



## **INITIAL FEEDBACK FOR GRADUATION PATHWAY OPTIONS RULEMAKING**

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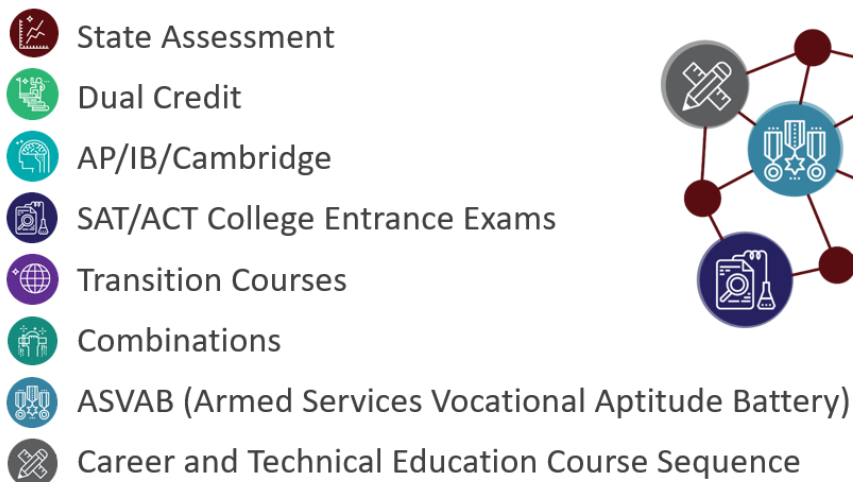
*Submitted for the August 2023 Board meeting by Linda Drake, Director of Career- and College-Readiness Initiatives*

### **Graduation Pathway Options Background**

There are three parts to the Washington diploma: the High School and Beyond Plan, credit and subject area requirements, and graduation pathway options, and the purpose of the diploma is to declare a student ready for success in postsecondary education, gainful employment, civic engagement, and lifelong learning (RCW 28A.230.090).

Graduation pathway options were established in 2019, and they replaced an exit exam requirement which consisted of the state exam for high school or an approved alternative. There are currently eight pathway options that include the state exam, other exams, transition courses, a military option, and Career and Technical Education course sequence. For the top five options listed shown in Figure 1, students must pass an option in English and one in math, in any combination. The military and CTE options are “stand alone,” that is, if the student passes one of these options, they have met the pathway requirement.

**Figure 1: Graduation Pathway Options Established in 2019** (RCW 28A.655)



### **House Bill 1308 (Chapter 349, Laws of 2023)**

Recent legislation, House Bill 1308, addressed the graduation pathway requirement by:

- Clarifying the purpose of graduation pathways.

- Adding a performance-based graduation pathway option, and directing the State Board of Education (SBE) to write rules to:
  - Establish the requirements for the safety and quality of the performance-based learning experience.
  - Establish the requirements for authentic performance-based assessment criteria for determining the student has demonstrated the applicable learning standards.
  - Collaborate with the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction on graduation proficiency targets and associated rubrics aligned with state learning standards in English language arts and mathematics to support implementation of the performance-based graduation pathway option.
- Establishing some ongoing data and monitoring requirements with the aim of helping to ensure the options are more equitably offered.
- Directing the State Board to establish the list of Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate, and Cambridge International courses which meet the graduation pathway requirements.

### Initial Feedback to Inform the Development of Proposed Rules

Several events, shown in Table 1, were used to collect input from diverse stakeholders and knowledgeable parties to help inform the development of proposed rules.

**Table 1: Collecting Input for Development of Proposed Rules**

Name of Event	Date	Participants	Comments
<a href="#">Design a Graduation Pathway Webinar</a>	July 20, 2023	267 registrants.	Feedback collected through an online application, Padlet.
<a href="#">Learning from Other States Webinar</a>	July 25, 2023	Panelists from the states of New Mexico and Colorado discussed performance-based graduation pathways, facilitated by Education Commission of the States (ECS) staff. These states were chosen in consultation with ECS staff as states that use performance-based assessment as a graduation option.	Approximately 60 people viewed the webinar and engaged in questions and answers, many from Washington.
Meeting with Vermont state educators	July 26, 2023	SBE staff engaged in conversations with Vermont education staff (Vermont uses performance-based	Facilitated by Great School Partnership staff, consultant for the Mastery-based Learning Collaborative.

		assessment as a graduation option)	
Meeting with State District Assessment Coordinators	August 4, 2023	Approximately 70 district assessment coordinators from around Washington.	Discussion will focus on quality of the learning experience and assessment criteria for the performance-based pathway option. (The meeting has not yet occurred as of the date of the Board meeting materials.)

**The Design a Graduation Pathway Webinar**

Of the 267 registrants for the **Design a Graduation Pathway** webinar, 158 joined the meeting online. Feedback was collected using the online application Padlet. All registrants were sent copies of the presentation and had access to Padlet to record their feedback. Padlet links were left active for one week after the webinar so that all registrants could add additional feedback.

The webinar included a brief presentation, time for participants to enter their feedback, and brief discussion and sharing about the performance-based pathway. In Padlet, participants could post responses to prompts with text, and in addition, could link or upload relevant sources and references. Participants could also respond and “like” posts of other participants. The prompts for feedback were organized into three areas.

- 1) Student focus:
  - What helps students engage with learning experiences generally?
  - What would help ensure the performance-based pathway option connects to student’s goals for life after high school?
- 2) Safety and quality of the learning experience
  - What requirements would help ensure the student learning experience was safe?
  - What requirements would help ensure the quality of the student learning experience?
- 3) Assessment Criteria
  - What are important issues to consider in developing the assessment criteria that educators will use to determine if the student has met English language arts and math learning standards through the performance-based pathway?
  - What requirements would help ensure consistency in evaluating the student’s performance?

**Summary of Design a Graduation Pathway Webinar Participant Feedback**

The following summarizes the webinar participant’s feedback by identifying some of the common themes in response to each of the webinar prompts.

*Student focus: What helps students engage with learning experiences generally?*

- Cultural experiences and connections with student's community: incorporating cultural relevance and community connections into the learning experience.
- Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) and supports for preparing students and equipping them with life skills.
- Real world applications, and authentic, hands-on, and meaningful experiences: providing opportunities for internships, apprenticeships and guidance from mentors.
- Interest-driven learning and student choice—allowing students to pursue topics that interest them.
- The most "liked" Padlet post, with 8 "likes," expressed a concern about the barriers to providing CTE pathways in smaller schools.

*Student focus: What would help ensure the performance-based pathway option connects to student's goals for life after high school?*

- Using the High School and Beyond Plan for connecting the pathway with the students' goals; some responses also expressed a concern that the High School and Beyond Plan does not yet meaningfully capture students' interests and goals.
- Allowing students to explore diverse interests and career options—this would address individual students' unique aspirations.
- Career exposure and guidance would help students make informed decisions about future career paths.
- Support for diverse interests, including arts and non-conventional career paths, would help students pursue goals outside of traditional academic pathways.

*Safety and Quality of the Learning Experience: What requirements would help ensure the student learning experience was safe?*

- Monitoring both students and worksite, using CTE Worksite Learning processes.
- Ensuring Labor and Industry rules for youth employment and industry safety standards are followed.
- Teaching students about boundaries and how to be safe in an adult setting.
- Use background checks for adults working with students.
- Concern about the amount of educator time and the funding it would take to ensure students are monitored and the pathway is implemented well.
- Concern about insurance and liability.

*Safety and Quality of Learning Experience: What requirements would help ensure the quality of the student learning experience?*

- Sufficient resources to ensure guidance and oversight on the quality of the student learning experience.
- Ongoing professional development for educators to ensure adherence to proficiency targets and rubrics.
- Incorporate student involvement through self-assessment, reflection, and goal setting.
- Establish clear guidelines, goals, grading criteria, and continuous monitoring of the learning experience.
- Consider time constraints for students who are already occupied with full-time studies, work, family, and activities.

- Implement accountability checks for special education services to ensure appropriate support is provided for learning to standard.
- The most “liked” comment, with 5 “likes,” referred to Universal Design for Learning.

*Assessment criteria: What are important issues to consider in developing the assessment criteria that educators will use to determine if the student has met English language arts and math learning standards through the performance-based pathway?*

- Industry standards should be considered for assessment criteria—they differ across different industries and subsets of industries.
- The assessment criteria should be flexible and adaptable to fit various scenarios.
- Students should have a say in setting their goals for completion and discussing how their projects relate to the assessment process.
- Standards and rubrics should be consistent across the state.
- The most “liked” post, with seven “likes,” referred to 21st Century Skills as assessment criteria.

*Assessment criteria: What requirements would help ensure consistency in evaluating the student’s performance?*

- Emphasize the Standards for Math Practice (SMPs) and Depth of Knowledge (DOK) levels for math assessment. Students should demonstrate proficiency in a set of SMPs through tasks with DOK 3 or 4.
- Utilize a basic standard form or rubric for evaluation but allow evaluators to articulate how the performance meets unique standards.
- Encourage student self-assessment and reflection as part of the evaluation process.
- Ensure validity and develop metrics for various modalities, including verbal and written assessments, as well as modifications and accommodations.

*General concerns expressed by webinar participants*

Many respondents see potential benefits in the pathway, particularly for students with skills and work experiences not covered by existing pathways. However, they also have concerns and questions including:

- Respondents emphasized the importance of ensuring that the performance-based pathway does not create barriers for marginalized and disadvantaged students, including those with disabilities and language barriers (MLL). They express a desire for flexibility to align with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) and support for students in smaller districts. Also a concern for students from military families.
- Participants emphasized the need for pathways that align with students' interests, passions, and individual career goals. Some believe the focus should go beyond math and ELA and be more personalized and relevant to students' lives.
- There were concerns about maintaining rigor in the performance-based assessments and ensuring that the pathway remains equitable for all students. Some fear it might become a “check box” exercise, lacking depth and authenticity.
- Respondents raised the issue of training teachers and providing adequate support for implementing the new pathway effectively. They highlighted the need for professional development to guide counselors, administrators, and teachers.
- Concerns were raised about the financial implications of the new pathway, particularly in terms of staffing and resources required to support students adequately.
- Participants suggested the importance of establishing partnerships with community agencies and companies to provide students with internship opportunities and broader pathways.

- Respondents would like clear reporting mechanisms and consistent rubrics for assessing the performance-based pathway.
- Respondents expressed concerns about the timeline for implementing the pathway and how it might affect current students' graduation requirements.

### Registrants for the Design a Graduation Pathway Webinar

The following tables show the self-reported role and race and ethnicity of the webinar participants. Note that these are duplicated counts that includes registrants who identified more than one role or more than one race and ethnicity category.

**Table 2: Race and Ethnicity of Webinar Registrants** (note that registrants could chose more than one category; the unduplicated count of registrants totaled 267):

<b>Race/ethnicity</b>	<b>Count (duplicated)</b>	<b>Percentage (duplicated)</b>
Amer. Indian/Alaska native	7	3%
Asian	13	5%
Black/African Amer.	13	5%
Hispanic/Latino any race	18	7%
Native Hawaiian/other Pac. Island	4	1%
2 or more races	12	4%
White	175	66%
No resp.	45	17%

**Table 3: Role of Webinar Registrants** (note that registrants could chose more than one category; the unduplicated count of registrants totaled 267):

<b>Role</b>	<b>Count (duplicated)</b>	<b>Percentage (duplicated)</b>
Business, industry, or labor	5	2%
Community-based or advocacy Organization	26	10%
District personnel	91	34%
K12 student	6	2%
Other	13	5%
Parent or caregiver	17	6%
Post second student	5	2%
School personnel	78	29%
State agency	33	12%
Blank	14	5%

### Learning from Other States

Both states that participated in the **Learning from Other States** webinar, Colorado and New Mexico, aim to provide multiple measures of student learning to move away from solely

relying on standardized assessments. They prioritize culturally responsive assessments and involve stakeholders, including teachers, administrators, families, students, and community partners in decision-making.

Colorado has 11 graduation guidelines options, including traditional measures like ACT and SAT, as well as capstone and collaboratively developed standards-based performance assessments. Students must meet graduation requirements based on content areas and demonstrate readiness through at least one of these performance-based measures. Colorado allows flexibility for schools to determine their demonstrations of competency based on local priorities. Colorado also includes industry-recognized credentials as part of the competency demonstrations.

In New Mexico, students need to demonstrate competency in reading, writing, math, science, and social studies. They have introduced performance-based options like capstone projects and portfolios, which align with the graduate profiles created by communities.

Some themes that arose in the discussion include:

- A focus on performance-based assessment that goes beyond traditional tests and allow students to demonstrate their competencies through capstone projects, portfolios, and other locally developed measures, with an emphasis on culturally responsiveness.
- Both states highlighted the importance of involving various stakeholders, including teachers, administrators, families, students, and community partners, to build buy-in and acceptance of the assessments.
- Both states have graduation guidelines or locally developed graduate profiles. The performance-based assessments are designed to align with these guidelines and profiles.
- A focus on local decision-making with support and guidance at a state level to help ensure that assessments meet quality criteria and improve consistency across the state. The discussion expressed concern about validity and reliability and recognized that agreed-upon criteria and standards were critical to ensuring fairness and effectiveness.

### **Discussion with Vermont State on Personalized Pathways and Performance-based Assessments**

SBE staff met with the state of Vermont Agency of Education staff. Some themes that arose in the discussion included:

- The importance of attending to practice through meetings with practitioners and professional development.
- How to implement an initiative well that does not come with additional funding to implement.
- Creating flexibility and personalization for students and avoiding "check-boxing."
- Communicating clearly with the Legislature, including milestones, to maintain a multi-year effort.
- Creating an authentic and individualized student planning tool as a protected way that students can communicate with adults in the system.

## Next Steps

Initial feedback from stakeholders, as well as learning that can be gained from conversations with other states, will be considered in developing the proposed rules to implement HB 1308. This information will also inform the development of implementation tools, including proficiency targets and associated rubrics for a performance-based graduation pathway option.

Figure 1 shows the timeline of rule writing to implement HB 1308 and updates the High School and Beyond Plan to address other recent legislation. Throughout August 2023, in dialogue with Board members particularly the Equity Committee, SBE staff will create draft proposed rules. At the September 2023 Board meeting, the Board will consider approval of proposed rules. The Board will consider adoption of final rules in December of 2023, with implementation tools available by February of 2024.

**Figure 2: Rules Filing Timeline**

