

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SSB 5617

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As Amended by House, March 29, 2023

**Title:** An act relating to career and technical education course equivalencies.

**Brief Description:** Concerning career and technical education course equivalencies.

**Sponsors:** Senate Committee on Early Learning & K-12 Education (originally sponsored by Senators Wellman, Nguyen, Hasegawa, Liias, Lovelett, Nobles and Wilson, C.).

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Early Learning & K-12 Education: 2/08/23, 2/13/23 [DPS-WM, w/oRec].

Ways & Means: 2/20/23 [w/oRec].

**Floor Activity:** Passed Senate: 2/28/23, 48-0.

Passed House: 3/29/23, 98-0.

### Brief Summary of First Substitute Bill

- Requires interdistrict cooperative agreements between all participating school district 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.

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*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.*

- Tasks OSPI with convening a technical working group to determine potential equivalency development of coursework for technology-based competitive student activities, subject to appropriation.

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## SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION

**Majority Report:** That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5617 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

Signed by Senators Wellman, Chair; Nobles, Vice Chair; Wilson, C., Vice Chair; Dozier, Hunt, Mullet and Pedersen.

**Minority Report:** That it be referred without recommendation.

Signed by Senators Hawkins, Ranking Member; McCune.

**Staff:** Benjamin Omdal (786-7442)

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## SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

**Majority Report:** That it be referred without recommendation.

Signed by Senators Rolfes, Chair; Robinson, Vice Chair, Operating & Revenue; Mullet, Vice Chair, Capital; Wilson, L., Ranking Member, Operating; Gildon, Assistant Ranking Member, Operating; Schoesler, Ranking Member, Capital; Rivers, Assistant Ranking Member, Capital; Warnick, Assistant Ranking Member, Capital; Billig, Boehnke, Braun, Conway, Dhingra, Hasegawa, Hunt, Keiser, Muzzall, Nguyen, Pedersen, Saldaña, Torres, Van De Wege, Wagoner and Wellman.

**Staff:** Kayla Hammer (786-7305)

**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 First Substitute Bill:** Skill Center Cooperative Agreements. An interdistrict cooperative agreement between 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:** Available.

**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 on Original Bill (Early Learning & K-12 Education):** *The committee recommended a different version of the bill than what was heard.* 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 (Early Learning & K-12 Education):** 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 (Early Learning & K-12 Education):**  
No one.

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony (Ways & Means):** No public hearing was held.

**Persons Testifying (Ways & Means):** N/A

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying (Ways & Means):** N/A

#### **EFFECT OF HOUSE AMENDMENT(S):**

- Restores an expired provision requiring school district boards of directors to grant academic course equivalency for at least one statewide equivalency high school career and technical course from the list of courses approved by the Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI).
- Requires the SPI to convene a technical working group to develop a course equivalency crosswalk for technology-based competitive student activities that complies with specified equivalency and content requirements.
- Makes clarifying changes by:
  1. modifying interdistrict cooperative agreement requirements to specify that approved state and local equivalency courses offered by the host school district of a skill center must be honored as equivalency courses by all school districts participating in the skill center;
  2. specifying that the list of approved local and state equivalency courses that is to be provided annually must be provided by the host school district;
  3. specifying that 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 offered at those sites and in accordance with applicable transcription requirements;
  4. providing that approved local or state equivalency courses at any core, branch, or satellite skill center must be offered for academic credit to all students participating

- in courses at those sites; and
5. modifying notification requirements that obligate schools with students in any of grades 9 through 12 to provide information to students, parents, and guardians about the opportunities that exist for meeting credit-based graduation requirements through equivalency courses.