
Education Committee

HB 1276

Brief Description: Creating the dropout prevention through farm engagement pilot project.

Sponsors: Representatives Reykdal, Hunt, Tharinger, Wylie, Pollet, Jinkins, Ryu, Roberts, Morrell and Bergquist.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Creates two Dropout Prevention through Farm Engagement pilot projects for a three year period beginning in the 2013-14 school year.
- Requires the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) to select the two projects from school districts willing to partner with community-based organizations, food banks, and farms or gardens to establish an alternative high school program for at-risk youth.
- Specifies that one of the pilot projects be a currently operating program and the second project must create a new program in a different community.
- Requires an evaluation and report to the Legislature by December 1, 2015.

Hearing Date: 2/12/13

Staff: Luke Wickham (786-7146).

Background:

Dropout Statistics.

The Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) prepares an annual report regarding graduation and dropout statistics for schools and districts in Washington. The four-year graduation rate in Washington was 76.6% for the Class of 2011. Certain sub-groups including special education, limited English, low-income, and migrant students have graduation rates lower than the rate for all students. The cumulative dropout rate, after four years, for students entering ninth grade in 2007-08 was 13.9%. There were 14,054 students in the 2010-11 class who dropped out before they finished high school.

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.

Dropout Prevention.

In 2011, a state workgroup provided a report to the Legislature and the Governor that recommended specific measures to address dropout prevention. Among the general recommendations, the report indicated that it was crucial to combine the best components of three approaches, including:

1. quality school and community data to drive decision-making;
2. district and schoolwide reforms (student support systems, district and school improvement planning); and
3. integrated school, family, community, and agency partnerships.

Summary of Bill:

This bill creates two Dropout Prevention through Farm Engagement pilot projects for a three year period beginning in the 2013-14 school year. The Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) selects the two projects from school districts who agree to partner with community-based organizations, food banks, and farms or gardens to establish an alternative high school program for at-risk youth.

One of the pilot projects must be a currently operating program with a record of success in engaging low-income and disengaged youth. The second selected project must create a new program in a different community.

These programs would:

1. primarily target low-income and disengaged youth who have dropped out or are at risk of dropping out of high school;
2. provide youth with opportunities for community service such as building food gardens for low-income families and work-based learning and employment;
3. provide youth with opportunities to earn core credits and elective credits toward high school graduation, including but not limited to science, health, and career and technical credits;
4. offer youth development support and services including social emotional learning, counseling, leadership training, and career and college guidance; and
5. improve food security for participating youth and the community through the farm or garden program.

For each full-time equivalent student enrolled in the pilot project, including enrollment in the summer, the participating school district will receive a basic education allocation calculated for a skill center student. However, this allocation does not apply to student enrollment in courses that are not part of the pilot project.

The purpose of the pilot project is to measure the effectiveness and cost-benefit of this model in improving outcomes. After two full years of operation, the OSPI must conduct a rigorous evaluation, including analysis of a statistical comparison group of students who did not participate in the pilot. The OSPI must submit the evaluation results to the Education Committees of the Legislature by December 1, 2015.

The outcomes to be measured in the pilot project include:

1. student Grade Point Average overall and in science;
2. number of earned credits in core courses and elective courses;
3. incidence of discipline issues;
4. school attendance rates;
5. high school graduation and General Educational Development attainment;
6. student health and nutrition;
7. acreage used for fresh produce;
8. volume of produce produced and made available to students, families, school district food programs, and community food banks; and
9. hours of community service activity by students.

The law expires on August 31, 2016.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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