Washington State
House of Representatives
Office of Program Research

BILL ANALYSIS

Education Committee

SB 5299

Brief Description: Allowing the use of computer science credits for the purpose of graduation requirements.

Sponsors: Senators Wellman, Kuderer, Hunt, Mullet, Nguyen and Wilson, C..

Brief Summary of Bill

- Allows students, upon approval, to substitute an approved computer science course for a third year mathematics or science course in order to meet graduation requirements.

- Specifies that the substituted computer science course must align with the student's High School and Beyond Plan.

Hearing Date: 3/12/21

Staff: Megan Wargacki (786-7194).

Background:

High School Graduation Requirements. In general, to qualify for graduation from a public high school, students must: (1) satisfy course and credit requirements established by the State Board of Education (SBE); (2) meet any locally established requirements; (3) complete a High School and Beyond Plan (HSBP); and (4) meet the requirements of at least one graduation pathway option.

Requirements of the SBE obligate graduating students to complete 24 credits in delineated subject areas. Of these 24 credits, three must be in mathematics, three must be in science, and four are electives.

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

Graduation credit rules of the SBE mandated by law provide that the content of the third credit of mathematics and the content of the third credit of science may be chosen by the student based on the student's interests and HSBP with agreement of the student's parent or guardian or agreement of the school counselor or principal.

Computer Science. Beginning no later than the 2022-23 school year, school districts must provide an opportunity for all high school students to access an elective computer science course that is aligned to the state learning standards for computer science or mathematics.

School districts may award academic credit for computer science to students based on student completion of a competency examination that is aligned with the state learning standards for computer science or mathematics and course equivalency requirements adopted by the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction.

School districts must approve advanced placement (AP) computer science courses as equivalent to high school mathematics or science.

High School and Beyond Plan. The purpose of a HSBP is to guide a student's high school experience and prepare the student to meet postsecondary education and career goals. The HSPBs must be: (1) initiated during the seventh or eighth grade; (2) updated to reflect high school assessment results; (3) revised for changing interests, goals, and needs; and (4) identify available interventions and academic support for students who are not on track to graduate. The HSPBs must also include, among other elements, identification of career and educational goals, identification of dual credit opportunities, and a four-year plan for course taking. Decisions on whether a student has met HSBP requirements are made at the local level.

Summary of Bill:

A student may substitute an approved computer science course for a third year mathematics or science course for the purposes of graduation requirements, upon agreement of a student's parent or guardian or agreement of the school counselor or principal. An approved computer science course substituted by a student for a third year mathematics or science course must be aligned with the student's HSBP.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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