

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5617

As of February 8, 2023

Title: An act relating to facilitating course equivalency agreements between skill centers and school districts.

Brief Description: Facilitating course equivalency agreements between skill centers and school districts.

Sponsors: Senators Wellman, Nguyen, Hasegawa, Liias, Lovelett, Nobles and Wilson, C..

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Early Learning & K-12 Education: 2/08/23.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires interdistrict cooperative agreements in a skill center to stipulate that any course equivalencies approved by the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) or a host district must be honored by other participating school districts.
- Directs OSPI to conduct a review of career and technical education (CTE) course equivalency implementation and to provide technical assistance to districts to ensure CTE course equivalencies are being consistently offered for academic credit.
- Requires school districts to notify parents and guardians of enrolled students from 8th through 12th grade about what opportunities exist at the school district for students to meet credit-based graduation requirements through equivalency courses and courses offered by skill centers.
- Tasks OSPI with convening a technical working group to determine potential equivalency development of coursework for technology-based competitive student activities, subject to appropriation.

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.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION

Staff: Benjamin Omdal (786-7442)

Background: Skill Centers. Skill centers are regional secondary schools serving high school students from multiple school districts. They provide instruction in preparatory career and technical education (CTE) programs that are either too expensive or too specialized for school districts to operate individually. Each skill center is operated by a host school district, and may serve as a core campus for satellite skill center programs in underserved rural areas.

Career and Technical Education Equivalencies. Credits awarded through a CTE course apply to core academic and graduation requirements if equivalency requirements are met. High schools or school districts must have course equivalencies for CTE courses offered to students in high schools and skill centers.

OSPI is required to support school district efforts to adopt course equivalencies by, in part, recommending CTE curriculum that is suitable for equivalencies, publicizing best practices of districts in developing and adopting equivalencies, and providing related technical assistance and guidance to school districts.

Any statewide equivalency course offered by a school district or accessed at a skill center must be offered for academic credit.

Summary of Bill: Skill Center Cooperative Agreements. An interdistrict cooperative agreement between a host district and all participating school districts in a skill center must stipulate that any statewide equivalencies or adopted local course equivalencies approved by the host district must be honored by other participating school districts. The list of approved local and state equivalency courses must be provided to participating districts on an annual basis by September 1st.

Students served at any core, branch, or satellite skill center campus must have access to academic credit for any approved local or state equivalency courses.

Credit Equivalency. OSPI must conduct a review of equivalency implementation requirements and provide technical assistance to districts to ensure state course equivalencies are being consistently offered for academic credit for students at high schools and skill centers. School districts must include recommendations for increasing access to equivalency coursework as part of their annual CTE reporting requirements.

School districts must also provide parents and guardians of students information on what opportunities exist at the school district for students to meet credit-based graduation requirements through equivalency courses and courses offered by skill centers.

Equivalency Development for Technology-Based Competitive Student Activities. Subject to the appropriation of funds, the Superintendent of Public Instruction shall convene a technical working group to determine potential equivalency development of coursework for technology-based competitive student activities, in alignment with the arts and other content areas as applicable. The work group shall include educators that have experience with technology-based competitive student activities. The Superintendent of Public Instruction shall develop and approve course equivalencies based on the work of the technical working group.

Appropriation: The bill contains a section or sections to limit implementation to the availability of amounts appropriated for that specific purpose.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 30, 2023.

Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: There is an unevenness in what is happening around the state with respect to skill centers, as some students have been taking courses that may not be accepted as an equivalent course towards graduation requirements. The bill helps to ensure that students who have chosen a certain pathway can fulfill graduation requirements while doing so. Students learning and academic progress should not be dependent on where they live. Skill centers help students be engaged in academics and get to the graduation finish line.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Lisa Wellman, Prime Sponsor; Becky Wallace, Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI); Charlie Brown, Skills Centers Directors; Tim Knue, Washington ACTE.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: No one.