

RCW 28A.700.005 Findings—Intent—2008 c 170.

(1) The legislature finds that many secondary career and technical education programs have made progress in retooling for the twenty-first century by aligning with state and nationally certified programs that meet industry standards and by increasing the rigor of academic content in core skills such as reading, writing, mathematics, and science.

(2) However, the legislature also finds that increased expectations for students to meet the state's academic learning standards require students to take remedial courses. The state board of education is considering increasing credit requirements for high school graduation. Together these policies could restrict students from pursuing high quality career and technical education programs because students would not have adequate time in their schedules to enroll in a progressive sequence of career and technical courses.

(3) The legislature further finds that teachers, counselors, students, and parents are not well-informed about the opportunities presented by high quality career and technical education. Secondary career and technical education is not a stopping point but a beginning point for further education, including through a bachelor's degree. Secondary preapprenticeships and courses aligned to industry standards can lead directly to workforce entry as well as to additional education. Career and technical education is a proven strategy to engage and motivate students, including students at risk of dropping out of school entirely.

(4) Finally, the legislature finds that state policies have been piecemeal in support of career and technical education. Laws exist to require state approval of career and technical programs, but could be strengthened by requiring alignment with industry standards and focusing on high-demand fields. Tech prep consortia have developed articulation agreements for dual credit and smooth transitions between high schools and colleges, but agreements remain highly decentralized between individual faculty and individual schools. Laws require school districts to create equivalences between academic and career and technical courses, but more support and professional development is needed to expand these opportunities.

(5) Therefore it is the legislature's intent to identify the gaps in current laws and policies regarding secondary career and technical education and fill those gaps in a comprehensive fashion to create a coherent whole. This act seeks to increase the quality and rigor of secondary career and technical education, improve links to postsecondary education, encourage and facilitate academic instruction through career and technical courses, and expand access to and awareness of the opportunities offered by high quality career and technical education. [2008 c 170 s 1.]