

18.50 Ensuring Graduation with a Meaningful High School Diploma

Resolution passed 2024

Whereas, according to Washington State law, “[t]he purpose of a high school diploma is to declare that a student is ready for success in postsecondary education, gainful employment, and citizenship, and is equipped with the skills to be a lifelong learner;” and

Whereas, the Washington State Board of Education (SBE) recently created a “Profile of a Graduate” that defines a graduate as someone who: cultivates personal growth/knowledge, solves problems, communicates effectively, sustains wellness, embraces differences/diversity, and masters life skills/self-agency; and has also developed recommendations to better align graduation requirements with the Profile of a Graduate including re-focusing “requirements on learning standards rather than on seat time to support mastery-based learning and interdisciplinary learning;” and

Whereas, Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Education (CRSE) creates schools that elevate historically marginalized voices; affirm racial, cultural, and linguistic identities; and prepare students for rigorous learning, connecting across differences, and becoming agents of positive social change; and

Whereas, SBE surveys and listening sessions in 2022 found that educators, students, and families perceive the current system of graduation requirements as confusing and complex; not all students have access to all graduation requirements and pathways; the High School and Beyond Plan is implemented inconsistently around the state; and there are concerns that some students receiving special education services have no appropriate graduation pathway option; and

Whereas, data from the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) Report on Graduation Pathways shows that almost 22% of Washington students are not completing any graduation pathway, and BIPOC students, students with disabilities, and English language learners are failing to complete any graduation pathways at significantly higher than average percentages; and

Whereas, while four-year graduation rates continue to increase, data from OSPI show that in 2023 16.4% of students did not graduate in four years and those percentages were higher for BIPOC students, highly mobile students, students receiving special education services, and multi-language learners; and

Whereas, today and in the future more than 70% of Washington State jobs will require a post-secondary credential, jobs at lowest risk of automation tend to require more education as well as analytical and critical problem-solving skills, and innovations in artificial intelligence will impact a wide range of occupations; and

Whereas, the SBE requires every student to create and update a High School and Beyond Plan, the purpose of which is to “help students take ownership over their learning during high school while exploring their values, strengths, passions, and long-term goals;” and “ensure they are learning the skills necessary to reach their post-high school goals;” and

Whereas, students applying for enrollment in a Washington public four-year college must complete the College Academic Distribution Requirements (CADRs), and admission to many private colleges often requires more credits of math, science, and/or world language than in the list of SBE high school graduation credit requirements; and

Whereas, the legislature regularly proposes and passes new graduation requirements that must be folded into the current 24-credit graduation requirements but does not provide funding for additional instructional hours.

Therefore, be it

Resolved, that Washington State PTA and its local PTAs and councils shall advocate for policies, programs, and funding that support school districts in providing all students, including those furthest from educational justice, a meaningful high school diploma that supports their post-secondary goals, including:

- Aligning graduation requirements with the State Board of Education’s Profile of a Graduate
- Regularly reviewing graduation requirements and pathways at the state and local level, including engaging with families, communities, and businesses to address gaps, emerging technologies, and changes in workforce needs
- Providing rigorous, innovative, and student-centered class offerings using culturally responsive and racially affirming curricula and teaching practices
- Preparing students to attend the college of their choice by offering classes that align with Washington’s College Academic Distribution Requirements (CADRs) and that are commonly required for admission to public and private four-year colleges and universities
- Allowing students to pursue their career goals by offering an array of Career and Technical Education classes and opportunities to prepare for a career in the trades, or earn an associate’s degree or other post-secondary certificate
- Creating opportunities to attain credits through evidence of competency and dual credit course options
- Providing equitable access to programs and supports to help students stay on track to graduate and that allow for timely credit recovery
- Ensuring all students have access to comprehensive academic supports, accelerated learning, and dual credit classes
- Ensuring all students have equitable access to a variety of graduation requirements and graduation pathways, college and career counseling, and High School and Beyond Plan supports
- Ensuring all state graduation requirements, including the High School and Beyond Plan, are implemented consistently throughout the state
- Ensuring that BIPOC students, highly mobile students, students with disabilities, and multi-language learners have equitable access to, and are equitably supported in, attaining a meaningful high school diploma
- Addressing the changing social and emotional needs of students

- Creating a mechanism where new graduation requirements enacted by the legislature undergo an alignment process with existing graduation requirements to ensure that they do not inflict a financial or structural burden on school districts; and be it further

Resolved, that Washington State PTA and its local PTAs and councils shall advocate for policies and programs that support student and family communication and engagement as critical components to attaining a meaningful high school diploma, by ensuring all students and families receive timely, clear, and comprehensive information about:

- Graduation requirements and pathways
- Dual credit opportunities
- Credit recovery opportunities
- Student progress toward graduation
- Post-secondary and career planning; and be it further

Resolved, that Washington State PTA and its local PTAs and councils shall advocate for ample funding for school districts to provide all components of a meaningful high school diploma that supports student post-secondary goals, including but not limited to curricula; instructional, counseling, and support staff; staff training; and sufficient hours and periods in the school day for students to complete all graduation requirements while still allowing the opportunity to explore their interests.