

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5505

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Education, February 19, 2003

Title: An act relating to courses of study options offered by public high schools.

Brief Description: Providing course study options for public high schools.

Sponsors: Senators Carlson, Rasmussen, Honeyford, Doumit and Eide.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Education: 2/12/03, 2/19/03 [DPS].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5505 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Johnson, Chair; Zarelli, Vice Chair; Carlson, Eide, Finkbeiner, McAuliffe, Rasmussen and Schmidt.

Staff: Susan Mielke (786-7422)

Background: Current law requires school districts to offer courses that include content and skills addressed in the student learning goals, the high school graduation requirements, and minimum college entrance requirements. Student learning goal four provides that students must develop knowledge and skills essential to understand the importance of work and how student actions directly affect future career and educational opportunities. The minimum high school graduation requirements, established by the State Board of Education (SBE), require one credit in occupational education. Occupational education is defined as learning experiences designed to acquire skills under student learning goal four required in current and emerging occupations. The minimum requirements for freshman admission to Washington's public four-year universities and college, established by the Higher Education Coordinating Board, do not include any career or occupational educational requirements.

Additionally, current law requires schools to provide students an opportunity to pursue career and educational objectives through educational pathways that emphasize integration of academic and vocational education. Educational pathways may include programs such as work-based learning, school-to-work transition programs, tech prep programs, vocational-technical education, running start, and preparation for community or technical college or for a baccalaureate education.

Summary of Substitute Bill: In addition to providing programs for students who plan to attend a baccalaureate institution, all public high schools must provide programs for students who plan to pursue other career or work opportunities.

The programs may provide exploratory and preparatory opportunities specified in the bill.

SBE may provide a waiver from the requirements to provide these programs. When considering waiver requests, SBE must consider the extent the school district offered such programs prior to the 2003-04 school year.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: The additional options that public high schools must offer are for students that pursue career or work opportunities other than attending a four-year college or university. Instead of requiring specified exploratory and preparatory courses, these types of courses are permitted. Criteria is added for the State Board of Education to use when considering requests for waivers from these requirements.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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

Testimony For: This bill raises the status and visibility of career and technical education programs by putting them in statute and makes it clear to districts that these options should be available to students. Since goal four is not tested on the WASL, it is often overlooked. All students need to be prepared for the next step beyond high school, whatever that may be. College preparation is not and should not be the only option available to students. Career and technical education opens the door for students to start a career in a technical field after high school or can lead students to a certification program in a community college. Currently, these educational programs are not filled to capacity, which can be detrimental to the business partnerships that these programs have developed. Many students have been inspired to stay in school and have become leaders because they participated in these programs.

Testimony Against: Career and technical education needs to be supported but this bill ties the hands of schools and school districts. This bill raises fiscal concerns by being so proscriptive and too specific about the types of programs that must be offered. If there is no additional funding provided, then this bill could weaken career and technical education, not strengthen it.

Testified: Roger J. Sidick, Bret Chev (pro); Thomas Lopp, AYES (pro); Marianna L. Goheer, Kathleen Loop, WA-ACTE (pro); Ellen O'Brien Saunders, WTECB (pro); Christie Perkins, WA State Special Ed Coalition (pro); Tim Knue, WA ACTE (pro); Kurt Kingman, Mary M. Knight School Board (pro); Dennis Kampe, WA Assn. of Vocational Administrators, Clark County Skills Center (pro); Brian Jeffries, OSPI (pro w/concerns); Rainer Houser, AWSP (pro w/concerns); Joe Stengele, WA State FBLA (pro); Barbara Mertens, WASA (con).