

HOUSE BILL ANALYSIS

HB 2190

Title: An act relating to alternative learning experience parent partnership programs.

Brief Description: Changing the alternative learning experience program.

Sponsors: Representatives Quall, Dunshee, Talcott, Haigh and Lantz.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Meeting Date: February 25, 1999.

Bill Analysis Prepared by: Suzi Morrissey (786-7111).

Background: School districts are permitted by law to administer alternative learning experience programs for students who meet a number of different criteria. The programs allow districts to serve the needs of students for whom a traditional classroom education is not the best option. Some of the students served through different alternative learning experience programs include teen parents, working teens, former drop-outs, self-directed learners, and distance learners. Some districts have also instituted alternative learning programs for students who receive part of their education at home. These alternative learning experience programs are sometimes called parent partnership programs.

Alternative learning experience parent partnership programs must meet a number of requirements adopted through rule by the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI). The programs must be approved by the school board and include a written plan for each student. A portion of the program may be provided outside the regular classroom and a portion may be provided by the student's parents or guardian under the supervision of the school district. The number of hours that a student will engage in learning activities is included in the plan. The student's educational progress must be reviewed during the first twenty days of school and at least once every forty-five days thereafter. Participating students must be assessed at least once a year. Plans for students who are not completing their learning activities may be revised, and the student may be removed from the program if the student continues not meeting the required elements of his or her learning plan.

Under certain conditions, students who meet the requirements for alternative learning experience parent partnership programs may be counted as full-time public school students. In order to count these students, school districts must spend either have an average staff/student ratio in the program or spend at least 70 percent of the basic education allocation on the students' education.

Current rules for alternative learning programs were adopted in 1995. OSPI proposed several changes in 1997 and 1998. The changes proposed in 1997 were dropped after the public hearing. The proposed changes in 1998 generated some controversy before and during the public hearing held on January 15, 1999.

Summary of Bill: State funding may be provided for alternative learning experience parent partnership programs that meet a number of conditions. Each participant must have a written plan approved under the school board's policies for such programs. A portion of the experience may be provided outside the regular classroom and a portion may be provided by the student's parents. The plan must describe how the student's performance will be supervised, evaluated, and recorded by school district staff. The student's progress must be evaluated at least once during the first twenty days and every 45 days thereafter. The results of the evaluation will be shared with the student, and, for students in kindergarten through eighth grade, with the student's parents. Plans may be revised for students who are not completing required activities. Students who continue to lag behind the plan's requirements may be removed from the program.

All records of students in the programs will be maintained and available for audit. Instructional materials referenced in the plan must be consistent with state and federal constitutional rights and requirements. The amount of time that a student will spend on learning activities conducted in and out of the classroom must be included and recorded. The plan will also include a description of the learning activities the student will undertake in and outside of the classroom. Students who attend school fewer than five hours a week must meet with district staff for an average of at least one hour every week. During that time the student will receive instruction and will have his or her assignments reviewed.

The legislation includes a formula for determining how to count the amount of time a student spends in learning activities. The legislation also includes the requirements districts must follow regarding student records and in order to count these students for funding purposes.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on February 18, 1999.

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