

State of Arkansas
94th General Assembly
Regular Session, 2023

As Engrossed: S3/29/23

A Bill

SENATE BILL 470

By: Senators J. Dotson, J. English, J. Bryant

By: Representative Beck

For An Act To Be Entitled

AN ACT CONCERNING CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION; TO AMEND THE LAW CONCERNING WEIGHTED CREDIT AWARDED FOR CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION COURSES; TO AMEND THE LAW CONCERNING STATEWIDE STUDENT ASSESSMENT SYSTEMS USED TO MEASURE COLLEGE AND CAREER READINESS; TO AMEND THE COMPUTER SCIENCE EDUCATION ADVANCEMENT ACT OF 2021 TO INCLUDE COMPUTER SCIENCE-RELATED CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION COURSES AS ELIGIBLE FOR CREDIT; AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

Subtitle

CONCERNING CAREER AND TECHNICAL
EDUCATION.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ARKANSAS:

SECTION 1. DO NOT CODIFY. Legislative intent.

The General Assembly finds and declares that:

(1) It is critical to expand the opportunities available to public school students who pursue career and technical education pathways;

(2) The State of Arkansas must level the playing field for students who choose a career and technical education pathway by ensuring their accomplishments within a career and technical education pathway are deemed just as significant as those achieved by college-bound students who graduate high school with honors;

(3) Ensuring that career and technical education assessments are



weighted in a similar manner as traditional education assessments is an important step in providing students with additional options available to them following high school graduation; and

(4) It is imperative that career and technical education as a whole is supported on the state level as an equal alternative to traditional educational pathways by implementing legislative solutions that address existing shortfalls faced by students who pursue career and technical education pathways.

SECTION 2. Arkansas Code § 6-15-902(c)(4), concerning career and technical courses that are eligible for weighted credit, is amended to read as follows:

(4)(A) The Division of Elementary and Secondary Education in collaboration with the Division of Career and Technical Education may approve a career and technical course within an approved career and technical pathway for weighted credit if the course:

~~(A)(i)~~ Exceeds the curriculum standards for a nonweighted class; and

~~(B)(ii)~~ Leads to an approved industry-recognized certification.

(B) The Division of Career and Technical Education shall:
(i) Review new and existing career and technical pathways to determine which courses within the career and technical pathways meet criteria for weighted credit; and

(ii) Publish a list of approved career and technical pathways annually by January 1.

(C) Criteria used to determine what courses within a career and technical pathway shall receive weighted credit shall include without limitation the consideration of career and technical pathways that:

(i) Lead to high-value industry credentials; and

(ii) Align to state and local workforce data.

(D) Weighted credit awarded under subdivision (c)(4)(A) of this section shall be awarded for each course upon:

(i) Completing the relevant career and technical pathway; and

(ii) Earning the high-value industry credential

aligned with the career and technical pathway.

SECTION 3. Arkansas Code § 6-15-2907(a), concerning statewide student assessments to measure college and career readiness, is amended to read as follows:

(a) The Division of Elementary and Secondary Education shall implement a statewide student assessment system to be administered by Arkansas public schools on a schedule determined by the State Board of Education that includes the following components:

(1) Developmentally appropriate measurements or assessments for kindergarten through grade two (K-2) in literacy and mathematics;

(2) Assessments to measure English language arts, mathematics, and science as identified by the state board;

(3) Assessments of English proficiency of all English learners; and

(4)(A) Assessments to measure college and career readiness.

(B)(i) A public school that serves a student in grades ten through twelve (10-12) shall administer college and career readiness assessments, including a career readiness assessment that leads to a nationally recognized work readiness certificate, as determined by the state board to each student before he or she graduates from high school.

(ii) A career readiness assessment under subdivision (a)(4)(B)(i) of this section may include without limitation the ACT WorkKeys National Career Readiness Certificate (NCRC).

(C)(i) Public school districts may offer additional college and career readiness assessments for students in grades ten through twelve (10-12) at no cost to the student by using public school district funding, including without limitation Enhanced Student Achievement Funding under § 6-20-2305.

(ii) A Platinum, Gold, Silver, or Bronze credential through the ACT WorkKeys (NCRC) shall be used by an institution of higher education as transcribable credit toward the attainment of a postsecondary technical degree.

SECTION 4. Arkansas Code § 6-16-152(b) and (c), concerning requirements under the Computer Science Education Advancement Act of 2021,

are amended to read as follows:

(b)(1) Beginning with the entering ninth grade class of 2022-2023, a public high school student shall be required to earn one (1) unit of credit in a Department of Education-approved high school computer science or computer science-related career and technical education course before the student graduates.

(2) The one (1) unit required in subdivision (b)(1) of this section may be earned in grades eight through twelve (8-12).

(3) A computer science or computer science-related career and technical education course offered by a public high school shall:

(A) Be of high quality;

(B) Meet or exceed the curriculum standards and requirements established by the State Board of Education; and

(C) Be made available in a traditional classroom setting, a blended learning environment, an online-based or other technology-based format that is tailored to meet the needs of each participating student.

(4) The Division of Career and Technical Education within the Department of Education shall work with the Arkansas Computer Science Initiative within the Department of Education to establish by rule the minimum criteria by which a career and technical education course may be approved as a computer science-related career and technical education course.

(c)(1) The department shall designate at least four (4) state board-approved computer science or computer science-related career and technical education courses that students in grade eight (8) may take for high school credit.

(2) If a student in grade eight (8) wishes to take a course not designated, a school district ~~must~~ shall comply with any existing course approval requirements.

SECTION 5. DO NOT CODIFY. Applicability.

A student who has been approved for weighted credit in a career and technical course under § 6-15-902(c)(4) prior to the effective date of this act shall receive weighted credit for the career and technical course in which the student is currently enrolled in the form in which the weighted credit has been approved.

As Engrossed: S3/29/23

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/s/J. Dotson

APPROVED: 4/11/23