation requirement changes; detailed implementation steps for graduation requirements and pathways; and provided resources and support around graduation pathways and requirements.	<a href="#">OSPI-WSAC Graduation Pathways 2020 webinar</a>
Part of the OSPI Graduation: A Team Effort (GATE) webinar series, this webinar highlights course equivalencies, credit flexibility, and CTE accessibility.	<a href="#">GATE Webinar: Designing Accessible Graduation Pathways for All Students</a>
Part of the OSPI-WSAC webinar series, this webinar takes a deeper look at the Performance-based Pathway option with examples of both embedded and extracurricular projects that are aligned with the pathway option's requirements.	<a href="#">OSPI-WSAC Webinar: Performance-based Pathway Option, Empowering Student Ownership &amp; Creativity</a>
Hosted by OSPI, the <a href="#">Open Doors Graduation 101 webinar</a> provided an overview of graduation requirements and pathways with specific attention to Open Doors Youth Reengagement programs.	<a href="#">Open Doors Graduation 101 webinar</a>  <a href="#">Q&amp;A Document: Graduation and Open Doors</a>

## Graduation and Credit Requirement Resources

Resource Description	Resource Link
OSPI's Graduation page provides resources and information related to WA State Graduation Requirements	<a href="#">OSPI Graduation Webpage</a>
SBE's website details Washington State Graduation Requirements for multiple graduating classes.	<a href="#">SBE Graduation Requirements Webpage</a>
A helpful infographic from SBE providing a quick look at WA State Graduation Requirements.	<a href="#">SBE Graduation Infographic</a>

## Learning by Choice Resources

Resource Description	Resource Link
OSPI's Learning by Choice webpage provides answers to commonly asked questions about the Learning by Choice law.	<a href="#">OSPI Learning by Choice Webpage</a>

## Special Education Resources

Resource Description	Resource Link
Learn more about how the Individualized Education Program (IEP) Transition Plan and aligned High School and Beyond Plan (HSBP) support a student to be ready for their goals for postsecondary goals	<a href="#">Transition Supports and Services Summary for Students, Families &amp; Caregivers</a>
The Center for Change in Transition Services (CCTS) has many resources to support students with IEPs be ready for their next steps after high school. They include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self-paced training modules about best practices in developing transition plans within the IEP. Module 9 focuses on HSBP and IEP Transition Plan Alignment</li> <li>• T-Folio is a free <b>transition portfolio</b> tool for high school age youth with disabilities that can be used to individualize both HSBP and IEP Transition Planning</li> </ul>	<a href="#">CCTS Writing Effective Transition Plans Self-Paced Training</a>  <a href="#">CCTS T-Folio</a>
Comparable content course substitution guidance ( <a href="#">WAC 180-51-115</a> )	<a href="#">Page 8, Special Education Tip</a>

## ALE Resources

Resource Description	Resource Link
The OSPI ALE Webpage has information related to offering ALE, including a guide to program implementation, sample documents, and communication resources.	<a href="#">OSPI ALE Webpage</a>

## Open Doors Youth Reengagement Resources

Resource Description	Resource Link
The OSPI Open Doors Webpage has information related to offering Open Doors Youth Reengagement programs, including guidance on program implementation, sample documents, and technical assistance manuals.	<a href="#">Open Doors Youth Reengagement</a>
Hosted by OSPI, the <a href="#">Open Doors Graduation 101 webinar</a> provided an overview of graduation requirements and pathways with specific attention to Open Doors Youth Reengagement programs.	<a href="#">Open Doors Graduation 101 webinar</a> <a href="#">Q&amp;A Document: Graduation and Open Doors</a>

## Dual Credit Resources

Resource Description	Resource Link
The OSPI Dual Credit webpage has detailed information about all six exam- and course-based dual credit programs, including program-specific FAQs, forms, and guidance documents.	<a href="#">OSPI Dual Credit Webpage</a>
Dual credit updates are frequently provided through agency bulletins. Bulletins on recent changes to Running Start eligibility and enrollment limits, summer Running Start, CiHS funding, test fee subsidies, dual credit notification requirements, and other topics are available on OSPI's Bulletins webpage. New bulletins are also commonly posted on the Dual Credit Programs webpage.	<a href="#">OSPI's Bulletin Webpage</a>
OSPI routinely provides need-to-know dual credit information through the Dual Credit Updates listserv. This includes professional development opportunities, bulletins, grant information, forms, communication from postsecondary partners, and other resources.	<a href="#">Dual Credit Updates Listserv</a>
Webinars and other recordings on dual credit are available on OSPI's Dual Credit YouTube playlist.	<a href="#">Dual Credit YouTube Playlist</a>

## Online Learning Resources

Resource Description	Resource Link
Find information on OSPI's Online Learning webpage about approved online school programs, enrolling students, and district applications for online school programs or course providers.	<a href="#">OSPI ALE Webpage</a>

## Resources for Students in Foster Care/Experiencing Homelessness

Resource Description	Resource Link
OSPI's Postsecondary Education website provides information related to supporting students in foster care in their journey toward postsecondary education.	<a href="#">OSPI Foster Care Postsecondary Education website</a>
The Foster Care Transition toolkit includes tips and resources intended to help foster youth access and navigate social, emotional, educational and skills barriers as they transition into adulthood.	<a href="#">Foster Care Transition Toolkit</a>
The Supplemental Education Transition Planning (SETuP) Program assists students in foster care and unaccompanied students experiencing homeless in making the transition from high school to postsecondary enrollment, career or military service.	<a href="#">Supplemental Education Transition Planning (SETuP) Program Webpage</a>  Additional SETuP information can be found at the <a href="#">SETuP   WSAC (wa.gov)</a>
Treehouse is a statewide nonprofit that provides a range of education planning, monitoring, support services and resources for students in foster care.	<a href="#">Treehouse website</a>
Students in foster care are eligible for the Treehouse Graduation Success Program, which provides supports and services tailored to a youth's individual developmental needs.	Treehouse <a href="#">Graduation Success Program website</a>
The National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth have a collection of higher education resources for students experiencing homelessness.	<a href="#">National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth website</a>

## Appendix B: Abbreviations

**ACT:** American College Testing

**AFQT:** Armed Forces Qualification Test

**ALE:** Alternative Learning Experience (see [WAC 392-550](#) for ALE requirements)

**AP:** Advanced Placement

**ASVAB:** Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery

**BTC:** Bridge to College

**CEDARS:** Comprehensive Education Data and Research System

**CB:** College Bound program

**CiHS:** College in the High School

**CI:** Cambridge International

**CTE:** Career and Technical Education

**ELA:** English Language Arts

**FAAD:** Financial Aid Advising Day (new requirement begun in fall 2020)

**FAFSA:** Free Application for Federal Student Aid

**GREW:** Graduation Requirement Emergency Waiver (Classes of 2020–2024)

**HSBP:** High School and Beyond Plan

**IB:** International Baccalaureate

**IEP:** Individualized Education Program

**PE:** Physical Education

**PPR:** Personalized Pathway Requirements (3.0 flexible credits; World Language/Fine Art)

**RCW:** Revised Code of Washington (state statutes/laws)

**RS:** Running Start

**SAT:** Scholastic Aptitude Test

**SBA:** Smarter Balanced Assessment

**SBCTC:** State Board of Community and Technical Colleges

**SBE:** State Board of Education

**SETuP:** Supplemental Education Transition Planning

**STEC:** State Tribal Education Compact (related to CTE Directors)

**WAC:** Washington Administrative Code (state rules)

**WA-AIM:** Washington Access to Instruction & Measurement (state assessment alternate assessment based on alternate academic achievement standards)

**WASFA:** Washington Application for Student Financial Aid (See [WSAC's Financial Aid webpage](#) for more information)

**WSAC:** Washington Student Achievement Council

# REVISION LOG

Updates to the Graduation Toolkit following policy changes in House Bill 1599 (2019) generated a transition to a Graduation Pathways Toolkit in August 2019. For the Class of 2023, the “Pathways” was removed to signify the toolkit’s comprehensive focus on all things related to Graduation.

Any **substantive** changes are noted below.

Page(s) Revised	Section	Description	Date
5	Welcome	Welcome updated to reflect the Graduating Class of 2026.	6/1/2025
8	Develop a High School and Beyond Plan	Condensed the language to reduce repetition.	6/1/2025
8–11	Required HSBP Development Process	Updated assessment language to be inclusive of all statewide assessments and availability of scores to inform course taking.	6/1/2025
13–16	CTE Sequence	Reorganized section, condensed information for each option, and addition of Open Doors Program information.	6/1/2025
16	CTE Sequences in an Open Doors Youth Reengagement Program	Section added.	6/1/2025
17–18	Dual Credit Courses	Added information about awarding credit for dual credit courses.	6/1/2025
21	Graduation Pathways and Earning the Seal of Biliteracy	Deleted section and replaced with a special note.	6/1/2025
24–25	Supporting Students Receiving Special Education Services	Updated to reflect changes made during the 2025–26 legislative session.	6/1/2025
25–26	Supporting Highly Mobile Students with Partial Credit Practices	Updated title to align with existing section naming conventions and edited to retain third-person voice, added clarification regarding GED related crediting.	6/1/2025
27	Transcribing High School Credit Earned in Middle School	Added information regarding credits for college-level courses taken prior to high school.	6/1/2025
27–28	Two-Credit Academic Waiver for “Individual Student Circumstances	Deleted special note for the Graduation Requirement Emergency Waiver (GREW).	6/1/2025
29	Graduation Ceremonies	Added special note in regard to Tribal Regalia and Cultural	6/1/2025

Page(s) Revised	Section	Description	Date
		Significance with information specific to Running Start participants.	
30–31	Free Options	Deleted “After-Exit” program information.	6/1/2025
32	SBA Score and Community and Technical Colleges’ Placement Agreements	Updated to reflect the renewal of the agreement and deleted reference to review process.	6/1/2025
35	Appendix A	Updated resources for Special Education Resources, Graduation Pathways, and Dual Credit.	6/1/2025
19–20	College Admission Exam Scores for ELA and/or Math	Updated courses per SBE rules.	9/1/2024
21–22	Performance-Based Learning Experience for ELA and/or Math	Added information on Performance-based Pathway.	9/1/2024
26	Transcription of Competency-based Crediting and GPA	Added a note to provide information in alignment with SBE and OSPI best practices.	9/1/2024
27	Continued Educational Support up to the Age of 22	Updated the age from 21 to 22 and added resources regarding the court decision.	9/1/2024
29	Two-Credit Academic Waiver for “Individual Student Circumstances”	Removed the “Graduation Requirement Emergency Waiver (GREW)” section and replaced it with a note to reflect its expiry.	9/1/2024
13	Graduation Pathways one-pager	Added information on Performance-Based Pathway and adjusted formatting.	4/30/2024
18–19	Graduation Pathways	Added new information related to the Performance-Based Pathway.	4/30/2024
27	Graduation Requirement Emergency Waiver	Updated guidance related to SBE’s extension of the Graduation Pathway waiver in the GREW for the Class of 2024.	4/30/2024
30–33	Appendix A	Added new resources related to information in the toolkit.	6/29/2023
16–17, 20, 21	Graduation Pathways	Approved CTE Equivalencies Update. Updated Performance-based Graduation Pathway.	6/29/2023

<b>Page(s) Revised</b>	<b>Section</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Date</b>
28–30	Waivers and Appeals	Updated section ~ Graduation Requirement Emergency Waiver (GREW).	6/29/2023
Most	Throughout all	At least minimal updates to most sections throughout entire document.	6/29/2023
Most	Throughout all	Updated most sections with final SBE rules and updated guidance/resources.	6/29/2023
All	Entire document	Updated entire document, with new legislation, format.	8/20/2019

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