

SENATE BILL REPORT

SHB 2973

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Early Learning, K-12 & Higher Education, February 24, 2006

Title: An act relating to creating a career and technical high school graduation option for students meeting state standards in fundamental academic content areas.

Brief Description: Creating a career and technical high school graduation option for students meeting state standards in fundamental academic content areas.

Sponsors: House Committee on Education (originally sponsored by Representatives Priest, Ormsby, Kenney, Kagi, Hasegawa, P. Sullivan, Moeller, Santos and Springer).

Brief History: Passed House: 2/09/06, 98-0.

Committee Activity: Early Learning, K-12 & Higher Education: 2/23/06, 2/24/06 [DPA, DNP, w/oRec].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING, K-12 & HIGHER EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass as amended.

Signed by Senators McAuliffe, Chair; Pridemore, Vice Chair, Higher Education; Weinstein, Vice Chair, Early Learning & K-12; Schmidt, Ranking Minority Member; Berkey, Carrell, Eide, Kohl-Welles, Rasmussen, Rockefeller and Shin.

Minority Report: Do not pass.

Signed by Senators Benton, Delvin and Pflug.

Minority Report: That it be referred without recommendation.

Signed by Senator Schoesler.

Staff: Stephanie Yurcisin (786-7438)

Background: The State Board of Education (SBE) is charged with adopting statewide high school graduation requirements. The current SBE requirements are: 1) accumulate 19 credits in specified content areas; 2) complete a high school and beyond plan; and 3) complete a culminating project. Local school districts can adopt additional courses or other requirements. School districts also determine whether and to what extent career and technical courses are equivalent to academic courses and meet graduation requirements in core academic areas.

Beginning with the graduating class of 2008, most students will also be required to obtain a Certificate of Academic Achievement (CAA) to obtain a diploma. Students must meet the state standard in reading, writing, and mathematics on the high school Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) to earn a CAA. Science will be added in 2010.

The Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) establishes standards for and reviews and approves all career and technical education (CTE) programs offered by local

school districts. The standards distinguish between exploratory and preparatory courses. In preparatory courses, students are expected to demonstrate a level of competency that includes application of the Essential Academic Learning Requirements to meet industry defined standards for a specific career; demonstrate leadership and employability skills; and be employment ready or prepared for postsecondary options. The occupational skills in an approved program are written based on nationally or locally recognized industry standards.

A number of CTE programs lead to a credential or certificate recognized by the appropriate industry as a benchmark level of knowledge and skills. Examples include Cisco (computer networks), Certified Nursing Assistant, or Core Carpentry from the National Center for Construction Education and Research.

Summary of Amended Bill: Each high school or school board must adopt course equivalencies for high school CTE courses using a course equivalency approval procedure adopted by the board. The equivalency can be for whole or partial credit. Career and technical courses determined to be equivalent to academic core courses must be accepted as meeting core requirements, including graduation requirements, if the courses are recorded on the student's transcript using the academic department designation and title.

The State Board of Education is required to reevaluate graduation requirements for students in rigorous career and technical education programs to ensure that students enrolled in these programs have the opportunity to earn their CAA, complete the CTE program, and complete other state and local graduation requirements. The SBE must report its findings and recommendations to the Legislature by December 1, 2007.

The Superintendent of Public Instruction will develop an objective alternative assessment for career and technical education programs, which must be comparable in rigor to the skills and knowledge that the student must demonstrate on the Washington Assessment of Student Learning. The alternative assessment shall include an evaluation of a collection of work samples prepared and submitted by an applicant who is enrolled in a career and technical education program. The Superintendent will develop guidelines for the collection of the work sample.

In developing the work samples for career and technical education programs, the Superintendent must consult with community and technical colleges, employers, the work force training and education coordinating board, apprenticeship programs, and other regional and national experts in career and technical education.

Amended Bill Compared to Original Bill: The amended bill removes the requirement that the State Board of Education establish a career and technical high school graduation option. The amended bill requires the SBE to reevaluate graduation requirements for students in CTE programs and to report back to the Legislature by December 1, 2008. The amended bill includes the requirement that the Superintendent of Public Instruction develop an objective alternative assessment for career and technical education programs, which must include an evaluation of work samples prepared and submitted by an applicant who is enrolled in a career and technical education program.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: This is a result of discussions over many years; we are currently at a crossroads as far as career and technical education is concerned. We need to provide a clear pathway for these courses for them to remain in the schools. The addition of requirements in other areas effectively prohibits rigorous CTE programs. This gives local districts some flexibility to allow them to establish rigorous CTE courses. This should not prohibit students from taking arts, health, or other courses as they wish. The CTE equivalency helps to recognize high rigor in students' CTE coursework and is a very good idea. Arts courses may still qualify for CTE credit, so arts and CTE may not be mutually exclusive. As more credits are added, CTE courses are being squeezed, and districts need to know that the students can meet their credit requirements through CTE courses.

Testimony Against: All students need to receive a well-rounded education and this would crowd out other courses. Exempting students from studying arts, social studies, and health and fitness is not good. This flexibility for the schools could deprive students of training that we really want them all to have.

Testimony Other: An alternative assessment for students would be very helpful, but the time squeeze from the WASL requirements may prohibit students from taking some of these CTE courses. The CTE course equivalency section is good, but the provisions allowing CTE students to graduate without courses such as art or health and fitness provides a separate track to graduation. The equivalency credit portion should be passed out as an appropriate first step to send out a message that CTE is an important option for students.

Who Testified: PRO: Representative Priest, prime sponsor; Don Rash, Association of Washington School Principals; Gil Mendoza, Tacoma School District; Dough Meyer, Kathleen Lopp, Washington Career and Technical Education.

CON: Gary King, Washington Education Association; Dwight Gee, Arts Fund.

OTHER: Andrew Nydam, Olympia High School; Rod Duckworth, Office of Superintendent of Public Schools; Wes Pruitt, Workforce Board.