

SENATE BILL REPORT

SSB 6332

AS PASSED SENATE, FEBRUARY 11, 1994

Brief Description: Establishing high school credit equivalencies for credits earned in institutions of higher education.

SPONSORS: Senate Committee on Higher Education (originally sponsored by Senators Bauer, West, Sutherland, Drew and Snyder)

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6332 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Bauer, Chairman; Drew, Vice Chairman; Prince, Sheldon and West.

Staff: Jean Six (786-7423)

Hearing Dates: January 26, 1994; February 2, 1994

BACKGROUND:

The Running Start program provides an opportunity for qualified eleventh and twelfth grade high school students to enroll in community and technical colleges to satisfy high school graduation requirements as well as earn college credit. In 1990 the Legislature authorized the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC) to operate Running Start programs at five pilot sites. All community and technical colleges were required to offer Running Start beginning Fall of 1992.

During 1992-93, the first year of statewide implementation, approximately 3,500 annual unduplicated high school students enrolled in Washington community and technical colleges under the program. 1993 fall quarter enrollments show 3,986 headcount enrollment, producing approximately 2,614 full-time equivalent students. The average Running Start student, as measured by grade point average continues to perform at least as well as the average entering community or technical college students.

The 1993 Legislature approved joint recommendations from the Running Start Task Force, the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction and the SBCTC which include a standard statewide reimbursement rate for all Running Start students and an increase in overhead from 5 to 7 percent to be retained by the sending high school. The increase in overhead is intended to be used to improve counseling services at the high school for program participants.

The State Board of Education recently changed the method by which college credit is applied to high school graduation requirements. The new rule states that five quarter hours or three semester hours of college or university work equals .75 of a high school credit. Under the new rule, effective fall quarter of 1994, a Running Start student who attends college full-time will earn 6.75 high school credits annually, compared with 6.0 credits earned by regularly enrolled high school students.

SUMMARY:

The State Board of Education (SBE) agrees to delay until September 1995 implementation of its rule establishing course equivalencies. By December 30, 1994, the Higher Education Coordinating Board and the SBE will report to the House and Senate Higher Education Committees recommendations on credit equivalencies.

By May 1, 1994, the Higher Education Coordinating Board and the State Board of Education will convene a task force for ongoing discussions of curriculum issues that transect higher education and the common schools. The task force encourages various education entities to provide each other with advice and counsel as rules and policies are adopted with implications for students in all sectors. In selecting members of the task force, the boards shall consult the office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, the Commission on Student Learning, the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges, the Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board, representatives of the four-year institutions, representatives of the school directors, school and district administrators, teachers, higher education faculty, students, counselors, vocational directors, parents and other interested organizations.

The process shall be designed to accomplish goals including but not limited to: (1) recognizing the changing nature of educational instruction and crediting, and awarding appropriate credit for knowledge and competencies learned in a variety of ways; (2) encouraging students to enroll in programs and institutions that will best meet the students' needs and educational goals; and (3) creating uniform articulation agreements between institutions of higher education and the common school system for granting appropriate credit for competencies and knowledge learned in high schools, colleges, or universities.

Appropriation: none

Revenue: none

Fiscal Note: requested January 19, 1994

Effective Date: The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect immediately.

TESTIMONY FOR:

The State Board of Education rule on high school credit equivalency which would go into effect in fall 1994 puts a barrier in the way of students moving smoothly through the education system. Delay in the implementation of that rule is advised.

The HECB has already convened a task force on admissions that could serve as the foundation for the recommended task force to discuss the very broad issue of the effect of reform on all sectors of education. The Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board would like to be one of the boards convening the conversation.

TESTIMONY AGAINST:

This is a complex and technical issue. The voices saying "return to 1.0" have been heard and adjustments have been made accordingly. They seem to be coming from specific geographical areas in our state and we do not see any evidence which indicates they speak for the entire community college system on this issue.

This is micromanagement of an issue best resolved without legislative action. Putting a credit definition in statute is micromanagement. The State Board of Education (SBE) has the authority to establish value of high school credits. High school credit is a K-12 issue. We must pay attention to the needs of the students who remain in high school.

The SBE convened a task force which followed a very rigorous process to reach its decision and believes it reached the right decision. The SBE rule does not prevent a high school student from receiving a high school diploma and AA degree at the same time. Leave the new SBE rule in place; do not delay its implementation. There is an appeal and challenge process in place.

TESTIFIED: Rep. Val Ogden (pro); Dr. Jane Sherman, Deputy Director, HECB (pro); Brian Barker, Executive Director, Principals' Association (con); Lorraine Wilson, Associate Director, WSDA (con); Kathleen Anderson, SBE (con); Dr. Barbara Mertens, OSPI (con); Dr. Ron Crossland, SBCTC (con); Marlene Coplen, WTECB