

HOUSE BILL REPORT

2SSB 5508

As Passed House
April 11, 1997

Title: An act relating to reading accountability.

Brief Description: Enacting the third grade reading accountability act.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Ways & Means (originally sponsored by Senators Hochstatter, Oke, Morton, Swecker, Finkbeiner, Horn, Stevens and Schow).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Education: 4/1/97, 4/4/97 [DP];

Appropriations: 4/5/97 [DPA].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 4/11/97, 97-0.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 9 members: Representatives Johnson, Chairman; Hickel, Vice Chairman; Keiser, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Linville; Quall; Smith; Sterk; Sump and Talcott.

Minority Report: Without recommendation. Signed by 2 members: Representatives Cole, Ranking Minority Member; and Veloria.

Staff: Joe Hauth (786-7111).

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Majority Report: Do pass as amended. Signed by 29 members: Representatives Huff, Chairman; Alexander, Vice Chairman; Clements, Vice Chairman; Wensman, Vice Chairman; H. Sommers, Ranking Minority Member; Benson; Carlson; Chopp; Cody; Cooke; Crouse; Dyer; Grant; Keiser; Kenney; Kessler; Lambert; Linville; Lisk; Mastin; McMorris; Parlette; Poulsen; Regala; D. Schmidt; Sehlin; Sheahan; Talcott and Tokuda.

Minority Report: Without recommendation. Signed by 2 members: Representatives Doumit, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; and Gombosky, Assistant Ranking Minority Member.

Staff: Jack Daray (786-7178).

Background: There is general agreement that reading is a fundamental basic academic skill. Research suggests that students who do not achieve reading literacy by third grade fall behind their classmates and are less successful in school.

Current law encourages school districts to test second grade students to help identify students in need of academic skills assistance. The Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI) must annually conduct a standard, norm-referenced assessment of fourth, eighth, and 11 grade students' academic reading skills.

Summary of Bill: The Legislature finds that it is essential to read well in elementary school, and that assessing students and holding the educational system accountable will improve children's reading ability.

The Commission on Student Learning, in consultation with the Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI), must provide recommendations by November 1, 1997, to the Legislature, Governor, and the State Board of Education regarding a statewide reading accountability system. The assessment system must be capable of assessing each school individually against its own baseline, schools with similar characteristics, and schools statewide. The commission must consider several factors in developing the reading assessment system, including reading goals, financial incentives, technical assistance, the role of elementary school principals in meeting the reading goal, and reports. The commission's recommendations pertaining to statewide goals must be based on reading test scores of students taking the 1997 statewide fourth grade assessment developed by the commission.

The fourth grade statewide test is moved to the third grade. Currently, the SPI must test fourth grade students in reading, mathematics, and language arts using a standardized achievement test (CTBS/4), and test students using the fourth grade assessment developed by the commission. Beginning in the 1997-98 school year, the standardized achievement test is moved to the third grade level. Third grade students will be tested in reading and mathematics. The SPI must make results available to the Legislature and to school districts. School districts must make results available to parents of the children tested. Fourth grade students will still take the fourth grade assessment developed by the commission.

In addition to the annual school performance report, schools must present a summary of student scores on all state-mandated tests in an open school board meeting. The

report summarizing student scores must include comparisons to the school's performance in preceding years.

Reference in the biennial appropriations act is required, or the bill becomes null and void.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on March 21, 1997.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: (Education) The third grade reading accountability act provides system levels of accountability, in support of education reform. A silent mass of students aren't succeeding. If they are not reading by third grade they are unlikely to succeed. Statewide, the reading scores are flat, but the Kennewick School District, on which this bill is modeled, has had improved performance. This bill is aimed at making adults accountable for children's reading success.

(Appropriations) There are concerns about the proliferation of tests without overall assessment of cumulative impact of tests at second, third and fourth grades, plus National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). There are additional concerns with reward systems and potential impact. The striking amendment to be proposed addresses these concerns.

Testimony Against: (Education) *This bill needs several changes. This is a significant effort that requires time. Let's move the current system forward. The Superintendent of Public Instruction proposes an alternative. Have the Commission on Student Learning come back to the Legislature with recommendations for a statewide accountability system. The fourth grade reading assessment should be moved to the third grade.*

(Appropriations) None.

Testified: (Education) *Lynn Fielding, Kennewick School Board Member (pro); and Bob Butts, Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (con).*

(Appropriations) Bob Butts, Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction.