

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1276

As Reported by House Committee On:
Education
Appropriations Subcommittee on Education

Title: An act relating to dropout prevention through engaging youth in farming.

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 History:

Committee Activity:

Education: 2/12/13, 2/21/13 [DPA];

Appropriations Subcommittee on Education: 2/25/13 [DPA(ED)].

Brief Summary of Amended 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 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.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass as amended. Signed by 17 members: Representatives Santos, Chair; Stonier, Vice Chair; Magendanz, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Bergquist, Fagan, Haigh, Hayes, Hunt, Klippert, Lytton, Maxwell, McCoy, Orwall, Pike, Pollet, Seaquist and Warnick.

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.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 4 members: Representatives Dahlquist, Ranking Minority Member; Hargrove, Hawkins and Parker.

Staff: Luke Wickham (786-7146).

Background:

Dropout Statistics.

The Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction 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 percent 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 percent. There were 14,054 students in the 2010-11 class who dropped out before they finished high school.

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:

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

Summary of Amended 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. One of the projects must be selected from east of the Cascades and one from west of the Cascades. The selected projects must operate near farm related activities and may include farm-oriented student clubs and organizations

These programs would:

- primarily target low-income and disengaged youth who have dropped out or are at risk of dropping out of high school;
- provide youth with opportunities for community service such as building food gardens for low-income families and work-based learning and employment;

- 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;
- offer youth development support and services including social emotional learning, counseling, leadership training, and career and college guidance; and
- 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:

- student grade point average overall and in science;
- number of earned credits in core courses and elective courses;
- incidence of discipline issues;
- school attendance rates;
- high school graduation and General Educational Development attainment;
- student health and nutrition;
- acreage used for fresh produce;
- volume of produce produced and made available to students, families, school district food programs, and community food banks; and
- hours of community service activity by students.

The law expires on August 31, 2016.

Amended Bill Compared to Original Bill:

The amended bill adds language that one project be from east of the Cascades and one project be from west of the Cascades. It also adds that projects must operate near farm-related activities and may partner with farm related student clubs and organizations. The amended bill also specifies that the opportunities given to youth include employment training, and changes the designation of stipends given to youth from employment stipends to educational stipends.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) This bill is in the vein of alternative learning experiences. This bill hits on everything that members from both sides of the aisle are excited about. The reason to do this is to have student engagement during the summer. Students thrive in settings where they can have concrete involvement. This program provides a ripple effect, it puts young people in good positions to deal with obesity, civics, and work training. In the current program's first year, students increased the number of credits that they earned. The stipends are the tangible things that keep students involved in the program during the summer.

After being involved with the program, students start changing the world. There are some incredible things that happen that are hard to find in data. One of the specific services provided by the program is called the walk across. This forces participants to listen and not judge. This helps participants improve their ability to retain information. Everyone takes something different away from this program. When participants look back on the changes they have made since joining the program it is incredible. They now have friends, and are comfortable with public speaking. The program has not just prevented them from dropping out, it has changed their lives entirely. This program is critical for the relevance of learning and for relationships. Food banks are in great need and this program will teach kids to be generous, kind, healthy, and encouraged. This program could easily go beyond gardening.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Reykdal, prime sponsor; Jason Blue Peetz, Olympia High School and Garden Raised Bounty; Jeb Thornton, Nina Baker, Eric Fenno, Shannon McCabe-Gould, and Dayzsa Williams, Garden Raised Bounty; Christi Kershaw, Elma School District; Matt Grant, Olympia School District; Noel Parrish; and Mark Campeau, Olympia School Board.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass as amended by Committee on Education. Signed by 6 members: Representatives Haigh, Chair; Carlyle, Maxwell, Pettigrew, Seaquist and Sullivan.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 4 members: Representatives Fagan, Ranking Minority Member; Dahlquist, Haler and Wilcox.

Staff: Jessica Harrell (786-7349).

Summary of Recommendation of Committee On Appropriations Subcommittee on Education Compared to Recommendation of Committee On Education:

No new changes were recommended.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) The program in the bill is a pilot that has shown some success already and has shown great outcomes for the students involved. There is a cost to providing a stipend for the students. However, the stipend keeps the kids involved during the summer when they might otherwise work a part-time job where they would not be able to earn school credits toward graduation. It is far less expensive to pay a stipend than it is to pay for remediation or to pay for the costs that come with a kid dropping out of school. The key is that the stipend is only for the seven weeks during the summer when the students are getting employment training. It is similar to a work study in higher education.

For some students, the addition of the stipend is what gets the students involved and then their interest in the work and what they are learning is what keeps them involved. The summer atmosphere of the program is more professional and the students treat the program like a normal job. For students that must work during the summer to help with family household expenses, they might not otherwise be able to participate in the program if it were not for the stipend.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Reykdal, prime sponsor; and Blue Peetz, Connor Patrick, and Joe Candelaria, Olympia High School.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.