

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5616

As of February 24, 2011

Title: An act relating to the opportunity to earn postsecondary credit during high school.

Brief Description: Creating the launch year program.

Sponsors: Senators Tom, Litzow, McAuliffe, Hill and Shin; by request of Governor Gregoire.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Early Learning & K-12 Education: 2/03/11, 2/16/11 [DPS-WM].
Ways & Means: 2/22/11.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5616 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

Signed by Senators McAuliffe, Chair; Harper, Vice Chair; Litzow, Ranking Minority Member; Eide, Fain, Hobbs, King, Nelson, Rockefeller and Tom.

Staff: Kimberly Cushing (786-7421)

SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

Staff: Elise Greef (786-7708)

Background: Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB) programs allow students to take college-level courses while staying on their high school campuses. For both of these programs, students complete courses taught by high school teachers and take standardized examinations at the end of each course. Whether college credit is awarded depends upon a student's score on the exam. Minimum scores to qualify for college credit vary by college and by subject area. Students pay the exam fees.

In November 2010, the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) released a report regarding student participation in dual credit programs. Dual credit programs allow high school students to begin earning college credits while still in high school. An analysis of students' schedules for the 2009-10 school year, as reported in the Comprehensive Education Data and Research System (CEDARS) show that 10.9 percent of all high school courses taken can earn dual credit. Whether or not a student will be able to leave high school

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with a full year of postsecondary credit will vary depending on the subject matter and program requirements in each apprenticeship program or institution of higher education.

The Washington Higher Education Coordinating Board (HECB) is a ten-member citizen board appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the Senate. Established by the Legislature, HECB provides vision, leadership, and coordination for the state's public colleges and universities. HECB administers state and federal financial aid.

The State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC) is governed by a nine-member board appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the Senate. SBCTC is responsible for providing leadership and coordination for Washington's public system of 34 community and technical colleges.

Summary of Bill (Recommended Substitute): Within existing resources, all public high schools in the state must work toward the goal of offering a sufficient number of high school courses to give students the opportunity to earn the equivalent of a year's worth of postsecondary credit toward a certificate, apprenticeship program, technical degree, or associate or baccalaureate degree. The high school courses that may qualify for postsecondary credit are advanced high school courses with accompanying recognized college-level proficiency exams or demonstrated competencies. All public high schools must also inform students and their families about the opportunities to earn postsecondary credit during twelfth grade to get an advanced start on their career and postsecondary education.

By December 1, 2011, and biennially each June thereafter, institutions of higher education must develop a master list of postsecondary courses that can be fulfilled by achieving an agreed-upon score on a proficiency exam or meeting demonstrated competencies for lower-division general education requirements. Each institution must publish on its website and in its admissions materials its own list of courses that can qualify for postsecondary credit. Each institution must recognize at least one year of course credit that can be earned through proficiency exams or demonstrated competencies, including but not limited to AP and IB exams. The successful completion of the exam and award of credit must be noted on the student's college transcript.

Each institution of higher education must provide a list of postsecondary courses that can be fulfilled by proficiency exams or demonstrated competencies to the HECB and SBCTC in a form that the Superintendent of Public Instruction is able to distribute to school districts.

The HECB must annually publish on its website the agreed-upon list of high school courses qualifying for postsecondary credit and the exam scores and demonstrated competencies meeting postsecondary requirements.

EFFECT OF CHANGES MADE BY EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION COMMITTEE (Recommended Substitute): It is clarified that the high school courses that may qualify for postsecondary credit are advanced high school courses with accompanying recognized college-level proficiency exams or demonstrated competencies. It is specified that the master list of postsecondary courses that can be satisfied by successful proficiency examination scores or demonstrated competencies are for lower division general education requirements.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony on Original Bill (Early Learning & K-12 Education): PRO: We want coordination between high school and higher education. For a lot of students this is a great means to afford college. It also gives meaning to 12th grade in high school. When students think they are getting credit it should truly take place. We have been working for a long time to have college in the high school, which this is, without the cost to students. Students and their parents realize high school prepares students for their careers. We know high school students are taking courses that qualify for dual credit. We believe students have to pay again to repeat what they already know. We know that 35 percent of high school students don't carry a full load in their 12th grade year. More students are capable of taking rigorous courses than do. Taking a rigorous course gives students more confidence in their ability to attend college. High school students have many opportunities to get college credit. The Running Start program is excellent. AP and IB already have mandated exit exams. The only problem is to create an entire year's worth of credit. It may take districts time to create space and staff for advanced classes. We must take into account that in college there is a different level of studying and discussion. There should be no difference in the high school courses taken for college credit and college-level work. The timeline for universities is tight. Higher education is all over the map about which courses and exam scores do and don't count for credit. This bill requires colleges to list their courses that will count for credit so a high school student can plan. While this information is on all websites, it may be displayed differently. This will result in better prepared students advancing toward their degrees. Higher education accreditation standards allow up to one-year of credit, and colleges already award credit for any AP score of three or above. There are different requirements for prerequisites for majors. If everyone needs to agree on a uniform score it could end up being higher than is accepted now, or not all courses will be approved. We don't need a new Department of Education with this bill. We have a little concern about a lack of funding, but it is good to have it as a goal to provide opportunities for students.

OTHER: We are supportive of the intent but concerned about interpretation. Too many students are entering college needing remedial courses. We need students to have a solid senior year of course competency. Writing requires practice. Skipping a course doesn't help with practice. We are concerned about high school courses counting for college credit that aren't really college courses. Washington's public higher education system is one of the best in the country and we want to keep its quality and reputation. For those who are ready for college courses, we absolutely support it. Many teachers throughout the system are qualified to teach rigorous standards. A launch year isn't just a good idea it is a necessary idea.

Persons Testifying (Early Learning & K-12 Education): PRO: Senator Tom, prime sponsor; Senator McAuliffe; Leslie Goldstein, Judy Hartmann, Governor's Policy Office; Lucinda Young, Washington Education Association; Jane Sherman, Washington State

University/Council of Presidents; Jerry Bender, Association of Washington School Principals; Dan Steele, Washington Association of School Administrators.

OTHER: Marsha Riddle Buly, Western Washington University Faculty Legislative Rep.; Anthony Flinn, Eastern Washington University Faculty Legislative Rep.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony (Ways & Means): PRO: As college costs are rising rapidly, this measure provides a pathway for students to make sure access to college is more affordable. The bill also adds predictability so students know, while planning their classes, which courses will definitely provide college credit. It is another great tool to ensure the senior year of high school is a well-used year. This bill saves time and saves money. The bill should increase the rigor of students' programs and ultimately save money for both students and the state by reducing the time it takes to earn a degree. A great bill with zero fiscal impact to the state or the school districts but with a positive impact for parents and students regarding tuition costs.

Persons Testifying (Ways & Means): PRO: Senator Tom, prime sponsor; George Scarola, League of Education Voters; Mike Reilly, Council of Presidents; Leslie Goldstein, Governor's Policy Office.