

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SB 5088

As Passed House - Amended:
April 9, 2019

Title: An act relating to the awarding of credits for computer science.

Brief Description: Awarding credits for computer science.

Sponsors: Senators Wellman, Palumbo and Mullet.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Education: 3/25/19, 3/28/19 [DPA].

Floor Activity:

Passed House - Amended: 4/9/19, 96-1.

**Brief Summary of Bill
(As Amended by House)**

- Requires, by the 2022-23 school year, each school district that operates a high school to provide an opportunity for students to access an elective computer science course that is available to all high school students.
- Authorizes school districts, beginning in the 2019-20 school year, to award academic credit for computer science to students through competency examinations, provided applicable requirements are met.
- Requires graduation course requirement rules of the Superintendent of Public Instruction to include provisions for competency testing in lieu of electives, provided applicable requirements are met.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass as amended. Signed by 18 members: Representatives Santos, Chair; Dolan, Vice Chair; Paul, Vice Chair; Steele, Ranking Minority Member; McCaslin, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Volz, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Bergquist, Caldier, Callan, Corry, Harris, Kilduff, Kraft, Ortiz-Self, Rude, Stonier, Thai and Valdez.

Staff: Ethan Moreno (786-7386).

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Background:

Credits Required for Graduation and Application of Pre-High School Credit.

Among other duties, the State Board of Education (SBE) establishes high school graduation requirements or equivalencies for public school students. Beginning with the graduating class of 2019, graduating students must complete 24 credits in specified subject areas as determined by the SBE.

Academic credit earned before high school can be applied to graduation requirements. If requested by the student and his or her family, a student who completed high school courses before attending high school must be given high school credit that is applied to fulfilling graduation requirements. To qualify for this credit, the academic level of the course must exceed the requirements for grades 7 and 8, and other specified criteria must be met.

Learning Requirements.

The Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI) is responsible for developing and revising the essential academic learning requirements (EALRs) that identify the knowledge and skills all public school students need to know and be able to do based on four basic education learning goals established by the Legislature. The SPI is also responsible for adopting student learning standards aligned to the EALRs as grade-level content expectations.

The Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) has begun using "state learning standards" and associated variations, including "Washington state K-12 learning standards" and "Washington state learning standards," instead of EALRs. The OSPI indicates that there is no difference between the content of the EALRs and the learning standards and that only the naming terminology has changed.

Waivers for Course Requirements.

Limited waiver and exemption provisions for graduation requirements have been established in statute. For example, graduation requirement rules of the SBE must include authorizations for school districts to waive up to two credits for individual students based on unusual circumstances. Additionally, the SPI, in consultation with certain state agencies, is required to adopt rules to implement graduation course requirements. These rules must include, as the SPI deems necessary, provisions for granting equivalencies for, temporary exemptions from, and special alterations to, the graduation course requirements established in statute. These rules may also include provisions for competency testing in lieu of courses required for graduation, or demonstration of specific skill proficiency or understanding of concepts through work or experience.

Summary of Amended Bill:

Access to Elective Computer Science Course.

Beginning no later than the 2022-23 school year, each school district that operates a high school must provide an opportunity for students to access an elective computer science course that is available to all high school students. School districts are encouraged to consider community-based or public-private partnerships in establishing and administering the elective course, but any course offered in accordance with the requirement must be aligned to the state learning standards for computer science or mathematics.

Earning Computer Science Credit Through Competency Examinations.

Beginning in the 2019-20 school year, school districts may award academic credit for computer science to students through the completion of a competency examination that is aligned with the state learning standards for computer science or mathematics, and course equivalency requirements adopted by the OSPI to implement the competency examination requirements. School district boards of directors that elect to award credit through this authorization must develop written policies that include:

- a course equivalency approval procedure;
- procedures for awarding competency-based credit for skills learned partially or wholly outside of a course; and
- an approval process for computer science courses taken before attending high school.

Prior to the use of any competency examination that may be used to award academic credit to students, the OSPI must review the examination to ensure its alignment with: the state learning standards for computer science or mathematics; and course equivalency requirements adopted by the OSPI to implement the competency examination requirements.

Waivers for Course Requirements.

Rules adopted by the SPI for implementing graduation course requirements must conform to new and modified requirements. The rules must now include provisions for:

- competency testing in lieu of courses required for graduation;
- competency testing in lieu of electives, including computer science electives, provided applicable state learning standards and equivalency requirements are met; and
- the demonstration of specific skill proficiency or understanding of concepts through work or experience.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date of Amended Bill: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) Exposure to computer science is critical to promoting equity. Washington should require that all high schools teach at least one high school computer science course. The structure for requiring this course is in place, and funding is provided in a preliminary legislative budget proposal.

This bill provides additional opportunities for students to take computer science courses and earn associated credit. This bill supports student efforts to earn twenty-first century skills.

(Opposed) The bill should have additional clarifying provisions. The courses that are required in the bill need to meet current computer science requirements. There are concerns about having the state mandate a competency exam for one singled-out course. The state is

transitioning to the 24-graduation credit system, and mandating an additional elective when some schools do not have seven-period days and capacity to provide the course may create an equity issue. If a student takes an elective computer science course, it should count for math or science credit, but learning standards need to apply to the course.

Persons Testifying: (In support) Maggie Glennon, Code.org; and Shannon Thissen, Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction.

(Opposed) Lucinda Young, Washington Education Association.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.