Education Committee

HB 1472

Brief Description: Providing initiatives to improve and expand access to computer science education.

Sponsors: Representatives Hansen, Habib, Freeman and Magendanz.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires school districts to approve AP Computer Science as equivalent to high school mathematics.

- Creates a grant program to support computer science professionals serving as co-instructors for high school computer science courses, if funds are appropriated.

- Directs the Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board to convene a Computer Science Professional Shortage Task Force and issue a report by September 15, 2014.

Hearing Date: 2/7/13

Staff: Barbara McLain (786-7383).

Background:

According to data maintained by the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), there were approximately 66,000 student enrollments in computer and information technology courses in the 2011-12 school year. More than half of these enrollments were in entry-level courses. There are 35 high schools in the state approved to offer AP Computer Science, and just under 1,200 students enrolled in AP Computer Science courses in 2011-12.

Although computer science is a career and technical education (CTE) course, school districts have been directed to examine their credit-granting policies and award academic credit for CTE courses that are determined to be equivalent to an academic course. The OSPI has developed a Course Equivalency Toolkit to assist districts in making these determinations. School districts

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are encouraged to consider computer programming as equivalent to a mathematics course. There is no data collected on district credit-granting policies.

To meet state high school graduation requirements, students must take Algebra I and Geometry in order to pass the state end-of-course assessments in those subjects. The State Board of Education has established Algebra II as the third credit of mathematics required for graduation, but students may select an alternative course based on their High School and Beyond Plan.

The Office of Online Learning (called the Digital Learning Department or DLD) in the OSPI makes online courses available on a subscription basis for any school district in the state. The DLD course catalog contains a number of computer science courses, including AP Computer Science. Course fees may be paid by the school district or the student through tuition, depending on district policy.

The Technology, Education, and Literacy in Schools (TEALS) Program is a private initiative to place computer science professionals in high school classrooms on a voluntary basis to co-teach advanced computer science courses along with the regular classroom teacher. The professionals attend a summer course in teaching and classroom management, and commit to teach a course for a full school year or semester. Participating high schools must provide a $5,000 stipend to the professionals. The Microsoft Corporation supports the TEALS Program, and most of the professionals are Microsoft employees. The TEALS program currently operates in more than 20 high schools in Washington.

Summary of Bill:

School districts must approve AP Computer Science as equivalent to a high school mathematics course, including for purposes of meeting the third credit of mathematics required for graduation.

The DLD is directed to actively seek additional providers of online computer science courses, publicize availability of these courses, and actively seek funding to offset district and student costs of courses it makes available.

If funding is appropriated, the OSPI allocates grants to school districts that establish partnerships to support computer science professionals serving as co-instructors for high school computer science courses on a voluntary basis. The OSPI must assure that funds are used to increase the number of such courses, not supplant current funding.

The Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board must convene a Computer Science Professional Shortage Task Force (Task Force). The Task Force must include technology businesses and business organizations, state education and higher education agencies, education and higher education providers, and computer science teachers and faculty.

The purpose of the Task Force is to develop a strategic plan to increase the number of graduates from high schools, colleges, and universities who are prepared to enter the workforce or continue their education in computer science. A report is due to the Legislature by September 15, 2014.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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