
Education Committee

HB 2164

Brief Description: Encouraging school districts to loop groups of students and teachers in successive grade levels.

Sponsors: Representatives Maxwell, Dammeier, Lytton, Probst, Reykdal, Springer, Wilcox, Billig, Haigh, Kenney, Ladenburg, Santos, Kagi, Seaquist, Tharinger and Dahlquist.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Directs the Professional Educator Standards Board to permit school districts to assign teachers outside their endorsement area if the purpose of the assignment is to loop students and teachers between middle school and ninth grade as part of a program to improve academic and social outcomes.

Hearing Date: 1/23/12

Staff: Barbara McLain (786-7383).

Background:

Looping. The practice of keeping a group of students with the same teacher in successive school years and grade levels is called "looping." Some summaries of education research indicate that looping can have positive academic and social benefits for students, although it tends to be used in elementary grades more often than in middle grades. There is also research evidence that many students experience declines in attendance and grades in ninth grade. If students must repeat ninth grade, their chances of eventually dropping out of school increase significantly.

Teacher Certification. The Professional Educator Standards Board (PESB) establishes standards for teacher endorsement. In addition to being endorsed by subject area, teachers are endorsed by grade band. A K-8 endorsement allows a teacher to teach any subject in grades kindergarten through eight, but no higher. There are three middle school endorsements (Humanities, Math, and Science) that may be used in grades four through nine, and secondary endorsements (all of which are subject-specific) may be used only in grades five through 12.

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.

School districts are required by the PESB rules to assign only appropriately-endorsed teachers. However, there are four exceptions:

1. Teachers with additional education in a subject may teach that subject in grades four through nine.
2. School districts may assign teachers with particular competencies in alternative education to an alternative setting. There is no definition of "alternative."
3. The district may have the teacher and principal develop a plan for providing necessary additional assistance, as long as the school board approves of the assignment and the number of these teachers is reported annually to the PESB.
4. School districts may seek a waiver from the PESB of any of the endorsement rules, which the PESB considers annually and on a case-by-case basis.

Summary of Bill:

The Legislature intends to encourage school districts to consider looping of students between middle school and ninth grade as a strategy to improve student achievement and reduce dropouts.

The PESB must permit school districts to assign teachers outside their endorsement area without requiring supplemental assistance plans, additional coursework, or application for a waiver if:

- the purpose of the assignment is intentionally to loop students and teachers between middle school and ninth grade as part of a program to improve academic and social outcomes;
- the district determines the teacher has sufficient knowledge and skills to be a competent instructor in the assignment; and
- the assignment is approved by the school board.

School districts must report annually on the number of these assignments during the previous school year, but the PESB must maintain and display the number separately from other reported out-of-endorsement assignments.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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