

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 3094

As Reported by House Committee On:
Education

Title: An act relating to studying the expansion of high school skills centers.

Brief Description: Studying the expansion of high school skills centers.

Sponsors: Representatives Ormsby, Cox, Haigh, Kagi, Priest, McCoy, Fromhold, Condotta, Chase, Upthegrove, Schual-Berke, Kenney and Morrell.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Education: 2/2/04, 2/5/04 [DP].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Directs the Superintendent of Public Instruction to study and report to the Legislature regarding issues related to high school skills centers.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 11 members: Representatives Quall, Chair; McDermott, Vice Chair; Talcott, Ranking Minority Member; Tom, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Anderson, Cox, Haigh, Hunter, McMahan, Rockefeller and Santos.

Staff: Sydney Forrester (786-7120).

Background:

High school skills centers are an integral part of the K-12 system and are operated as an extension of high schools within a local region. Skills centers are governed by an administrative council comprised of the superintendents of the participating districts. They provide high school students with job preparation skills, including academic and work skills.

Skills centers are attended by both high academic achievers and students with special needs. Competency-based individualized instruction in applied academics and technology training is used to assist students in reaching a higher level of occupational skills, including basic skills, critical thinking skills, leadership skills, and work skills.

Ten skills centers currently are operating in Washington and 85 school districts across the state are members of a skills center consortium.

Summary of Bill:

The Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI) is directed to report to the Legislature by December 1, 2004 regarding: 1) the success of skills centers in preparing high school students for future jobs, including how the centers are utilized, the programs offered, and the placement of students; and 2) the operating and capital funding challenges facing skills centers. The SPI's report also must include recommendations for: 1) strengthening ties between school districts, skills center consortia, apprenticeship programs, and community and vocational colleges; and 2) funding, including whether skills center funding should be similar to funding for the Running Start program.

In developing the report, the SPI is directed to consult with high school skills center consortia, the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges, the Work Force Training and Education Coordinating Board, the State Apprenticeship and Training Council, the Center for Career Alternatives, the Washington Association for Career and Technical Education, and the State Work Force Development Council.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Testimony For: Skills centers serve those students who are pursuing a variety of time-honored occupations and are a critical piece of the delivery of career technical options, especially in rural areas. Skills centers do a lot for first-time students and for dropout retrieval. These centers are a valuable tool, but there are concerns about the disincentives for participating and the study would help address these disincentives. When running a levy, there is some financial disincentive for a high school to participate. Skills center participants want recommendations for meeting funding challenges, including consideration of the Running Start model. The skills that employers report having the most difficulty finding are job skills and work place skills. Eliminating the barriers to more participation would help address these concerns. We should not wait until kids are in high school before publicizing these options, but should start explaining in the fifth grade the trades and occupations training opportunities available at skills centers. The study also should look to the uses of the system; the students and the employers.

Testimony Against: None.

Persons Testifying: (In support) Greg Williamson, Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction; Dan Steele, Washington State School Directors' Association; Ellen O'Brien Saunders, Workforce Training and Education Board; John Aultman, New Market Skills Center; Kathleen Lopp, Washington Association of Career and Technical Education; and Rick Slunaker, Associated General Contractors.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.