

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5389

As Reported by Senate Committee On:
Early Learning & K-12 Education, February 10, 2021

Title: An act relating to teaching endorsements in computer science.

Brief Description: Creating teaching endorsements in computer science.

Sponsors: Senators Wellman, Nobles, Hunt, Nguyen, Randall, Saldaña, Stanford and Wilson, C..

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Early Learning & K-12 Education: 2/03/21, 2/10/21 [DP-WM].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Directs the Professional Educator Standards Board to create two specialty teaching endorsements for computer science in elementary and computer science.
- Requires additional appropriation in the computer science education grant program to support teachers with certification and endorsement costs, subject to appropriation.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

Signed by Senators Wellman, Chair; Nobles, Vice Chair, K-12; Wilson, C., Vice Chair, Early Learning; Hawkins, Ranking Member; Dozier, Hunt, McCune, Mullet and Pedersen.

Staff: Benjamin Omdal (786-7442)

Background: Teaching Endorsements. An endorsement is the subject area in which a

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certified educator is authorized to teach, along with designated grade levels for that area. The endorsement procedure varies by subject. For an endorsement in computer science, a candidate must complete testing requirements and apply online.

The qualifications and procedure for obtaining teaching certification and endorsement are generally determined by the Washington Professional Educator Standards Board in accordance with state law.

Specialty endorsements are endorsements that require a non-specialty endorsement and cannot be held alone. An educator must already hold a teaching certificate with at least one other endorsement before adding a specialty endorsement. Specialty endorsements are offered in:

- deaf education;
- environmental and sustainability education;
- gifted education;
- teacher of the visually impaired;
- orientation and mobility teacher; and
- elementary mathematics specialist.

Computer Science. Computer science generally refers to the science that entails the theory and methods of processing information in computers, as well as the design of computer hardware, software, and applications.

The Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction has adopted computer science learning standards, as directed by statute.

In 2019, the Legislature instituted a requirement that beginning no later than the 2022-23 school year, each school district that operates a high school must, at a minimum, provide an opportunity to access an elective computer science course that is available to all high school students. Districts may also award academic credit for computer science based on student completion of a competency examination that is aligned with state learning standards.

Computer Science and Education Grant Program. The 2019-21 operating budget allocated \$1 million in both fiscal year 2020 and fiscal year 2021 for the Computer Science and Education Grant Program to:

- train and credential teachers in computer sciences;
- provide and upgrade technology needed to learn computer science; and
- offer computer science frontiers grants to introduce students to and engage them in computer science.

Summary of Bill: The Professional Educator Standards Board (PESB) shall develop standards for two specialty endorsements in computer science, one in elementary computer science and one in secondary computer science.

PESB must consult with the Superintendent of Public Instruction to confirm that the specialty endorsements reflect the appropriate content necessary to teach computer science in the classroom.

The specialty endorsements must be available to all certificated teachers who hold a valid license and who demonstrate sufficient content knowledge in computer science.

Subject to the availability of funds, the Legislature must appropriate additional funds in the Computer Science Education Grant Program to support teachers with the costs associated with becoming certified, endorsed, or licensed in computer science. Entities eligible for the additional funds in this program include individual teachers, local education agencies, approved professional learning providers, and institutions of higher education located in Washington State.

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: PRO: The endorsements will allow current teachers to be qualified to teach computer science, especially those in rural areas. Only 48 percent of high schools currently teach computer science; there is a significant lack of computer science educators across Washington State. The bill will not require teachers to invest large amounts of money in order to earn the specialty endorsement, nor will it require a large investment from state agencies. Specialty endorsements allow districts to have greater flexibility. Having specialty endorsements will lead to greater accessibility to computer science across the state. Studies show that students that take computer science courses perform better academically in other areas. There is a significant need for computer science courses and teachers for underserved groups. This bill will enable PESB to enhance educators' ability to meet student needs by focusing in on particular age groups.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Lisa Wellman, Prime Sponsor; Laurie Weidner, Professional Educator Standards Board; Terry Whitney, College Board; Lucinda Young, Washington Education Association; Samantha Kersul, TechNet; Charles Knutson, Amazon; Jenny Plaja, Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction; Maggie Glennon, Code.org.

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