

# HOUSE BILL REPORT

## HB 2973

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**As Reported by House Committee On:**  
Education

**Title:** An act relating to creating a career and technical high school graduation option for students meeting state standards in fundamental academic content areas.

**Brief Description:** Creating a career and technical high school graduation option for students meeting state standards in fundamental academic content areas.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Priest, Ormsby, Kenney, Kagi, Hasegawa, P. Sullivan, Moeller, Santos and Springer.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:**

Education: 1/26/06, 2/1/06 [DPS].

**Brief Summary of Substitute Bill**

- Directs the State Board of Education to establish a career and technical graduation option where students: (1) take courses to prepare for the Certificate of Academic Achievement; (2) enroll in an approved career and technical program and attain the program's credential; and (3) may be permitted to not meet state standards in content areas not assessed on the high school assessment.
- Requires each high school or school board to adopt course equivalencies for career and technical courses.

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### HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

**Majority Report:** The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 13 members: Representatives Quall, Chair; P. Sullivan, Vice Chair; Talcott, Ranking Minority Member; Anderson, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Curtis, Haigh, Hunter, McDermott, Priest, Santos, Shabro, Tom and Wallace.

**Staff:** Barbara McLain (786-7383).

**Background:**

High School Graduation Requirements.

Most graduation requirements are established by the State Board of Education (SBE). The current SBE requirements are:

- (1) accumulate 13.5 credits in the content areas of English, math, science, social studies, health and fitness, arts, and occupational education, plus an additional 5.5 credits of electives;
- (2) complete a high school and beyond plan; and
- (3) complete a culminating project.

The SBE also requires that each content area cover at least benchmark three of the Essential Academic Learning Requirements (EALRs). The EALRs cover reading, writing, mathematics, science, communication, social studies, arts, and health and fitness. Local school districts can adopt additional courses or other requirements. School districts also determine whether and to what extent career and technical courses are equivalent to academic courses and meet graduation requirements in core academic areas.

Beginning with the graduating class of 2008, most students will also be required to obtain a Certificate of Academic Achievement (CAA) to obtain a diploma. Students must meet the state standards in reading, writing, and mathematics on the high school Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) to earn a CAA. Science will be added in 2010.

#### Career and Technical Education.

The Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) establishes standards for and reviews and approves all career and technical education (CTE) programs offered by local school districts. The standards distinguish between exploratory and preparatory courses. In preparatory courses, students are expected to demonstrate a level of competency that includes application of the EALRs to meet industry defined standards for a specific career; demonstrate leadership and employability skills; and be employment ready or prepared for postsecondary options. The occupational skills in an approved program are written based on nationally or locally recognized industry standards.

A number of CTE programs lead to a credential or certificate recognized by the appropriate industry as a benchmark level of knowledge and skills. Examples include Cisco (computer networks), Certified Nursing Assistant, or Core Carpentry from the National Center for Construction Education and Research.

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#### **Summary of Substitute Bill:**

The SBE must establish a career and technical high school graduation option that:

- requires completion of coursework to prepare students to earn a CAA;
- requires completion of a CTE program approved by OSPI for this purpose and attainment of the credential or certificate associated with the program; and
- may contain other course requirements, but must permit students to not meet all state standards in content areas not tested on the WASL so that students can focus on the CAA and CTE program requirements.

The OSPI must develop a list of approved CTE programs that qualify for the graduation option. The programs must have the following characteristics:

- lead to a certificate or credential that is state or nationally recognized by trades, industries or other professional associations as necessary for employment or advancement in that field;
- require a sequenced progression of exploratory and preparatory courses that are vocationally intensive and rigorous; and
- have a high potential for providing the completer with gainful employment or entry into a postsecondary workforce training program.

Information about the option is included in a booklet about enrollment options and program opportunities distributed by the OSPI.

Each high school or school board must adopt course equivalencies for high school CTE courses using a course equivalency approval procedure adopted by the board. The equivalency can be for whole or partial credit. Career and technical courses determined to be equivalent to academic core courses must be accepted as meeting core requirements, including graduation requirements, if the courses are recorded on the student's transcript using the academic department designation and title.

**Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:**

The requirement that an approved CTE program consist of at least 1,080 hours is replaced by a description of the program: a sequenced progression of multiple courses that are vocationally intensive and rigorous. Language is clarified that students enrolled in the CTE graduation option may be permitted to not meet all state standards in content areas not assessed on the WASL. A requirement is added that each high school or school board must adopt course equivalencies for CTE courses. Career and technical courses determined to be equivalent to academic core courses must be accepted as meeting core requirements, including graduation requirements.

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**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Requested on February 2, 2006.

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

**Testimony For:** (Original bill) The critical question is whether we are going to have CTE programs in high school. This must be an active decision, not a passive one. There is increased pressure to fill the school day with academic courses in preparation or remediation for the WASL or to fulfill other EALRs and graduation requirements. This proposal creates flexibility and a clear pathway for CTE students to achieve a diploma. This provides great potential for students who do not want to attend a four-year university but have a passion and commitment to be successful. It opens the doors for them to pursue a rigorous CTE program.

The CTE programs are challenging, support high standards, and can ensure rigor, success, and motivation for students. The CTE provides rigor and relevance to a large number of students.

(With concerns) Additional work is needed to define the programs that qualify for the option. We also need to ensure that these programs are actually available for students, especially students in smaller school districts. It would be better to provide a description of the programs rather than specify the number of hours. The need for this option is driven by the use of the WASL as a high stakes graduation requirement, and this is not addressed. There is concern about creating a second tier diploma.

**Testimony Against:** None.

**Persons Testifying:** (In support) Representative Priest, prime sponsor; Gil Mendoza, Tacoma School District; Bruce McBurney, Central Kitsap School District; Kathleen Lopp, Washington Association for Career and Technical Education; Lisa MacFarlane, League of Education Voters; and Don Rash, Association of Washington School Principals.

(With concerns) Wes Pruitt, Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board; Rod Duckworth, Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction; and Gary King, Washington Education Association.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying:** None.