

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5088

As Amended by House, 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: Early Learning & K-12 Education: 1/21/19, 1/28/19 [DP].
Ways & Means: 2/18/19 [w/oRec].

Floor Activity:

Passed Senate: 3/12/19, 49-0.

Passed House: 4/09/19, 96-1.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires that all districts with a high school must provide an opportunity to access an elective computer science course beginning no later than the 2022-23 school year.
- Allows school districts to award computer science credits based on completion of a competency exam.
- Requires the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction to adopt rules on competency testing.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Wellman, Chair; Wilson, C., Vice Chair; Hawkins, Ranking Member; Holy, Hunt, McCoy, Mullet, Padden, Pedersen, Salomon and Wagoner.

Staff: Benjamin Omdal (786-7442)

SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

Majority Report: That it be referred without recommendation.

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.

Signed by Senators Rolfes, Chair; Frockt, Vice Chair, Operating, Capital Lead; Mullet, Capital Budget Cabinet; Braun, Ranking Member; Brown, Assistant Ranking Member, Operating; Honeyford, Assistant Ranking Member, Capital; Bailey, Becker, Billig, Carlyle, Conway, Darneille, Hasegawa, Hunt, Keiser, Liias, Palumbo, Pedersen, Rivers, Schoesler, Van De Wege, Wagoner and Warnick.

Staff: Kayla Hammer (786-7305)

Background: Computer Science. Computer science generally refers to the science that entails the theory and methods of processing information in computers, as well as the design of computer hardware, software, and applications. In 2013, the Legislature directed school districts to approve AP Computer Science as a math or science equivalent. In 2015, SHB 1813 directed the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction to adopt computer science learning standards.

Non-School Courses. If requested by a student or their family, a student who has completed high-school-level courses before attending high school must receive credit towards high school graduation requirements so long as:

- the course was taken with high school students; or
- the course is similar or equivalent to a course offered at a high school in the district.

Students who complete high school courses in these circumstances do not have to take an additional competency examination or perform additional assignments to receive the credit.

Competency Examinations. In current rules issued by the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), districts may grant credit based on student demonstration of proficiency or competency of certain subjects, per the district's written policy. In 2018, the Legislature directed OSPI to review available and appropriate options for various competency-based assessments. In addition, current rules require districts to adopt written policies to grant graduation credit for alternative learning experiences, non-high school courses, work experience, and challenges. Credit based on competency testing may be granted in lieu of enrollment or taking specific courses.

Summary of Bill: Computer Science Elective. Beginning no later than the 2022-23 school year, each district that operates a high school must provide the opportunity to access an elective computer science course. The course must be available to all students, and districts are encouraged to consider community-based or public-private partnerships to establish and administer a course.

Competency-Based Credit. Beginning in the 2019-20 school year, districts may award academic credit for computer science based on completion of a competency examination. Districts that award this credit must develop a written policy that addresses equivalency approval, skills learned partially or wholly outside the classroom, and computer science courses taken before high school. In addition, OSPI must create rules that address competency testing in lieu of graduation requirements and electives.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members: No.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony (Early Learning & K-12 Education): PRO: We need to give students skills to compete in the current economic environment. Having access to computer science provides students with many more academic and vocational opportunities. There is a wide discrepancy between computer science offerings across schools in Washington. Action is needed now to keep up with the changing economic and educational landscape. Computer science is a skill that every student should have the opportunity to access.

OTHER: Options should remain for school districts unless there are assurances funding and technology is in the districts to support the program and meet learning standards. There are also concerns about mandating competency testing.

Persons Testifying (Early Learning & K-12 Education): PRO: Senator Lisa Wellman, Prime Sponsor; Chad Magendanz, Technology Education and Literacy in Schools; Shannon Thissen, OSPI; Lauren Bricker, Puget Sound Computer Science Teachers Association; Andy Ko, University of Washington; Maggie Osorio, Code.org; Steve DuPont, Central Washington University; Dave Powell, Stand for Children; Aracely Casillas, Highline Public Schools and Code.org; Andy Shouse, Chief Program Officer, Washington STEM; Joseph Hofman, State Board of Education, Western Washington Student Board Member.

OTHER: Lucinda Young, Washington Education Association.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying (Early Learning & K-12 Education): No one.

EFFECT OF HOUSE AMENDMENT(S):

- Requires that the elective computer science courses that must be offered be limited to high school students and aligned to state learning standards for computer science or mathematics.
- Specifies that OSPI must review computer science competency examinations prior to use to ensure alignment with the state learning standards and course equivalency requirements.
- Requires that rules adopted by OSPI on competency testing in lieu of electives must meet applicable state learning standards and equivalency requirements.