
Education Committee

2SSB 5717

Brief Description: Requiring a study on the availability and use of skill centers.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Early Learning, K-12 & Higher Education (originally sponsored by Senators Rockefeller, Benton, Fairley, Oke, Keiser, Zarelli, Shin, Rasmussen and Kohl-Welles).

Brief Summary of Second Substitute Bill

- Directs the Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board to study and recommend to the 2007 Legislature how to increase opportunities for students not adequately served by a skills center.
- Requires the study to examine gaps in service areas; service for students in rural and high density areas; integration of core academic content into skills center programs; and the role skills centers play in dropout prevention and retrieval.

Hearing Date: 2/20/06

Staff: Barbara McLain (786-7383).

Background:

About 7,000 high school students from 85 school districts currently attend one of the ten skills centers across the state that provide in-depth instruction in career and technical skills. Students typically attend the skills center for part of the day, and their home high school for the remainder of the day. Skills centers also offer summer school programs. Skills centers operate under cooperative agreements with participating school districts and are governed by an administrative council comprised of the superintendents of the participating districts. The centers generate full-time equivalent (FTE) funding for enrolled students and receive enhanced funding for those courses approved as career and technical education courses by the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI).

Skills centers are located in Vancouver, Tumwater, Wenatchee, Port Angeles, SeaTac, Everett, Spokane, Kennewick, Bremerton, and Yakima. The 2005-07 capital budget included funding for a feasibility study for an additional skills center in Skagit County.

Summary of Bill:

The Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board (Workforce Board), in collaboration with the OSPI, is directed to study and recommend to the 2007 Legislature how to increase opportunities for students living in areas of the state that are not adequately served by a skills center. If plausible, the Board must provide preliminary recommendations to the Washington Learns study by June 2006.

The study must focus on the following issues:

1. current skill center geographic coverage and gaps in service areas;
2. how to increase program access to students in rural and remote areas and address the difficulties in providing adequate services in high density areas;
3. how to integrate core academic content into skill center programs and how to determine skill center course equivalencies for the purpose of meeting high school graduation requirements; and
4. the role that skills centers can play in dropout prevention and retrieval program.

In making recommendations, the Workforce Board must explore the feasibility of satellite sites, joint programs between high schools and community colleges, use of the K-20 network, and additional evening and summer programs. The study must also provide an analysis of any additional funding needs or different funding methods necessary to implement the recommendations.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on February 15, 2006.

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