

**SUBJECT:** Allowing school districts to offer career and technology programs

**COMMITTEE:** Public Education — committee substitute recommended

**VOTE:** 7 ayes — Grusendorf, Oliveira, Branch, Dawson, Eissler, Griggs, Madden

0 nays

2 absent — Dutton, Hochberg

**WITNESSES:** For — Reece Blincoe, Del Valle ISD; Jeff Clark, National Federation of Independent Business; Linda Holcombe, Texas Industrial Vocational Association; Lonnie Hollingsworth, Texas Classroom Teachers Association; Steve Kester, American Electronics Association; Gary Madsen, Round Rock ISD; Shannon Noble, Texas Air Conditioning Contractors Association; Jim Quinten, Automotive Wholesalers of Texas; Ted Melina Raab, Texas Federation of Teachers; Ana Yanez-Correa, League of United Latin American Citizens; Johannah Whitsett, Association of Texas Professional Educators

Against — MerryLynn Gerstenschlager, Texas Eagle Forum

On — Paul Lindsey and Hank Madelen, Texas Education Agency

**BACKGROUND:** Education Code, chapter 29 requires each public school student to master the basic skills and knowledge necessary for gaining entry-level employment in a high-skill, high-wage job or for continuing the student's education at the post-secondary level. School districts must offer a foundation curriculum that includes language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies and an enrichment curriculum that includes health, physical education, fine arts, economics, technology applications, and career and technology education. The Texas Education Agency (TEA) must prepare and update biennially a state plan for career and technology education to ensure that such education is an established part of the state's total education system.

A school board may contract with another school district or with a post-secondary institution to provide career and technology classes. A student who attends career and technology classes at another school under a contract with

another school district is included in the average daily attendance of the student's home district for purposes of the school-finance formulas.

DIGEST:

CSHB 242 would allow a school board to develop and offer a "rigorous" course of study in career and technology education under which a student could obtain an award for distinguished achievement in that course of study. The award would include a stamp or another notation on the student's transcript and would not be in lieu of a diploma or certificate of course work completion. The State Board of Education (SBOE) could develop and implement a plan to incorporate foundation curriculum requirements into the career and technology curriculum.

Property-wealthy school districts could reduce their wealth per student by executing an agreement to provide students of one or more other districts with career and technology education. The education commissioner would have to certify that implementation of the agreement would not result in any of the affected districts' wealth per student exceeding the equalized wealth level and that the property-wealthy district would have to spend at least as much money to benefit students from other districts as the amount of the reduction in the district's wealth. Such agreements would not require voter approval.

A school district could contract with an outside entity to develop the career and technology program or could work with local businesses to develop or operate the program. A district could provide insurance to protect the business against liability for bodily injury or death of a student in a technology program. Any proceeds of insurance related to the student other than liability insurance would have to be used for the benefit of the student and the student's family.

CSHB 242 would encourage the governor to present a proclamation or certificate to honor business and industry representatives who, in the judgment of TEA and the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC), had assisted in the provision of a career and technology program. TWC, in cooperation with other agencies, would have to make available to the public a list of all awards and incentives available for business participation in career and technology education training. The bill would specify that campus-level decision-making committees must include business representatives.

The bill would express the intent of the Legislature that public schools provide career and technology education by teaching fundamental academic skills and providing practical, hands-on learning experiences, and that career and technology education should not include mandatory career tracking for students or result in professional certification instead of receipt of a high school diploma.

The bill would take effect September 1, 2003, except that the provisions on campus decision-making and providing awards for distinguished achievement in career and technology education would take effect immediately and would apply beginning with the 2003-04 school year if the bill was finally passed by a two-thirds record vote of the membership of each house.

**SUPPORTERS  
SAY:**

CSHB 242 would encourage school districts to offer academically rigorous career and technology programs and to provide incentives for students to complete these programs. These programs can be critical in helping prepare for the workforce those high school students who do not plan to pursue a post-secondary education. Even students who do plan to continue their education can benefit from rigorous career and technology programs that teach practical skills. By encouraging districts to provide training that meets or exceeds business or industry standards, the bill would help the state meet its goal of preparing students for the workforce. Students who completed a rigorous program could be recognized for their efforts with distinguished achievement awards and notations on their transcripts.

CSHB 242 specifically would state that it is not intended to track students into career and technology training at the expense of traditional subjects. The bill would encourage the SBOE to incorporate basic skills, such as language arts and mathematics, into the career and technology program. For students having difficulty in traditional subjects, career and technology courses often are the only incentive for attending school. Hands-on learning experiences in career and technology courses help reinforce the information taught in these more traditional subjects and may inspire students at risk of dropping out to continue their studies.

CSHB 242 would provide incentives for property-wealth school districts to offer career and technology training to students in other districts that may not be able to afford to offer these programs. The bill also would encourage

business and industry to work in partnership with school districts to provide career and technology training. This would help ensure that students are developing the right skills to prepare them for jobs in their communities.

State law already expresses a goal of providing students with the skills they need to gain entry-level employment in a high-skill, high-wage job. While school districts would not have to adopt any of the provisions of CSHB 242, the bill would offer tools and incentives for districts, students, and businesses to achieve that objective.

**OPPONENTS  
SAY:**

CSHB 242 would accelerate a trend toward tracking students, particularly minority students, into career and technology courses at the expense of traditional academic subjects. The portion of the bill expressing legislative intent would not be included in statute and thus would not be meaningful.

Because the bill would not require the SBOE to incorporate foundation requirements into the career and technology curriculum, school districts could continue to offer career and technology programs that did not incorporate basic subjects. Students who do not perform well in basic subjects should not be able to graduate with recognition for distinguished achievement.

Schools' limited resources should be focused on teaching high school students basic academic subjects. Students who want to take career and technology courses can take them in community colleges. Also, the bill's incentives for wealthy districts to offer career and technology programs to students in other districts might encourage those districts to divert money from traditional subjects to career and technology programs.

**OTHER  
OPPONENTS  
SAY:**

CSHB 242 is unnecessary because most school districts already offer career and technology programs, including cooperative programs with local community colleges and businesses.

**NOTES:**

The committee substitute added to the original bill the provision authorizing the SBOE to develop and implement a plan to incorporate foundation curriculum requirements into the career and technology curriculum. It deleted provisions that would have required campus decision-making committees to include industry representatives and would specify instead that those committees must include business representatives. The substitute also deleted

a section that would have established a Career and Technology Advisory Board and added the section specifying that insurance proceeds related to a career and technology student should go to a student and the student's family. The substitute eliminated a provision that would have required voter approval of agreements between property-wealthy districts and other districts and added the specification that those agreements would not be subject to other statutes that require voter approval.

The companion bill, SB 112 by Van de Putte, was reported favorably as substituted by the Senate Education Committee on March 13.

In 2001, the 77th Legislature enacted a similar bill, HB 660 by Seaman, et. al., creating a career and technology program. Gov. Rick Perry vetoed the bill, stating that it would have attempted to enact through legislation what should be accomplished through the implementation of existing statutes and policies, and that it could have caused schools to move away from rigorous academic programs in favor of career pathways. Another similar bill, HB 1418 by Seaman, enacted by the 76th Legislature in 1999, was vetoed by Gov. George W. Bush, who stated that it could dilute efforts to insist on high academic standards in public schools.