

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SSB 5617

As Passed House - Amended:

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:

Education: 3/9/23, 3/16/23 [DPA].

Floor Activity:

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

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill (As Amended by House)

- Requires cooperative agreements for the operation and governance of skill centers to stipulate that any approved state and local equivalency career and technical education (CTE) courses offered by the host school district must be honored as equivalency courses by all school districts participating in the skill center.
- Requires approved local or state equivalency CTE courses offered at a skill center, satellite skill center, or branch campus to be offered for academic credit to all students participating in courses at those sites.
- Establishes new notification requirements for schools regarding student opportunities to meet credit-based graduation requirements through CTE equivalency courses.
- Directs the Superintendent of Public Instruction to convene a technical working group to develop a course equivalency crosswalk for

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technology-based competitive student activities that complies with specified equivalency and content requirements, and to update a list of approved curriculum frameworks based on the work of the technical working group.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass as amended. Signed by 15 members: Representatives Santos, Chair; Shavers, Vice Chair; Rude, Ranking Minority Member; McEntire, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Bergquist, Callan, Eslick, Harris, McClintock, Ortiz-Self, Pollet, Sandlin, Steele, Stonier and Timmons.

Staff: Ethan Moreno (786-7386).

Background:

Career and Technical Education.

Career and technical education (CTE) is a planned program of courses and learning experiences that begins with an exploration of career options and supports basic academic and life skills. As articulated in statute, CTE enables the achievement of high academic standards, leadership, options for high-skill, high-wage employment preparation, and advanced and continuing education. Students must earn one CTE credit to qualify for graduation, but the State Board of Education (SBE) permits students to meet this requirement through a qualifying occupational education course.

Instruction in CTE is provided through two general course classifications—exploratory and preparatory—both of which must comply with numerous standards established by the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI). Career and technical education instruction is delivered through programs at middle and high schools, through approved online courses, and at skill centers (including satellite and branch skill centers), which are the regional CTE instructional venues established by a cooperative agreement and operated by a host school district.

Career and Technical Education Credits—Equivalencies.

A CTE course that meets equivalency requirements allows a student to meet core academic and graduation requirements by successfully completing the course. Each high school or school district board of directors must adopt course equivalencies for CTE courses offered to students in high schools and skill centers. As part of this requirement, each school district board of directors must develop a course equivalency approval procedure, and an equivalency may be for whole or partial credit.

Duties of the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction.

The OSPI has numerous duties related to CTE course equivalencies established in statute. For example, the OSPI is required to support school district efforts to adopt course equivalencies by, in part, recommending a 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.

The OSPI, in consultation with technical work groups convened for this purpose, must also develop and approve curriculum frameworks for a list of CTE courses with academic content that is considered equivalent in full, or part, to academic courses meeting graduation requirements. The content of the courses on the list must be aligned with the state's learning standards as well as industry standards. At the local level, school districts must grant academic course equivalency based on the approved list of CTE courses, but districts may also adopt local equivalency courses. Until September 1, 2021, each school district board of directors was required to grant academic course equivalency for at least one statewide equivalency high school career and technical course from the list of approved courses.

Subject to funding requirements, the OSPI must also create methodologies for implementing equivalency crediting on a broader scale and facilitate its implementation by:

- implementing statewide CTE course equivalency frameworks for high schools and skill centers in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics; and
- providing competitive grant funds to school districts to increase the integration and rigor of academic instruction in CTE equivalency courses.

School districts and the OSPI must satisfy equivalency crediting reporting requirements.

School districts must annually report to the OSPI the annual number of:

- students participating in state-approved equivalency courses; and
- state approved equivalency credit courses offered in school districts and skill centers.

Additionally, each December 1, the OSPI must submit the following information to the Governor, the SBE, and the appropriate committees of the Legislature:

- the selected list of CTE equivalency courses and their curriculum frameworks approved by the Superintendent of Public Instruction; and
- a summary of the school district equivalency crediting information reported annually to the OSPI.

Summary of Amended Bill:

Numerous CTE equivalency course and crediting requirements are modified or established for school districts, schools, and the OSPI.

Requirements for Schools and School Districts.

Skill Centers. The interdistrict cooperative agreement between participating school districts for the operation and governance of a skill center must stipulate that any approved state and local equivalency courses offered by the host school district must be honored as

equivalency courses by all school districts participating in the skill center. The list of approved local and state equivalency courses must be provided by the host school district to the participating districts on an annual basis by September 1, and 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 requirements. Additionally, 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.

A directive obligating school district boards of directors to, at a minimum, grant academic course equivalency for at least one high school CTE course from the list of equivalency courses approved by the Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI) is reinstated by removing the September 1, 2021, expiration date.

Notifications. Prior to course scheduling or course registration for the next school term, each public school that serves students in any of grades 9 through 12 must provide all students and their parents or legal guardians with information about the opportunities for meeting credit-based graduation requirements through CTE equivalency courses, including those available within the school district or at a skill center.

Requirements for the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction.

Expanding Equivalency Implementation. Provisions directing the OSPI, subject to funding requirements, to create methodologies for implementing equivalency crediting on a broader scale and facilitate its implementation are modified to require:

- implementing statewide approved CTE course equivalency frameworks *and* local course equivalencies authorized for high schools and skill centers (without referencing science, technology, engineering, and mathematics); and
- a review of the implementation of course equivalency requirements for school districts, and providing technical assistance to districts to ensure that state course equivalencies are being consistently offered for academic credit for students at high schools and skill centers.

Reporting Requirements. The OSPI's annual course equivalency report to the Governor, the SBE, and the appropriate committees of the Legislature must include a summary of implementation efforts and review findings related to methodologies for implementing equivalency crediting on a broader scale, including recommendations for increasing access to equivalency coursework.

Technical Working Group. Subject to funding requirements, the SPI must 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. This technical working group must include educators from school districts or educational service districts that have experience with technology-based competitive student activities.

The SPI must develop and approve course equivalencies to include in the updated CTE equivalency course list based on the work of the technical working group.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) Students have options for different academic pathways, including options through skill centers, but skill centers are not considered as important as other education venues. Some school districts provide transportation for skill center students, while others do not. Some districts offer equivalency credits to skill center students, and others do not, but this is not what the Legislature intended. This bill is intended to ensure that students are getting proper equivalency credit for courses taken at skill centers. The bill also requires the OSPI to provide technical assistance.

Skill centers work with school districts, but school districts have the authority to determine what the equivalency requirements are. The skill center students are doing the same work as other students so they should have access to comparable equivalency credit options.

Technical, competitive student efforts should be eligible for credit. Student robotics help prepare students for future employment. Robotics has both technical and non-technical aspects, including advocacy, that are beneficial to students

Career and technical education course equivalencies for after-school efforts should be offered. Robotics students spend more time on robotics, up to 30 hours per week, than they do for many classes. This bill is important to students.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Senator Lisa Wellman, prime sponsor; Patience Irwin, Rediet Tassew, Elinor Widdows, and Anne Clark, Robototes FIRST Robotics Team; and Charlie Brown, Skill Center Directors.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.