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## Education Committee

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### 2SSB 5794

**Brief Description:** Concerning alternative learning experience courses.

**Sponsors:** Senate Committee on Ways & Means (originally sponsored by Senators Dammeier, Ranker, McAuliffe, Honeyford, Eide and Litzow).

#### Brief Summary of Second Substitute Bill

- Defines Alternative Learning Experiences (ALE) by type of course rather than by type of program.
- Defines hybrid ALE courses as providing at least 20 percent weekly instructional contact.
- Defines remote ALE courses as providing less than 20 percent weekly in-person instructional contact.
- Uses a current definition of an online ALE course but clarifies that the primary instructional contact must be with a teacher.
- Allocates funding for ALE courses using the statewide average Basic Education rate for Running Start.
- Directs the Office of Financial Management to conduct a study and create a proposal for an efficient and sustainable funding alternative for the ALE with an increased focus on educational outcomes.

**Hearing Date:** 3/19/13

**Staff:** Barbara McLain (786-7383).

#### **Background:**

##### *Alternative Learning Experience Programs.*

Alternative Learning Experience (ALE) programs provide a way for students to be enrolled in public education without being required to meet the in-class seat-time requirements for regular

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instruction. They also provide a way for school districts to claim students enrolled in nontraditional programs for purposes of state funding.

There are three primary types of ALE programs identified in statute: online programs; parent partnership programs that include significant participation by parents in the design and implementation of the student's learning; and contract-based learning.

An online course is defined as one where the course content is delivered electronically using the internet or other computer-based methods, and more than half of the teaching is conducted from a remote location using an online learning management system.

However, these broad definitions are illustrative rather than exclusive, and in practice school districts have designed a wide array of ALE programs with varying amounts of classroom-based instruction offered in combination with individualized learning outside the classroom. Some students might be enrolled in an ALE program that has characteristics of two or more of the program types.

For the 2011-12 school year, the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) reported the following full-time equivalent student enrollment in the ALE programs:

- Online programs: 8,433
- Parent partnership programs: 13,483
- Contract-based learning: 8,809

#### *Funding.*

Legislation enacted in 2011 directed the OSPI to reduce funding for the ALE programs by an average of 15 percent during the 2011-12 and 2012-13 school years. Under the OSPI implementation scheme, full-time students who receive at least one hour per week of face-to-face, in-person instructional contact time are funded at the 10 percent reduction level. For online programs, this contact may be digital and synchronous. All other ALE students are funded at the 20 percent reduction level.

Funding allocations for students enrolled in the Running Start dual-credit program are specified in statute and calculated as the statewide average Basic Education allocation for a high school student, rather than being calculated separately for each school district. There is one allocation for regular students (\$4,961.76 for the 2012-13 school year) and an enhanced allocation (\$5,856.48) for vocational education students.

#### **Summary of Bill:**

##### *Alternative Learning Experience Programs.*

Descriptions of three types of ALE programs are replaced by definitions of three types of ALE courses:

1. A hybrid course is one where a student has instructional contact with a teacher for at least 20 percent of the total weekly time for the course. The contact could occur remotely using technology.
2. A remote course is one where a student has in-person instructional contact with a teacher for less than 20 percent of the total weekly time for the course.

3. An online course has the same definition as current law, with the additional stipulation that the student's primary instructional interaction is with a certificated teacher.

Instructional contact must be for the purpose of teaching, review of assignments, testing, evaluation, or other learning activities identified in the student's learning plan.

There are no limitations on the grade levels of students who may be served in hybrid, remote, or online courses. High school ALE courses must meet district or state graduation requirements and be offered for credit.

Beginning with the 2013-14 school year, school districts must denote the type of ALE course in the statewide student information system.

Statutes pertaining to the ALE courses are placed in a new RCW Title.

*Funding.*

The OSPI must allocate funding for hybrid, remote, and online ALE courses based on the unenhanced statewide average Basic Education rate used for Running Start.

The Office of Financial Management must conduct a study to create a proposal for efficiently and sustainably funding ALE courses and recommend steps to increase the focus on educational outcomes. The study must review ALE funding models in other states and include recommendations for: establishing baseline data on student achievement in ALE courses in relation to other comparable students; identifying outcome targets and methods for ongoing evaluation of ALE outcomes; and improving ALE accountability.

The study must be done in consultation with representatives from school districts that administer the various types of ALE courses, the OSPI, the Washington State Institute for Public Policy, individuals with expertise in outcome-based public school funding models, and the Legislative Evaluation and Accountability Program Committee. A report is due by November 1, 2013.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Requested on March 12, 2013.

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