

SUBJECT: Including career and technology training in educational objectives

COMMITTEE: Public Education — committee substitute recommended

VOTE: 8 ayes — Sadler, Dutton, Grusendorf, Hardcastle, Hochberg, Oliveira, Olivo, Smith
0 nays
1 absent — Dunnam

WITNESSES: For — None
Against — Merry Lynn Gerstenschlager, Texas Eagle Forum

BACKGROUND: Education Code, sec. 4.001 defines the mission, objectives and academic goals of the public education system in Texas.

During the interim, the House Committee on Public Education studied career and technical education for students who do not intend to attend four-year universities.

DIGEST: CSHB 660 would amend Education Code, sec. 4.001 to allow local school districts to offer programs in technology education and training, including agricultural sciences, business education, health occupation technology, and consumer sciences.

The bill would allow each independent school district to develop a career and technology education curriculum. It also would provide for a nine-member state Career and Technology Education Advisory Board. The membership would consist of:

- ! a representative from the Texas Education Agency;
- ! a representative from the Texas Workforce Commission;
- ! two representatives from the business and industrial community;
- ! three educators, administrators, or parents; and
- ! a member appointed by the education commissioner.

CSHB 660 would permit the granting of an award to recognize distinguished achievement in career and technology education. The award would be a stamp or another notation on the recognized student's transcript and would not be offered in lieu of a diploma or certificate of course work completion. School districts could contract with an outside entity to develop the career and technology program or work with local businesses in developing or operating the program. A local school district could provide insurance to protect the business against liability for bodily injury or death of a student in a technology program.

CSHB 660 would encourage the governor to present a proclamation or certificate to honor those business and industry representatives who participate in the program.

The bill also would authorize the local school board with a wealth per student that exceeded the equalized wealth level to reduce the district's wealth per student by providing career and technology education to students in one or more other school districts, if the program were approved by voters and certified by the education commissioner.

CSHB 660 would amend the Labor Code to authorize the use of the skills development fund to provide career and technology training.

The bill would be effective on September 1, 2001, except that the portions that would change the mission statement and provide the award for distinguished achievement in career and technology education would become effective immediately beginning with the 2001-02 school year if CSHB 660 finally passed by a two-thirds record vote of the membership of each house.

**SUPPORTERS
SAY:**

CSHB 660 would encourage school districts to enrich their industry technology programs at a time when most have reduced their budgets for these programs. Not all students will attend four-year universities, and the curriculum should not be exclusively geared to college-preparatory courses. Students who seek employment or post-secondary career and technology training immediately after high school may not be adequately prepared by the current course of study. These students need the assistance to take advantage of a growing number of careers in industry and technology.

CSHB 660 would not prepare students for low-paid or dead-end jobs. Skilled craft positions such as plumbers, electricians, welders, auto mechanics, health science professionals, and computer technicians pay high salaries and are in great demand in an expanding Texas economy. Career and technology training helps to contribute to higher scores on standardized testing, and many of these students do attend community colleges and four-year universities.

CSHB 660 would provide local school districts with the option of whether to participate. Early success might encourage the program to be adopted statewide.

CSHB 660 would provide opportunities for wealthy school districts to work cooperatively with other less-affluent districts in developing these career and technology programs. It would allow these districts to see how their tax money is utilized. CSHB 660 would add safeguards by requiring approval by local voters and certification by the commissioner. This sharing of resources would have the support of both wealthy and non-affluent school districts.

OPPONENTS
SAY:

Schools should not deviate from their mission of providing a general academic education for all students. CSHB 660 could lead to a tracking system where some students are steered into career and technology programs. Students, especially those yet to enter high school, have little idea of their future career aspirations and should not be limited in their education program.

OTHER
OPPONENTS
SAY:

The portion of CSHB 660 that would allow wealthy districts to adjust their wealth per student calculation by participating in career and technology programs could cause disruptions in an already complex state school finance equalization system.

NOTES:

In 1999, the 76th Legislature approved HB 1418 by Seaman, a similar bill that created a career and technology program and certificate that school districts could implement at their discretion, but the bill was vetoed by Governor George W. Bush. In his veto message, Bush said, "House Bill No. 1418 creates a new 'certificate of initial mastery' which could dilute Texas' efforts to insist on high academic standards for our public schools."

The companion bill, SB 1354 by Armbrister, was referred to the Senate Education Committee on March 13.

The committee substitute differs from the bill as originally filed by deleting a provision that would have required the State Board of Education to require a career and technology program by the 2002-03 school year. It also deleted provisions requiring the education commissioner to appoint six members of the advisory committee, that a regional service centers participate in the program, and that school districts develop a career awareness curriculum and purchase new textbooks for the program.