
Education Committee

SSB 5714

Brief Description: Creating a pilot program of Spanish and Chinese language instruction.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Early Learning & K-12 Education (originally sponsored by Senators Roach, Prentice, Rasmussen, Oemig, Clements, Rockefeller, Tom, Fairley, Hobbs, Shin, Swecker, Holmquist, Benton, Stevens, Parlette, Delvin and Kline).

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Creates a pilot program for Spanish and Chinese language instruction in elementary schools.

Hearing Date: 3/16/07

Staff: Andrew Colvin (786-7304).

Background:

Currently, there is no requirement for school districts to provide instruction in languages other than English in elementary schools. High school students must have at least five and one-half elective credits to graduate, and the study of a world language other than English or the study of a world culture may satisfy any or all of the elective requirements. In order to enter a public four-year college or university in Washington, a student must have at least two years of the same foreign language, Native American language, or American Sign Language.

Washington's Essential Academic Learning Requirements do not cover world languages. However, the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) has endorsed, for voluntary use, standards for world language instruction adopted by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages.

Although not required, there are elementary schools in Washington that provide foreign language instruction. At least 21 schools currently operate a dual language program, which provides instruction for all students in two languages. Nearly all are in Spanish and English. The John Stanford International Elementary School in Seattle offers dual language programs in both

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Spanish and Japanese. Usually this model is used with native speakers of English and native speakers of another language.

Summary of Bill:

A pilot program is created for two school districts to provide Spanish and Chinese language instruction in elementary schools. Interested districts must apply for a grant by May 15, 2007, and the OSPI must determine the grant recipients by June 15, 2007. Participating school districts may use current law to employ people of unusual competence to provide the language instruction under the general supervision of a certificated staff person. The OSPI must provide an annual report for the life of the program, including whether the pilot should be continued, expanded, or modified.

The act expires in July 2009.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.