

2/26/2019

To Members of the Senate Education Committee:

RE: SB 456 Support

I think exploring the elimination of the Essential Skills requirement in order to receive a diploma is worth doing. Currently, the state has requirements for the number of credits in different departments that a student must take in order to graduate. These credits are earned by a student based on work and assessments created by a student's teacher from class.

Currently, students have to take other tests in order to apply for college, and the Essential Skills creates another layer of bureaucracy that implies that what teachers teach and assess with class grades is not enough. Students do not have to do that in college: you take classes, get grades, and get your credits to graduate. The Essential Skills requirement may actually be a barrier to more students graduating.

Actually, I would rather see more time put into re-evaluating the current requirements needed to graduate from high school as we tend to have an old-school model of what is necessary to be an educated citizenry. I would like to more hands-on classes such as personal finance, home economics, automotive skills, creative arts, library/information literacy, more in-depth PE classes such as yoga, running, swimming etc...in order to create more well-rounded individuals and supported with vital skills and abilities as they grow into adulthood and figure out who they are. We need to provide more opportunities that are meaningful and relevant. I encourage our state to look more closely at the Finland model where no one takes a state standardized test until 10th grade, and students can choose a college or career/vocational education path as all jobs in a community are valued—not one over the other.

In our family experience, my daughter has attended her local community college for her senior year in order to get college credit as well as high school credits, and she has blossomed. She said she is finally taking classes that are relevant and interesting to her. In addition, students need to be able to apply what they learn in their core classes to make it meaningful and relevant. My daughter struggled with math, but did ok; still she didn't see the relevance of another year of advanced math and now she is shying away from pursuing her love of science because it requires more math—and she took three years to include Pre-Calculus with good grades.

We need to get back to joyful and meaningful learning and revisit what our new generation needs from our schools. Please consider SB 456 and consider starting a conversation that will review what we really want our high schools to provide for our students.

Respectfully,
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