

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
SENATE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE

January 31, 2014
8:00 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Senator Gary Stevens, Chair
Senator Mike Dunleavy, Vice Chair
Senator Bert Stedman
Senator Charlie Huggins
Senator Berta Gardner

MEMBERS ABSENT

All members present

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE FOR HOUSE BILL NO. 190(EDC)
"An Act providing for course credit in secondary school based on demonstrated mastery of the subject."

- MOVED CSHB 190(EDC) OUT OF COMMITTEE

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

BILL: HB 190

SHORT TITLE: CREDIT FOR SECONDARY SCHOOL COURSES

SPONSOR(S): REPRESENTATIVE(S) SEATON

03/28/13	(H)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
03/28/13	(H)	EDC
04/03/13	(H)	EDC AT 8:00 AM CAPITOL 106
04/03/13	(H)	Scheduled But Not Heard
04/05/13	(H)	EDC AT 8:00 AM CAPITOL 106
04/05/13	(H)	Heard & Held
04/05/13	(H)	MINUTE(EDC)
04/08/13	(H)	EDC RPT CS(EDC) 4DP 1NR 1AM
04/08/13	(H)	DP: LEDOUX, SEATON, DRUMMOND, GATTIS
04/08/13	(H)	NR: SADDLER
04/08/13	(H)	AM: P.WILSON
04/08/13	(H)	EDC AT 8:00 AM CAPITOL 106
04/08/13	(H)	Moved CSHB 190(EDC) Out of Committee
04/08/13	(H)	MINUTE(EDC)
04/11/13	(H)	TRANSMITTED TO (S)
04/11/13	(H)	VERSION: CSHB 190(EDC)

04/11/13 (S) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
04/11/13 (S) EDC
04/12/13 (S) EDC AT 8:00 AM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)
04/12/13 (S) Heard & Held
04/12/13 (S) MINUTE(EDC)
01/31/14 (S) EDC AT 8:00 AM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)

WITNESS REGISTER

REPRESENTATIVE PAUL SEATON
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Sponsor of HB 190.

POSIE BOGGS, representing herself
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 190.

HERB SCHROEDER, Vice Provost
Alaska Native Science & Engineering Program (ANSEP)
University of Anchorage
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Answered questions related to HB 190.

GENE STONE, Assistant Superintendent
Mat-Su Borough School District
Palmer, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in favor of HB 190.

ROB PICOU, Executive Director of Instruction
Mat-Su Borough School District
Palmer, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in favor of HB 190.

LES MORSE, Deputy Commissioner
Department of Education and Early Development (DEED)
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Answered questions regarding HB 190.

ACTION NARRATIVE

8:00:04 AM

CHAIR GARY STEVENS called the Senate Education Standing Committee meeting to order at 8:00 a.m. Present at the call to order were Senators Gardner, Huggins, Dunleavy, and Chair Stevens. Senator Stedman arrived shortly thereafter.

HB 190-CREDIT FOR SECONDARY SCHOOL COURSES

8:00:38 AM

CHAIR STEVENS announced that the only order of business would be HB 190. He noted the bill was last heard on April 12, 2013. [CSHB 190(EDC) was before the committee.]

8:00:59 AM

REPRESENTATIVE PAUL SEATON, Alaska State Legislature, Juneau, Alaska, sponsor of HB 190, reviewed the bill. He related that during Alaska Native Science & Engineering Program (ANSEP) testimony last year, the House Education Committee recognized the need for the bill. Students who took calculus in college for a full year could only get a semester of high school credit due to the district's policy on "seat time." That highlighted the question as to whether a student should be stuck in a classroom where they already knew the material. The bill would allow students to challenge courses, take an assessment, and demonstrate mastery of the material to the district's satisfaction. He pointed out that mastery is a very important aspect and is left to individual districts to define.

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON remarked that grade point average was a consideration when writing the bill. It allows the district to give credit for the course and apply the course as a criterion for the Alaska Performance Scholarship, but does not specify that the district must award a grade for the course. Another issue was whether to allow students who challenged classes to be considered full-time students. The bill allows districts to make that decision. Anchorage has a "course by challenge/course by choice" policy. Challenged courses do not qualify for full-time status. The bill is not a back-door approach to having half-time students.

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON noted that all superintendents were contacted and many responded in favor of the bill. The bill provides that assessments for challenging courses be generated within a reasonable time. It leaves the demonstration of mastery up to individual districts. It allows students to progress at their fastest pace.

8:05:48 AM

CHAIR STEVENS thanked Representative Seaton and noted the presence of Senator Stedman.

SENATOR DUNLEAVY asked if there are differences between the Governor's bill [SB 139] and HB 190.

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON remarked that there are several differences. He said he is pleased that SB 139 has adopted the terminology of "mastery." However, there are limitations in SB 139, as found on page 2, lines 4 and 5, where it states "the opportunity to earn credit for a course offered in a school in mathematics, language arts, science, social studies, and world languages if the student proves mastery." There are two limitations included in that language: it is offered "in a school," and only for the five courses listed. It does not include tech-prep courses, such as carpentry, or PE. He questioned if the district should be able to decide which courses could be challenged.

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON clarified that establishing an assessment tool does not mean that a district must create a new test; the district can adopt an existing one.

[8:09:07 AM](#)

CHAIR STEVENS noted that many of the bills currently making their way through the legislative system are included in the Governor's bill. He stressed the appropriateness of hearing each topic within individual bills because it is unknown what will happen to the Governor's bill.

SENATOR HUGGINS referred to the reluctance a 4.0 average student might have about challenging courses because it might affect their grade point average. He suggested providing special opportunities for those over-achieving students.

[8:10:45 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON thought HB 190 would challenge those students. He said he does not want to interfere with university selection criteria. The fear of decreasing grade point average keeps some students out of Advanced Placement classes.

SENATOR HUGGINS clarified that the bill addresses problems in the current education system. He said 4.0 students should be encouraged to some higher level of challenge that may not occur in a high school. He suggested encouraging programs like Middle College in Mat-Su.

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON agreed. He said the bill solves the problem of getting around "seat time" for credit.

SENATOR HUGGINS maintained that the education system needs to be reformed.

8:14:20 AM

SENATOR GARDNER addressed the differences between SB 139 and HB 190. She gave an example of an orchestra student wishing to test out of credits, but not play in the orchestra.

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON said that is not the intent of the bill. Instead, a student might test out Violin I and go right into Violin II, receiving credit for Violin I.

SENATOR GARDNER gave an example of a bi-lingual foreign student who could pass all courses in a given language. She asked if they would be given elective credit for those courses.

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON replied that it is up to the district to decide some of those issues. It does not make sense for a fluent speaker of Spanish to take Spanish I. He did not wish to hold someone back to learn knowledge they already have.

SENATOR GARDNER said she understands the intent of the bill. She stressed there is more to a high school education than just taking required classes.

8:17:49 AM

SENATOR DUNLEAVY expressed strong support for HB 190. He gave an example of a Spanish-speaking student in a Spanish class. He said the bill is common sense, low impact, and inexpensive.

CHAIR STEVENS thanked Representative Seaton.

He opened public testimony.

8:19:59 AM

POSIE BOGGS, representing herself, Anchorage, Alaska, testified in support of HB 190. She opined that not all students enjoy the high school experience. She shared a personal experience with school and with private tutoring in math. She spoke against the idea of seat time. She said her own children took college classes during high school. She suggested making it as easy as possible for parents. She referred to page 1 and questioned the language "reasonable time" because it does not give parents planning time.

8:26:49 AM

HERB SCHROEDER, Vice Provost, Alaska Native Science & Engineering Program (ANSEP), University of Anchorage, Anchorage, Alaska, offered to answer questions related to HB 190.

SENATOR DUNLEAVY asked what question Mr. Schroeder brought before the legislature.

MR. SCHROEDER explained a situation with an ANSEP student's inability to qualify for the Alaska Performance Scholarship. The student took numerous advanced college math courses which did not equal enough seat time to earn the high school credits he needed to graduate. He wanted to ensure that students receive the credit they deserve for taking advanced classes.

CHAIR STEVENS thanked Mr. Schroeder.

[8:29:28 AM](#)

GENE STONE, Assistant Superintendent, Mat-Su Borough School District, Palmer, Alaska, spoke in favor of HB 190. He pointed out that the Mat-Su District has already implemented the requirements of HB 190.

ROB PICOU, Executive Director of Instruction, Mat-Su School Borough District, Palmer, Alaska, testified in favor of HB 190. He explained that previously he worked in the Bering Strait School District. The data there showed that a great number of students had to take remedial math and English courses in college, and many were not successful in college, returning home after the first year. He said the solution was to create a dual credit option. Once students took the HSGQE, they immediately took the Accuplacer Test to identify whether they would require remedial English or math. Then, the district partnered with Northwest Campus to create a dual credit option for those classes before the students graduated high school. Many students did not have the support they needed for online remedial courses. Northwest Campus changed their schedule in order to offer the courses to the high school students. Of the 15 percent of the students in the district who attempted college, roughly 12 percent were returning home unsuccessful. He concluded that HB 190 would greatly support such dual credit options.

[8:32:15 AM](#)

CHAIR STEVENS thanked Mr. Picou. He closed public testimony.

SENATOR HUGGINS asked the sponsor what "demonstrating mastery of the subject" means.

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON said districts will determine what mastery means. The bill does not delineate mastery in the bill and does not take over assessment or curriculum matters. The district

could use last years' final for Algebra II for the assessment tool for Algebra II. Anchorage requires a 90 percent score for Credit by Choice. He summarized that school boards are in charge of their curriculum.

SENATOR HUGGINS noted that the State Board of Education also has some responsibility.

[8:36:40 AM](#)

CHAIR STEVENS referred to Ms. Boggs' statement about a school district dragging its feet on making this change, but he reiterated that local control should define the timeframe.

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON said the issue of local control was an amendment added by the House Education Committee. There is a lot of support for this concept. The assessment tool could be last year's final exam, but it is left to the local district to decide.

CHAIR STEVENS asked the Department of Education and Early Development (DEED), to respond.

[8:38:51 AM](#)

LES MORSE, Deputy Commissioner, Department of Education and Early Development (DEED), Juneau, Alaska, addressed the role of the department: to facilitate and support the final assessments of course offerings for smaller districts that needed support. The larger districts have already set levels of mastery. He suggested that the State School Board may also be involved in supporting districts in setting the bar for mastery.

[8:40:25 AM](#)

SENATOR GARDNER suggested that the bigger difference between the Governor's bill and HB 190 is the setting out of fields that can be challenged in SB 139. She requested the department's opinion.

MR. MORSE spoke in support of SB 139. He did not agree that the Governor's concept limits the courses, but rather states which courses must be available to challenge. Other areas are up to local districts. He suggested that some areas are problematic for challenging out of, such as some of the visual and performing arts. The Governor's approach was to use those areas where tools are available, but districts would have their own options in other areas.

[8:41:57 AM](#)

SENATOR DUNLEAVY moved to report CSHB 190, Version U, from committee with individual recommendations and attached fiscal notes.

There being no objection, CSHB 190(EDC) moved from the Senate Education Standing Committee.

8:42:17 AM

At ease

8:44:10 AM

CHAIR STEVENS noted that all five members signed "Do Pass."

8:44:21 AM

There being no further business to come before the committee, Chair Stevens adjourned the Senate Education Standing Committee at 8:44 a.m.