

HOUSE BILL REPORT

ESSB 6604

As Passed House - Amended:
March 11, 2010

Title: An act relating to flexibility in the education system.

Brief Description: Providing flexibility in the education system.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Early Learning & K-12 Education (originally sponsored by Senators Hobbs, King, McAuliffe, Oemig, Tom, Brandland, Holmquist, McDermott and Kline).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Education: 2/17/10, 2/23/10 [DPA].

Floor Activity:

Passed House - Amended: 3/2/10, 94-3.

Senate Refused to Concur.

House Amended.

Passed House: 3/11/10, 97-0.

Brief Summary of Engrossed Substitute Bill

- Removes requirements that school districts prepare Student Learning Plans for students in grades 5, and 9 through 12, who are not successful on state assessments or not on track to graduate, but retains the requirement for students in grade 8.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass as amended. Signed by 13 members: Representatives Quall, Chair; Maxwell, Vice Chair; Priest, Ranking Minority Member; Hope, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Dammeier, Fagan, Hunt, Johnson, Lias, Orwall, Probst, Santos and Sullivan.

Staff: Barbara McLain (786-7383).

Background:

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Legislation enacted in 2004 requires school districts to prepare Student Learning Plans (SLPs) for all students in grades 5, and 8 through 12 who are not successful on one or more of the state assessments of student learning. The law was later amended to include students who are not on track to graduate. Districts must notify the student's parents or legal guardians about the information in the SLPs. The SLPs must contain information about the courses, competencies, and other steps needed to be taken by the student to meet the state standards, remediation strategies, and options that will be made available for the student, and actions the school district intends to take to improve the student's skills.

Summary of Bill:

School districts are only required to prepare the SLPs for students in grades 8 who were not successful on the state assessments or who may not be on track to graduate.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available for original bill.

Effective Date of Amended Bill: This bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) It is important to keep in mind every time the Legislature passes a new law, the question should be asked of whether it creates yet another unfunded mandate. This year in particular, school districts are facing serious budget problems. We need to give them more flexibility. Student learning plans lack added value. Other activities that have been supported by the Legislature, such as Navigation 101 and high school and beyond plans, are much more meaningful. There has been no parent support or feedback on student learning plans. We have been wanting to reduce unfunded mandates for years. We appreciate this as a first step and appreciate the legislators who are trying to bring it forward again.

(In support with concerns) The provisions removing student learning plans are very supported. Student learning plans were a good idea in theory but have proven to be a paperwork exercise. There is concern about losing additional teachers due to budget cuts; there simply is not enough staff time to complete these plans. There is strong support to repeal these plans. The provisions regarding green building requirements are supported; these requirements are very expensive to meet and they can only be supported if adequately funded.

The provisions regarding the Washington State School Directors' Association (WSSDA) should be removed. The WSSDA is an integral partner in the overall school system and they provide important advocacy and representation. The WSSDA was created in statute in 1947 with a mission to coordinate representation of all school districts in the state. It was important at the time, and the education system is far more complex today.

(Opposed) Flexibility is supported, but the provision regarding the Financial Education Public Private Partnership actually creates less flexibility by limiting activity only if there are

private funds available. There is likely to be federal funding in the area of financial literacy that could be used.

Persons Testifying: (In support) Senator Hobbs, prime sponsor; Jerry Bender, Association of Washington School Principals; Barbara Mertens, Washington Association of School Administrators; and Mitch Denning, Alliance of Education Associations.

(In support with concerns) Lucinda Young, Washington Education Association; Dan Steele, Washington State School Director's Association; and Bob Butts, Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction.

(Opposed) Terry Kohl, Washington Credit Union.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.