



STEM Policy

Legislators Want Computer Science To Count for Language Requirement

- By Dian Schaffhauser
- 02/09/15

A bill being pushed in the state of Washington would allow two years of computer science to count as two years of world languages for the purpose of admission into college in the state.

[House Bill 1445](https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/1656974-1445.html) <<https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/1656974-1445.html>> actually requires that K-12 school leaders meet with college leaders to "facilitate a conversation" about accepting computer science as a replacement for the current language stipulation. If the bill were turned into law, those education organizations would have to put a report together by Nov. 1, 2017 that lays out the curriculum, courses and course sequencing necessary for the change to be made official.

A similar effort was attempted in Kentucky last year. There, [Senate Bill 16](http://www.lrc.ky.gov/record/15rs/SB16.htm) <<http://www.lrc.ky.gov/record/15rs/SB16.htm>> would have amended education regulations to allow computer programming language courses to be accepted by postsecondary institutions as meeting foreign language requirements in public schools. The Kentucky bill was passed and sent to the House, where it landed in the education subcommittee for further work.

According to [research](http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/pdf/studies/2011462.pdf) <<http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/pdf/studies/2011462.pdf>> by the [National Center for Education Statistics](http://nces.ed.gov/) <<http://nces.ed.gov/>>, about 19 percent of students graduated from high school in 2009 with at least one credit in computer science topics. That's down from 25 percent in 1990 and 2000.

A [recent study](http://thejournal.com/articles/2015/02/02/school-leaders-mostly-mystified-by-computer-science-education.aspx) <<http://thejournal.com/articles/2015/02/02/school-leaders-mostly-mystified-by-computer-science-education.aspx>> by the [Computer Science Teachers Association \(CSTA\)](#)

<http://csta.acm.org/index.html> found that only three out of four high schools currently offer computer science courses, and only four in 10 count credits earned in a computer science class toward requirements; the rest count them as electives. The organization recommended in its report that high schools begin counting those classes toward graduate requirements.

In reporting on geek site [Ars Technica](http://arstechnica.com/tech-policy/2015/02/washington-lawmakers-want-computer-science-to-count-as-foreign-language/) <http://arstechnica.com/tech-policy/2015/02/washington-lawmakers-want-computer-science-to-count-as-foreign-language/>, Washington state legislator Chris Reykdal, who co-sponsored the bill, said he believes that world language requirements should be moved down into elementary schools, "when the brain is mapping in a different way, and we would have kids fluent by sixth or seventh grade."

The focus on computer science in his bill, he noted, is a nod to the opportunities for "high-paid" computer science jobs. "It strikes me that we don't give kids a meaningful shot in getting some computer science basics before they go to university," he told reporter Cyrus Farivar.

Co-sponsor Chad Magendanz is also promoting [HB 1813](#) <http://app.leg.wa.gov/billinfo/summary.aspx?bill=1813&year=2015>, a bipartisan proposal to expand computer science education to prepare students for jobs in high tech. "If we give more children access to computer science learning now, they'll have greater opportunities in the future," he said in a statement about that bill.

About the Author

Dian Schaffhauser is a writer who covers technology and business for a number of publications. Contact her at dian@dischaffhauser.com.

Content - editorial@thejournal.com | Website - dnagel@1105media.com
Subscriptions - THEJournal@1105service.com | Contact the webmaster: [\[+\] Site Feedback](#) [\[+\]](#)
©1994-2014 [1105 Media Inc](#), Ed-Tech Group. See our [Privacy Policy](#) and [Terms of Use](#)