

HOUSE BILL REPORT

2SSB 5790

As Reported by House Committee On:
Education

Title: An act relating to skill centers.

Brief Description: Regarding skill centers.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Ways & Means (originally sponsored by Senators Hobbs, Rockefeller, Rasmussen, Fairley, McAuliffe, Kohl-Welles, Pridemore, Hatfield, Clements, Jacobsen and Shin).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Education: 3/16/07, 3/27/07 [DPA].

Brief Summary of Second Substitute Bill (As Amended by House Committee)

- Creates a definition of a skill center and requires that enrolled students be funded at up to 2.0 full-time equivalents.
- Directs the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction to revise guidelines for skill centers to encourage development of satellite and branch campus programs; develop a capital plan and K-20 technology plan for skill centers; and broker the development of Skill Centers of Excellence in key economic sectors.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass as amended. Signed by 9 members: Representatives Quall, Chair; Barlow, Vice Chair; Priest, Ranking Minority Member; Anderson, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Haigh, McDermott, Roach, Santos and P. Sullivan.

Staff: Andrew Colvin (786-7304).

Background:

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.

About 7,000 high school students from 85 school districts currently attend one of the 10 skill centers across the state that provide in-depth instruction in career and technical skills. Students typically attend the skill center for part of the day and their home high school for the remainder of the day. Skill centers also offer summer school programs.

Skill centers are not created in statute; instead, they function as a cooperative among participating school districts. The Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) has developed guidelines for the initiation and operation of a skill center. The guidelines include that a skill center must enroll at least 70 percent of the students on a core campus and must maintain at least 150 full-time equivalent (FTE) students.

The skill centers generate FTE funding through the general apportionment funding formula for enrolled students and receive enhanced funding for approved career and technical education courses. Skill centers are largely .6 FTE programs, leaving .4 FTE for the sending school district. If a student takes more than two classes at the sending school in addition to the skill center program, the sending school is not reimbursed for classes beyond the first two.

Skill centers are located in Vancouver, Tumwater, Wenatchee, Port Angeles, SeaTac, Everett, Spokane, Kennewick, Bremerton, and Yakima. The 2005-07 biennial and 2006 supplemental capital budgets included funding for feasibility studies for additional skill centers in Skagit County, Moses Lake, northeast King County, Pierce County, and Seattle.

The 2006 Legislature directed the Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board (Workforce Board) to conduct a study of skill centers and make recommendations on how to provide increased opportunities for students in areas without a skill center, including the feasibility of using satellite sites, joint programs, and the K-20 network; how skill centers can reduce dropout rates; and how to address any additional funding needs.

Summary of Amended Bill:

A skill center is defined as a regional career and technical education partnership established to provide access to industry-defined programs of study that prepare students for careers, employment, apprenticeships, and post-secondary education. Skill centers are operated by a host school district and governed by an administrative council under a cooperative agreement.

Beginning in the 2007-08 school year, students attending skill centers must be funded for all classes at the skill center and at the sending districts, up to two (2.0) FTEs. The OSPI must ensure that Student Achievement Account funds generated by skill center students are returned to skill centers.

The OSPI, in cooperation with the Workforce Board, skill center directors, and the Washington Association for Career and Technical Education, must revise the skill centers policy guidelines so that the threshold enrollment at a skill center need not have a minimum of 70 percent of students enrolled on the core campus, in order to facilitate serving rural students through satellite programs or branch campuses.

Developmental planning for branch campuses is encouraged for underserved rural areas or high-density areas. Once a branch campus reaches sufficient enrollment to become self-sustaining, it can become a separate center or remain an extension of the founding center. Satellite and branch campus programs are encouraged to address high-demand fields.

The OSPI must develop a 10-year capital plan for skill centers. Subject to funding, the OSPI will conduct approved feasibility studies for serving rural and high-density area students and develop a master plan for creating a technology infrastructure to connect all skill centers to the K-20 network.

Subject to available funding, skill centers must provide rural and high-density area students with access to late afternoon, evening, and summer school programs in high-demand occupations. When possible, the programs must be targeted for credit retrieval, dropout prevention and intervention, and dropout retrieval. Skill centers that receive funding must evaluate their efforts.

The OSPI must establish and broker the development of "Skill Centers of Excellence" in key economic sectors of regional significance, as well as identify their roles in developing curriculum and methodologies for reporting course equivalencies for high school graduation. Once the Skill Centers of Excellence are established, the OSPI will seek funding for a Running Start for Career and Technical Education grant program to develop programs of study targeted to regionally-determined high-demand occupations.

Amended Bill Compared to Second Substitute Bill:

Skill Center students shall be funded at up to 2.0 full-time equivalents, rather than 1.4.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) In the last 20 years the number of spots available for students to attend skill centers has not kept up with the increase in the overall number of students. At the same time, we've developed many great programs for students going to college, such as Advanced Placement (AP) classes and Running Start. But we've neglected the young people who don't want to go college; kids who instead may want to become a plumber, a carpenter, or pipe-fitter. These are good skills that shouldn't be neglected. Many high schools have scaled back programs such as wood shop because of other demands on the schools and students. Out of the hundreds of millions of dollars going to K through 12 and higher education, this bill only needs a little bit, and will have a big impact.

The funding limit should be returned to 2.0 FTEs, which would remove the disincentive for districts to send students to skill centers. This will also assist in extending skill center opportunities to students in more rural and remote areas. Another good aspect of this bill is that it puts skill centers in statute. This bill is really a product of a study requested of the Workforce Board and the OSPI regarding access to skill centers, and this bill contains most of the recommendations from that study.

(With concerns) Funding for skill center students at less than 2.0 FTEs makes it difficult to allocate the funding between schools and skill centers. If the bill is not amended to fund skill center students at up to 2.0 FTEs, then it should be prescriptive as to how the funding should be allocated between the schools and the skill centers.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: (In support) Senator Hobbs, prime sponsor; Jacob Jackson, North Olympic Peninsula Skills Center; Brian Jeffries, Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction; and Kathleen Lopp, Washington Association for Career and Technical Education.

(With concerns) John Aultman, New Market Skills Center.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.