



**House  
Legislative  
Analysis  
Section**

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**OCCUPATION EDUCATION ACT**

**House Bill 4505 (Substitute H-2)  
First Analysis (5-13-93)**

**Sponsor: Rep. William R. Keith  
Committee: Education**

***THE APPARENT PROBLEM:***

There has been an increasing focus in recent years on the need for our educational system to prepare people for today's world of work and for the workplace of the future. In 1990, the Michigan State Board of Education developed a Strategic Plan for Vocational-Technical Education aimed at creating a new system whose intent would be "to develop a seamless transition from education to work that is continually accountable to the external forces that shape the employment picture of Michigan." Under this career and technical education system, according to an executive summary of the board plan, "the old distinctions between secondary and post-secondary, between technical and vocational skills and other distinctions that presently serve as barriers [would be] transcended to create a life-long learning system." The system would integrate academic skills with technical skills and do away with the "artificial wall between academics and 'vocational' courses." The plan notes that the creation of such a system requires a partnership of business, industry, labor, and education, and requires flexibility in the kinds of programs and activities undertaken to respond to the changing needs of the employee sector. Those needs should be used to help to determine the standards and outcomes that guide the system.

A similar system was urged by the report issued in 1992 by the Speaker's Blue Ribbon Commission on Career/Technical Education, which had been formed by then-Speaker Lewis Dodak, to address what was perceived as the growing gap "between what our children need to know to become employed and what they are learning in our schools." The report, which also employed the "seamless transition" phrase, urged that our educational system "identify the jobs that will be available in the future and the education, skill level and training that will be necessary to obtain those jobs." The emphasis, the report said, should be on 'competencies' and 'mastery of skills.' It too recommended investing in the current work force to provide it with the skills in demand in the labor

market and creating partnerships between business and education. Legislation has been crafted that would assist in the development and implementation of a new system of career and technical education.

***THE CONTENT OF THE BILL:***

The bill would amend the School Code (MCL 380.1287a) in the following ways.

\* A 19-member statewide cabinet for professional and technical standards would be created within the Legislative Council to develop, implement, and oversee a statewide system for gathering, disseminating, and providing accurate information on employment and skill-level needs in the workplace and to engage in related activities. The cabinet would be composed of 7 state officials and 12 members appointed by the governor and legislative leadership. Appointments would be made by October 1, 1993.

The state officials would be: a member of the State Board of Education, as designated by the board; the superintendent of public instruction or a designee; the director of the Department of Labor or a designee; the director of the Department of Commerce or a designee; the director of the Department of Social Services or a designee; the governor's advisor on job training or a designee; and a member of the Michigan Employment Security Commission, as designated by the commission. The governor, the Co-Speakers of the House of Representatives, and Senate Majority Leader would each appoint three members, one each representing business, education, and organized labor. (Organizations representing those interests would nominate candidates. Of the education members one each would have to represent local public education, postsecondary institutions, and vocational education.) Two additional representatives of business and industry would also be appointed, one jointly by the Co-

House Bill 4505 (5-13-93)

Speakers and one by the Senate Majority Leader, from nominations submitted by organizations representing business and industry. Finally, the governor would appoint a representative of community-based organizations.

\* The cabinet would have to develop and implement the statewide system by October 1, 1994. To the extent possible, the system would incorporate existing resources of and information already gathered by existing agencies, organizations, councils, and committees established by law and having a primary function directly related to education, employment, or job training.

\* The system would have to include the establishment of a new statewide labor market information exchange system made up of self-governing state and local occupational councils. There would be a state occupational council for each major occupational area in the state and local occupational councils to serve particular geographic areas. The state councils would be charged with providing information on current and anticipated employment needs in the occupational area, including the education and skills required for jobs, and with developing a uniform standard of competency for the occupational area. Local councils would be responsible for assessing local and regional employment needs and for assisting local and intermediate school districts to implement needed changes. If possible, an existing entity created by law would have to be used in structuring the local council. The number and configuration of local councils would be determined by the statewide cabinet.

\* The system would also have to include the establishment and coordination of youth apprenticeship, internship, and cooperative educational programs in the private sector work setting that would involve:

-- mechanisms for business to work cooperatively with schools and other educational institutions to develop school-to-work strategies, including on-the-job training and employment orientation for students wishing to pursue areas of study related to particular employment; and

-- mechanisms for business and higher education to assist in efforts to provide work-based education by developing models for youth apprenticeship, internship, and cooperative education programs and

the appropriate curricula to complement this learning. The models would have to emphasize career areas rather than specific jobs, and the focus would be on providing students with broad and widely applicable knowledge and job skills. The models would have to include structured on-the-job training combined with classroom instruction; the transfer of skills on the job through a mentor or skilled supervisor; the opportunity to acquire skills while earning a wage; an agreement between the training sponsor and trainee on the process and outcomes of training; and formal recognition, such as accreditation, afforded programs, and the awarding of worker credentials upon completion.

\* The cabinet would also have to:

-- identify ways in which existing revenue is being used to train and educate individuals for work, including state, federal, and private resources, and make recommendations to the governor and legislature on a more efficient and effective use of those funds, on whether additional funding is needed, and the purpose of additional funding.

-- identify ways in which business could invest in the educational system by assisting in instructional and organizational professional development, providing technology and equipment, and furnishing information on workplace changes.

-- identify the educational expectations of community colleges and other institutions of higher education and make recommendations to the governor, legislature, and State Board of Education about their role in helping provide students with a seamless transition from high school to college and to work.

-- provide oversight over the labor market information exchange system and the state and local occupational councils.

-- based on information from the state occupational councils, identify the competencies, skills, skill levels, and knowledge, including employability and problem solving skills, needed in the workplace and provide the information to the governor, legislature, and state board of education.

-- make recommendations to the governor and legislature on ways in which the state could assist employers in providing workplace-based training for existing employees, including guidelines and criteria

that should be used in evaluating such programs and the mechanisms that could be used to provide financial and other incentives to employers.

\* The State Board of Education, using information provided by the statewide cabinet, would be required to:

-- Evaluate, using the model core curriculum and labor market information, existing curricula and programs to assure that instruction includes needed competencies and skills for obtaining employment.

-- Evaluate whether existing assessment mechanisms used in the educational system, including, but not limited to, the statewide proficiency test and the Michigan educational assessment program, reflect the basic competencies, skills, skill levels, and knowledge that will be needed in work.

-- Develop policy and procedures to determine the extent to which learners have attained the expected competencies, skills, and skill levels.

-- Provide leadership, direction, and technical assistance to local and intermediate school districts for improving their educational programs to meet future employment needs.

-- Establish procedures for admission to community colleges and other institutions of higher learning to assure that applicants receive credit, for admission or advanced placement purposes, for credits and skills mastered in academic areas of study regardless of whether the method of teaching was applied or traditional academics.

-- Develop policy and procedures to ensure that all students and adults have access to a comprehensive guidance and counseling program that includes the career development components of employment opportunities and skill requirements.

-- As part of the state-endorsed diploma requirements, establish policies and procedures to validate completion of an approved program of career and technical education that includes applied academics.

-- Establish ways for community colleges, colleges, and universities to collaborate with local and intermediate school districts to make equipment, laboratories, and supplies available to the districts if

that is more cost effective than acquisition by the districts.

\* The bill specifies that the act it would create would be known and cited as "The Keith-Oxender Occupation Education Act of 1993."

### ***FISCAL IMPLICATIONS:***

The 1993-94 school aid appropriations bill (House Bill 4464) contains \$200,000 for the establishment of the statewide cabinet, according to the Department of Education. (5-5-93)

### ***ARGUMENTS:***

#### ***For:***

Generally, the bill proposes to strengthen the link between school and the world of work and ensure that the educational system provides children and adults with the competencies and skills they need to participate successfully in the state's ever-changing economy. That, in turn, would make the state's businesses better able to compete in the global economy. Towards this end, the bill sets up a system that will continually identify the skills and knowledge required in the workplace and help schools at all levels put in place the kinds of programs and activities that will produce the required outcomes. This involves evaluating curriculums to see that the proper kind of opportunities for learning are available and evaluating students to see if the anticipated learning is happening. There would be additional emphasis on apprenticeships, internships, and cooperative education programs, and a greater integration of academic and vocational learning. Under the bill, representatives of business, industry, labor, education, state government, and other sectors of society would work together on a special cabinet. The State Board of Education would have a key role as well in evaluating existing curriculums and methods of testing students, in providing leadership to local and intermediate school districts, and in promoting cooperation between the public schools and higher education. The hope is that the structures and process put in place by this bill will bring far-reaching change to the state's educational system in order to improve the quality of life of its people.

***Against:***

While the bill contains much that could improve the state's educational system, a number of concerns have been raised.

\* The bill intends to make significant changes to the K-12 school system and yet there is no guarantee a public school teacher or administrator will serve on the cabinet. It is possible only one representative on the cabinet will be connected to the K-12 system at all.

\* A spokesperson for agricultural interests has recommended that they be represented on the cabinet, since agriculture and agricultural education are important to the state.

\* Why is an entirely new cabinet (and the new spending it will involve) necessary? Couldn't these functions be carried out by the State Board of Education? Doesn't this bill just create another level of bureaucracy, with no guarantee that the schools will change significantly? The cabinet, it should be noted, is placed within the Legislative Service Bureau, which seems an odd location for an entity of this sort.

\* While the thrust of this bill makes sense, it should be noted that many schools already think that their task is preparing students for work and for additional education. Many undoubtedly believe they are doing a good job at this now. It seems odd to portray this as a startlingly new role (or "vision") for the state's public schools.

\* Preparing students (both children and adults) for work and for future education are important responsibilities of the schools, but they are not the only responsibilities. While this bill's concern for student achievement and competency is to be applauded, it should be kept in mind that schools have purposes beyond producing "products" for the state's employers.

***Response:***

Because the bill envisions bringing many different parties together to plan, implement, and continually evaluate various aspects of the state's educational system, it makes sense to house the cabinet in a "neutral" place like the Legislative Service Bureau. Various state departments will be involved in the activities envisioned by this bill, not just the Department of Education. The State Board of Education retains its significant responsibilities under the bill.

***POSITIONS:***

Among those indicating their support for the bill before the House Education Committee were the Michigan Farm Bureau, the National Federation of Independent Business/ Michigan, the Michigan Association of School Boards, and the Michigan Association of Secondary School Principals. (5-11-93)