

WEST VIRGINIA LEGISLATURE

2024 REGULAR SESSION

Introduced

House Bill 4709

By Delegates Dean, Young and Worrell

[Introduced January 15, 2024; Referred to
the Committee on Education then Finance]

1 A BILL to amend the Code of West Virginia, 1931, as amended, by adding thereto a new section,
 2 designated §18-2-44; to amend said code by adding thereto a new article, designated §18-
 3 21A-1, §18-21A-2, §18-21A-3, §18-21A-4, §18-21A-5, §18-21A-6, and §18-21A-7; and to
 4 amend said code by adding thereto a new article, designated §18-34-1 and §18-34-2, all
 5 relating to vocational and technical education programs; requiring the State Board and
 6 Commerce Department to create lists of apprenticeships and certifications and credentials
 7 to provide to students; creating a career and technical education pilot program to introduce
 8 middle school students career and technical education opportunities in the state; allowing
 9 for non-certified persons provide student instruction; providing state board authorize and
 10 establish conditions thereto and promote the pilot program; directing local public
 11 education institutions participation; requiring county school districts to provide certain
 12 information to students; and establishing the Governor's Workforce Credential.

Be it enacted by the Legislature of West Virginia:

ARTICLE 2. STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION.

§18-2-44. Mandatory career and technical education information for high school students.

1 (a) The State Board of Education and the Commerce Department shall coordinate efforts
 2 and create a list of existing apprenticeships throughout the state, as well as a list of certifications
 3 and other credentials that reflect current workforce needs, in order to educate and prepare high
 4 school students regarding career and technical education (CTE) opportunities and careers
 5 following graduation.

6 (b) Each county school district shall annually provide each student, beginning in the ninth
 7 grade, with the following information:

8 (1) Career and technical education programs within the district and adjoining districts; and

9 (2) The EDGE program, established by §18-13-1 et seq. and §18B-3C-4 of this code,
 10 which provides the opportunity for the student to obtain dual credits that count toward the high
 11 school graduation requirements, as well as to count toward the student's achievement of a

12 certificate or Associate Degree.

13 (3) A list of apprenticeships created pursuant to §18-2-44(a) of this code.

14 (4) A list of certificates and credentials created pursuant to §18-2-44(a) of this code.

15 (5) Details regarding enlistment and opportunities within the armed forces, including local
16 recruiter contact information.

ARTICLE 21A. CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION PILOT PROGRAM FOR
MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS.

§18-21A-1. Short title.

1 This article may be cited as the "Middle School Technical Education Program Act" or the
2 "Middle School STEP Act."

§18-21A-2. Legislative findings.

1 (a) Career and technical education prepare students to be both college and career ready
2 by providing core academic, technical and employability skills.

3 (b) High-quality career and technical education programs not only ensure that coursework
4 is aligned with rigorous academic standards and post-secondary expectations, but are built to
5 address specific skills needed in certain career pathways.

6 (c) Eighty percent of students taking a college preparatory academic curriculum with
7 rigorous career and technical education courses met college and career readiness goals,
8 compared to only 63 percent of students taking the same academic core who did not experience
9 rigorous career and technical education courses.

10 (d) Furthermore, a 2008 study from American College Testing showed that if students are
11 not on target for college and career readiness by the end of eighth grade the impact may be nearly
12 irreversible. The level of academic achievement that students attain by eighth grade has a larger
13 impact on their college and career readiness by the time they graduate from high school than any
14 other academic factor.

15 (e) Given the importance of career and technical education programs in fostering college
16 and career readiness, and the determinative impact that eighth grade achievement has on future
17 academic and professional success, it is essential that middle school students are informed about
18 and prepared to take advantage of career and technical education programs in their local
19 communities.

§18-21A-3. Purpose.

1 The purpose of the pilot program is to better prepare seventh and eighth grade students to
2 take advantage of West Virginia's Career and Technical Education programs and to improve
3 students' college and career readiness prior to high school. For the purposes of this article,
4 "middle school" means any school containing the seventh and eighth grade levels.

§18-21A-4. Organization of special pilot program.

1 (a) *Funding.* -- Participating middle schools shall use existing resources to implement the
2 pilot program.

3 (b) *Instructor Qualifications.* -- Qualified instructors include, but are not limited to, teachers,
4 counselors and other middle school staff possessing a post-secondary degree. Instructors are not
5 required to obtain any additional certification or license to instruct the course. Nothing in this article
6 or chapter 18A of this code prohibits principals or vice-principals, on a voluntary basis, from
7 participating in the program as a guest instructor or speaker.

8 (c) *Elective Course.* -- The pilot program shall be a one semester elective course:
9 *Provided,* That middle schools with alternative scheduling systems may adapt the program to suit
10 their scheduling needs.

11 (d) *Local Partners.* -- High schools, vocational schools, community colleges, public
12 universities, and any other institute of higher learning that receives funding from the State of West
13 Virginia shall provide speakers to participating middle schools upon the middle school's request.

§18-21A-5. Curriculum.

1 (a) *Guest Speakers.* -- Course instructors shall schedule bi-monthly guest speakers to

2 introduce students to a particular career and to prepare students to pursue the featured career by
3 providing relevant information on:

4 (1) Education requirements;

5 (2) Cost of education;

6 (3) Availability of education;

7 (4) Average salary;

8 (5) Average longevity; and

9 (6) Transferability of skills.

10 Instructors are encouraged to invite professionals excelling in fields where training is
11 available at the local career and technical education school.

12 (b) *On-Site Research.* -- Instructors may organize field trips to visit local employers, job
13 fairs, high schools, vocational schools, community colleges, technical schools, public and private
14 universities, and other post-secondary academic institutions to introduce students to potential
15 career paths via on-site presentations and experiential learning.

16 (c) *Career Skills.* -- The course shall include instruction on skill sets required to discover
17 and take advantage of employment opportunities, including, but not limited to:

18 (1) Performing a job search;

19 (2) Developing a résumé;

20 (3) Preparing for a job interview; and

21 (4) Developing and deploying personal networks to find job opportunities.

22 (d) *Academic Skills.* -- The course shall include instruction on skill sets required to discover
23 and take advantage of educational opportunities, including, but not limited to:

24 (1) Researching admissions requirements for vocational schools, community colleges,
25 technical schools, public and private universities, and other post-secondary academic institutions;

26 (2) Researching employment rates and average salaries for graduates of vocational
27 schools, community colleges, technical schools, public and private universities, and other post-

28 secondary academic institutions;

29 (3) Researching employment rates and average salaries for specific degrees, certifications
30 and majors from post-secondary academic institutions;

31 (4) Researching state, federal, and private scholarship and grant opportunities; and

32 (5) Preparing a college or technical school application.

33 (e) *Personal Graduation Plan.* -- For successful completion of the course, a student shall
34 create a "Personal Graduation Plan" outlining his or her plan to become employable following high
35 school or post-secondary school.

§18-21A-6. Admission process for middle schools.

1 (a) *Authority.* -- The state board shall establish guidelines for middle schools to submit a
2 request for the school's admission in the pilot program and the state board may admit middle
3 schools into the pilot program.

4 (b) *Admissions.* -- Middle schools may volunteer to implement the program by submitting a
5 request to the state board and admission shall be on a first-come, first-serve basis.

6 (c) *Minimum school participation.* -- It is the goal of the pilot program that a minimum of 10
7 middle schools participate each year during the pilot program's existence. If 10 middle schools
8 have not been admitted into the program by July 1 preceding the academic year, the state board
9 may solicit additional middle schools to participate in the pilot program to meet the minimum
10 participation goal, but may not require the participation of any middle school.

§18-21A-7. Certification and monitoring.

1 (a) *Certificate of completion.* -- Students shall receive a West Virginia STEP Certificate
2 verifying their participation in the pilot program upon successful completion of the course.

3 (b) *Monitoring.* -- The state board shall report to the Legislative Oversight Commission on
4 Education Accountability each year on the graduation, post-secondary participation, and to the
5 extent practicable, job placement rates, in the aggregate, of students that have received a West
6 Virginia STEP Certificate following successful completion of the pilot program.

ARTICLE 34. GOVERNOR'S WORKFORCE CREDENTIAL.

§18-34-1. Establishing the Governor's Workforce Credential.

1 The Governor's Workforce Credential is an initiative aimed at preparing students to enter
2 the workforce with industry-ready skills and abilities to meet business and industry expectations. It
3 also creates a way for employers to identify potential employees who are prepared to enter the
4 workforce and understand the industry accepted expectations of such employees. The credential
5 honors those students who are able to meet or exceed rigid requirements within their Career and
6 Technical Education (CTE) programs.

§18-34-2. Recognition for recipients of credential upon graduation.

1 Any student who fulfills the requirements of the Governor's Workforce Credential and has
2 also met their graduation requirements shall receive individual recognition at their high school
3 graduation ceremony.

NOTE: The purpose of this bill is to provide information to high school students regarding career and technical educational opportunities during and after high school, to create a career and technical education for middle school students, and to codify the Governor's Workforce Credential.

Strike-throughs indicate language that would be stricken from a heading or the present law and underscoring indicates new language that would be added.