

- SUBJECT:** Allowing dual credit courses by junior colleges outside their service area
- COMMITTEE:** Public Education — committee substitute recommended
- VOTE:** 7 ayes — Eissler, Farias, Jackson, Olivo, Patrick, Shelton, Weber  
0 nays  
4 absent — Hochberg, Allen, Aycock, Dutton
- WITNESSES:** For — Salem Abraham, Canadian ISD; (*Registered, but did not testify:* Portia Bosse, Texas State Teachers Association.; Bill Carpenter, Texas Council of Administrators of Special Education; Dominic Giarratani, Texas Association of School Boards; Casey McCreary, Texas Association of School Administrators; Ted Melina Raab, Texas AFT)  
  
Against — (*Registered, but did not testify:* Nick Gonzalez, South Texas College)
- BACKGROUND:** Education Code, ch. 130 assigns service areas to each community college district for providing educational services. A service area is territory within the boundaries of the district as well as territory outside the boundaries of the district in which the community college provides services.  
  
Education Code, sec. 130.008 allows a junior college to waive all or part of the tuition and fees for a high school student enrolled in a course for which the student may receive joint high school and junior college credit.
- DIGEST:** CSHB 2480 would allow a public junior college to enter into an agreement with a school district, organization, or other person that operated a high school to offer a course for joint high school and junior college credit, regardless of whether the high school was located within the service area of the junior college district.  
  
The bill would take immediate effect if finally passed by a two-thirds record vote of the membership of each house. Otherwise, it would take effect September 1, 2009.

**SUPPORTERS  
SAY:**

HB 2480 would expand opportunities for school districts and junior college districts by allowing junior college districts to offer dual-credit courses outside their service areas. Dual-credit courses allow high school students throughout the state to earn college credits and high school credits at the same time. Many academically strong high school students take advantage of dual-credit options to get a head start on higher education.

Dual credit provides numerous advantages for both the student and the state. Students who take dual-credit courses are more likely to complete high school and to enroll in and stay in college. Student participation has been increasing steadily in most areas since the program began. This is good for the state because it decreases the cost of tuition and fees for students by accelerating the time it takes to earn a degree. However, progress of the program has been slower in some school districts because students are not able to get the courses they need.

In areas of the state where school districts may not be receiving all of the services they need, the school district should be allowed to contract with whatever junior college could provide the dual-credit courses, even if the high school was not located within the junior college service area. School boards need the flexibility to obtain the course offerings where they can. This would be the best way to meet the needs of the students desiring to jump start their college careers.

**OPPONENTS  
SAY:**

While CSHB 2480 is well intentioned, it essentially would erode the service area boundaries currently in place and promote conflicts between junior college districts. The purpose of having junior college service areas is to give certainty to the junior colleges about who they serve and to communities about where they obtain their educational services.

Currently, if a junior college district wants to offer a particular course in a neighboring district, it first must obtain permission from the neighboring district. This sound policy enables community residents to have the classes they need and prevents a proliferation of course offerings. If CSHB 2480 were enacted, any junior college district would be able to move out of its service area and offer dual-credit course services in another district. Eventually, the larger, wealthier districts would end up with a monopoly on the dual-credit program because they could afford to offer the courses anywhere, anytime. This would have a statewide negative impact on small

and mid-sized junior college districts that depend on the tuition revenue they collect just to maintain their services.

If a particular school district believed that it is not being served by its junior college district for dual-credit courses, recourse is available at the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board through the Texas Higher Education Regional Councils, which are made up of members from all sectors of higher education. The bill should require that a school district confer with the THECB and the councils to explore options for service in its area, rather than enacting legislation that would have statewide impact.

**NOTES:**

The committee substitute differs from the bill as filed by authorizing a junior college district to enter into an agreement with a school district, organization, or other person that operates a high school, rather than authorizing a school district to establish an agreement with any junior college relating to dual-credit courses. The substitute also added an immediate effect clause.