

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SSB 5418

As Passed House - Amended:

April 9, 1999

Title: An act relating to K-12 accountability and assistance.

Brief Description: Changing school accountability and assistance provisions.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Education (originally sponsored by Senators McAuliffe, Rasmussen, Patterson and Kohl-Welles; by request of Governor Locke, Superintendent of Public Instruction and Commission on Student Learning).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Education: 3/31/99, 4/1/99 [DPA];
Appropriations: 4/5/99 [DPA(ED)].

Floor Activity:

Passed House - Amended: 4/9/99, 93-0.

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill (As Amended by House Committee)

- The Commission on Educational Accountability is created to adopt new improvement goals for the state's educational system, recommend policies on additional assistance for students and schools, identify schools and districts that merit recognition for success or need state intervention due to persistent low-performance over an identified period of time, and implement other responsibilities assigned by the legislation.
- All schools and struggling schools will have access to new assistance measures designed to help students meet the state's academic standards. The measures include accountability implementation funds for all schools, a state level technical support team, and targeted assistance funds for struggling schools.
- Schools and school districts will adopt goals designed to improve student performance on the fourth and seventh grade mathematics assessments and the seventh grade reading assessment.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass as amended. Signed by 13 members: Representatives Quall, Democratic Co-Chair; Talcott, Republican Co-Chair; Haigh, Democratic Vice Chair; Schindler, Republican Vice Chair; Carlson; Cox; Keiser; Rockefeller; Santos; D. Schmidt; Schual-Berke; Stensen and Wensman.

Staff: Susan Morrissey (786-7111).

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Majority Report: Do pass as amended by Committee on Education. Signed by 32 members: Representatives Huff, Republican Co-Chair; H. Sommers, Democratic Co-Chair; Alexander, Republican Vice Chair; Doumit, Democratic Vice Chair; D. Schmidt, Republican Vice Chair; Barlean; Benson; Boldt; Carlson; Clements; Cody; Crouse; Gombosky; Grant; Kagi; Keiser; Kenney; Kessler; Lambert; Linville; Lisk; Mastin; McIntire; McMorris; Mulliken; Parlette; Regala; Rockefeller; Ruderman; Sullivan; Tokuda and Wensman.

Staff: Jack Daray (786-7178).

Background:

Washington's Education Reform Act (HB 1209) created a system to identify the knowledge and skills that all students should know and be able to demonstrate at various points during the students' years in school. The Commission on Student Learning was established to define the required knowledge and skills and to create a series of assessments that would allow students to demonstrate their mastery of the identified material. During the ensuing years, the commission has established and implemented essential academic learning requirements (EALRs) for various basic skills and subject matter. The EALRs and the assessments that test them are directed to public school students in the fourth, seventh, and 10th grades.

The Commission on Student Learning was also directed to recommend to the Legislature a statewide accountability system to monitor and evaluate the level of learning occurring in schools and school districts under the reformed education system. The system was required to assess each school against its own baseline, schools with similar characteristics, and schools statewide. The system must include accountability reports for schools, school districts, and the state as a whole. The commission was directed to recommend an accountability system for reading in kindergarten through fourth grade by November 1, 1997. Accountability

recommendations for other subject areas and grade levels was required by June 30, 1999.

The commission was also required to recommend three additional policies deemed essential to the state's education system. The policies included a school assistance program to help struggling students meet the state's academic standards, a system to intervene in schools and school systems in which significant numbers of students persistently fail to meet the state's standards, and an award's program to provide incentives for school staff.

On October 19, 1998, the commission adopted a series of recommendations on accountability, assistance, interventions, and rewards. The recommendations included goals for the state's education system and a reporting system to help monitor student progress toward the goals. The system included a component that provides financial and technical assistance for all schools and school districts, as well as targeted assistance for low-performing schools and students. The system described different roles for school districts and the state in assistance, recognition and intervention. The commission also recommended that it continue in existence beyond its June 30, 1999, expiration date and that its role be expanded to include oversight of the accountability system.

Summary of Amended Bill:

Oversight of the Accountability System

The Commission on Educational Accountability is created. The commission will be composed of seven members, four appointed by the Legislature, two by the Governor, and one by the Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI). The members appointed by the Legislature and the superintendent will not be the SPI or members of the Legislature. The commission will be appointed by July 1, 1999, and will convene its first meeting by July 30, 1999. The commission may hire necessary staff, however, the SPI will provide the majority of the technical assistance and logistical support needed by the commission.

One of the commission's initial duties is to recommend certain accountability policies to the Governor, the SPI, and the education and fiscal committees of the House and Senate. The policies include strategies for intervention in schools in which low-performance persists for an identified period of time, additional assistance measures for students and schools, and rewards for successful schools and school districts. The recommendations will also include those statutes that need to be revised to provide SPI with the authority to intervene in school districts. The recommendations are due by September 5, 2000.

The commission will adopt goals for the accountability system, including timelines for improving student performance for all subjects assessed in the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL). Prior to implementation, the goals will be reviewed by the education and fiscal committees of the House and Senate. The commission will also adopt criteria for identifying successful and failed schools and school districts. The commission will identify successful performance incentive systems, schools and districts that require state intervention, and choice options for students attending failed schools. Once the commission identifies schools or districts that need state intervention, the SPI must take corrective actions authorized by law. The commission will also recommend to SPI schools and districts that merit recognition for their successful efforts. The commission will adopt performance standards to determine whether students have met the state standards on the WASL. It will also monitor the assessment reporting system and recommend to the SPI criteria for selecting schools to receive targeted assistance.

Accountability Goals, Including Goals in Reading and Mathematics

The mid-term goal of the state's accountability system is that 80 percent or more of the state's public school students meet the state standards on the WASL within a decade after each assessment is required statewide.

In addition to the current fourth grade reading improvement goal, each elementary school will adopt a goal to improve by 25 percent the percentage of students who did not meet the state's fourth grade mathematics standard. Each elementary school will adopt its goal by December 15, 2000, and attempt to meet it by the end of the 2002-03 school year.

Each middle and junior high school will adopt goals to improve by 25 percent the percentage of students who did not meet the state standards on the reading and mathematics sections of the seventh grade WASL. Reading goals will be adopted by December 15, 2000, and schools will attempt to meet the goals by the end of the 2002-03 school year. Mathematics goals will be adopted by December 15, 2001, and schools will attempt to meet the goals by the end of the 2003-04 school year.

School districts must adopt plans to meet the required goals. The aggregate of each school's goals must meet or exceed each district's goals.

Reporting Results

The SPI must report annually on the percentage of students meeting state standards, the percentage of students performing at each level of the WASL, and student performance based on a learning improvement index. The SPI will also report student demographic information by school and monitor the number and percentage of students who are exempted from state assessments. The commission will annually

review the reporting system for fairness, accuracy, timeliness, and equity of opportunity.

The annual performance reports currently required for all schools are revised to include a number of new measures. The reports will include information on how well students perform on state-mandated tests and school plans to improve that performance. The performance indicators will include comparisons with comparable schools in the state, and a comparison of student performance over a two-year period. The reports will also include information about school safety, teacher credentials, and choice options available to students attending the school. To the extent feasible, the SPI will make the information accessible on or through SPI's internet web site.

Assistance to Schools and Districts

The SPI will allocate Accountability Implementation Funds to school districts, to the extent that the Legislature provides such funds. The funds are intended to assist schools to develop and update student learning improvement plans, implement instruction and assessment strategies, provide staff development, and fund other activities intended to improve student learning. In order to receive funds during the 1999-2001 biennium, school districts must certify the use of the money for the purposes described in the bill. For future years, the districts must certify that they have analyzed funding from all sources and that the funding will be used to improve student learning.

The Helping Corps is created in SPI. The corps will consist of school improvement specialists and coordinators who will provide technical assistance to schools and school districts. The specialists will not be permanent employees. The coordinators and specialists will help schools to use student performance data and develop improvement plans based on the data. They will also help districts identify and use research-based instructional practices and curricula that is aligned with the state's academic standards. The specialists and coordinators will help schools develop family and community involvement programs and provide other types of assistance necessary to improve student learning.

The SPI will also provide funding for short-term intensive assistance designed to help schools develop and implement school improvement plans. The plans must be based on reliable research and effective practices. The commission will develop a set of recommended criteria for the funds. The funds are intended to stimulate comprehensive, school-wide change. The criteria required of applicants and their proposed improvement plans are described.

Transfer of Duties and Materials

The SPI will assume CSL's responsibilities for development and modification of the essential academic learning requirements and WASL. The reports, documents, records, files and written material of the CSL are transferred to SPI. Furniture, equipment, vehicles, and other tangible property will be transferred to either SPI or the Commission on Education Accountability, as appropriate.

Miscellaneous

By August 1, 2000, the SPI must complete an objective analysis of the fourth grade mathematics assessment. The required components of the analysis are described. The SPI will report the results of its analysis to the Governor and the House and Senate education committees by August 15, 2000.

The law on Student Learning Improvement Grants is repealed. Certain uncodified expiration dates that could be interpreted to affect the law governing both the Commission on Student Learning and the state's education reform efforts are also repealed. A new chapter on accountability is added to the code of education laws. Many of the existing laws on education reform will be moved to that new chapter. An emergency clause is attached to the sections creating the commission and repealing uncodified expiration dates. Null and void clauses are attached to the sections creating the commission, its duties, and new assistance programs. A severability clause is attached.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date of Amended Bill: The section creating the commission takes effect on July 1, 1999. Sections repealing uncodified laws and transferring duties and materials take place immediately. However, certain sections are null and void unless funded in the budget.

Testimony For: (Education) (Original bill) The state's initial education reform efforts are working. However, it is time to create an oversight organization to continue to monitor progress toward the state's education goals and to rally schools around the theme of continuous improvement. The proposed legislation contains a balanced accountability system that includes improvement goals, reporting on results, and assistance for students and schools. It also includes recognition for successful schools and intervention for schools in which low-performance persists over a period of time. The important elements include an independent group to monitor progress and recommend consequences for successful and unsuccessful schools and school districts. The system includes clear expectations, simplicity, continuous improvement, and fair evaluations. Most of the responsibility of the system remains

in the hands of local school boards. The recommendations embodied in the legislation were approved by the Accountability Task Force, a group that included representation from educators, community leaders, employers, administrators, and state government. However, teachers are concerned that this legislation could provide teachers with additional pressure without addressing the teachers' needs for a living wage.

(Appropriations) None.

Testimony Against: (Education) None.

(Appropriations) None.

Testified: (Education) (In support) Senator McAuliffe, prime sponsor; Steve Mullin, Washington Roundtable; Lynn Nixon, American Electrical Association; Wes Pruitt, Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board; and Barbara Mertens, Washington Association of School Administrators.

(Support with concerns) Jennifer Wallace, Governor's Office; Gary King, Washington Education Association; Bob Butts, Superintendent of Public Instruction; Barbara Casey, Washington State Parent Teacher Association; Dwayne Slate, Washington State School Directors' Association; and Doug Nelson, Public School Employees.

(Concerns) Larry Davis, State Board of Education.

(Appropriations) None.