

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2540

As Reported by House Committee On: Education

Title: An act relating to establishing career and technical course equivalencies in science and mathematics.

Brief Description: Establishing career and technical course equivalencies in science and mathematics.

Sponsors: Representatives Stonier, Morrell, Magendanz, Fey, Bergquist, Haigh, Freeman and Lytton; by request of Governor Inslee.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Education: 1/23/14, 2/5/14 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Directs the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction to develop curriculum frameworks for a selected list of Career and Technical Education (CTE) courses whose content is considered equivalent to science or mathematics courses that meet high school graduation requirements.
- Requires school districts to grant academic credit in science or mathematics for CTE courses on the list beginning in the 2015-16 school year.
- Requires school districts to provide students with the opportunity to access at least one CTE course from the list that is equivalent to mathematics and one that is equivalent to science, but permits districts with fewer than 2,000 students to apply for a waiver from the State Board of Education.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 12 members: Representatives Santos, Chair; Stonier, Vice Chair; Bergquist, Fey, Haigh, Hawkins, S. Hunt, Klippert, Lytton, Orwall, Pollet and Seaquist.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 5 members: Representatives Dahlquist, Ranking Minority Member; Hargrove, Hayes, Parker and Warnick.

Staff: Barbara McLain (786-7383).

Background:

Under current law, school districts are directed to examine their credit-granting policies and award academic credit for Career and Technical Education (CTE) courses that they determine to be equivalent to an academic course. If a student is granted equivalency credit, the student's transcript reflects the academic course number and description.

The Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) is directed to provide professional development, technical assistance, and guidance for school districts to accomplish this equivalency crediting. The OSPI has developed a Course Equivalency Toolkit to assist districts in making these determinations. Although the OSPI has a list of CTE courses that school districts consider equivalent, there are no data collected about the number of such credits actually granted. All decisions about granting equivalency credit are made by local school districts.

In 2011 the State Board of Education (SBE) adopted a "two-for-one" policy, effective with the graduating class of 2016, that allows a student to satisfy two graduation requirements with a single CTE equivalent course, thereby freeing up room in the student's schedule for other courses. The current requirement for the graduating class of 2016 is three mathematics credits and two science credits, one of which must be a laboratory science. The SBE has proposed requiring an additional laboratory science credit.

There are 181 school districts (out of 295) that enroll fewer than 2,000 students.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

The OSPI, in consultation with one or more technical working groups, is directed to develop curriculum frameworks for a selected list of CTE courses whose content in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics is considered equivalent, in full or in part, to science or mathematics courses that meet high school graduation requirements. The course content must be aligned with industry standards and with state learning standards which reflect the Common Core State Standards in mathematics and the Next Generation Science Standards. The OSPI must submit the course list and curriculum frameworks to the SBE for review, public comment, and approval before the 2015-16 school year. The list may be periodically updated thereafter.

Beginning no later than the 2015-16 school year, school districts are required to grant academic credit in science or mathematics for CTE courses on the OSPI list, but they are not limited to the courses on the list.

School districts must provide high school students with the opportunity to access at least one CTE course from the OSPI list that is equivalent to mathematics and one that is equivalent to science. Students may access these courses at high schools, skill centers, interdistrict cooperatives, or through online learning or the Running Start program. Boards of directors of school districts with fewer than 2,000 students may apply to the SBE for a waiver from this requirement. The SBE is authorized to grant these waivers.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

The content of the CTE course equivalents must reflect the Common Core State Standards in mathematics and the Next Generation Science Standards. School districts must provide students with the opportunity to access at least one CTE course from the OSPI list that is equivalent to mathematics and one that is equivalent to science, rather than requiring school districts to ensure that high school students have opportunity to access CTE course equivalencies. Online learning is added as an option for providing this access. Specific authority is added for the SBE to grant a waiver of this requirement for school districts with fewer than 2,000 students.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date of Substitute Bill: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed, except for section 4, requiring school districts to provide students with an opportunity to access CTE course equivalencies, and section 5, authorizing the SBE to grant waivers, which take effect September 1, 2015.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) Policies that support today's CTE programs should be championed. There are several aspects to be considered, including adequate funding, counseling and guidance, and graduation requirements. One important piece addressed in this bill is course equivalencies. There are students sitting together in the same classroom where one gets an academic credit for the course and the other does not. This bill promotes equal access for each and every student.

The Governor is very interested in assuring both that students are ready for their futures and that they have opportunities. The CTE courses are just as rigorous as other mathematics or science courses but are often more relevant and engaging for students. There is a desire to ensure that all students earn a meaningful diploma. There is support for equal opportunity and equal access for all students. This is a matter of fairness.

Some districts have been doing cross-crediting of courses, but it is an onerous process. Streamlining the process will help everyone. This will help with science, mathematics, engineering, and technology courses. Not only will this assist students who learn better in a hands-on environment, it will also help those advanced students who are enrolled in

biomedical and pre-engineering. The more flexibility that can be built into their schedules, the better.

Course equivalencies are a key component of whichever framework is decided upon for the 24-credit graduation requirements. There are some outliers who are doing an excellent job with course equivalency, but the key is equitable access.

This bill establishes state standards to provide access to relevant twenty-first century skills. It will also support goals to improve higher education attainment and close the achievement gap. Employers care about the next generation of students they will employ. Reports have recommended greater opportunities for experiential and project-based learning because these are increasingly shown as the best pedagogy for learning. These CTE courses are rigorous and teach students exactly what they need for success.

(In support with amendment) Applying policies consistently across the state is a concrete step for improving flexibility for students. There should be explicit reference to the Common Core State Standards and the Next Generation Science Standards.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: (In support) Representative Stonier, prime sponsor; Marcie Maxwell, Office of the Governor; Catherine Ahl, League of Women Voters of Washington; Gene Sementi, West Valley School District; Justin Montermini, Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board; Julia Suliman, State Board of Education; Tim Knue, Washington Association for Career and Technical Education; Sherry Krainick, Washington State Parent Teacher Association; and Steve Leahy, America's Edge.

(In support with amendment) Wendy Rader-Konofalski, Washington Education Association.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.