

HOUSE BILL ANALYSIS

SSB 5634

Title: An act relating to the retention and promotion of students.

Brief Description: Requiring school districts to adopt policies for the retention and promotion of students.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Education (originally sponsored by Senators Finkbeiner, Zarelli, Hale, Oke, Deccio, Johnson, Hochstatter, Rossi, McDonald, Horn, Swecker and West).

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Meeting Date: March 22, 1999.

Analysis Prepared by: Charlie Gavigan (786-7340).

Background: Policies concerning the promotion and retention of students may be addressed by a local school board in its governance role.

The Washington State School Directors' Association (WSSDA) has drafted sample policies for the promotion and retention of students. Under these policies, a student will be promoted to the next grade after successfully completing one year of study at a specific grade level. Retention at the same grade may be beneficial to the student if the student is not demonstrating a minimum competency in basic-skill subjects in relation to ability and grade level. Retention should not be considered except when there is a strong likelihood that the student will benefit with minimum social and emotional disruption.

Under the WSSDA sample policies, parents or guardians must be notified at least one quarter in advance of any retention decision. When possible, before the end of the third quarter, the teacher and principal will confer regarding any student who should be retained. The teacher and principal must invite parents and guardians to explain a student's progress. The parents or guardians must be advised on how they might assist the student. At least two weeks before the end of the school year, the parents or guardians must meet the teacher and principal to review the student's progress and decide if the student would best be served by promotion or retention. If the parents or guardians want their student to be promoted despite the school's recommendation, the school will ask the parents or guardians to complete a form reflecting that decision.

Summary of Bill: Beginning with the 1999-2000 school year, all local school boards must adopt new or amend existing promotion and retention policies.

A school district's promotion and retention policy must include the following: (1) notification to parents and guardians when a student is identified as being at risk of retention; (2) the notice must be provided as early in the school year, and as early in the student's school career, as practicable; (3) an opportunity for parents and guardians to consult with teachers who are responsible for the decision to retain or promote; and (4) a description of the remedial opportunities which are available to a student who is recommended to be retained or is at risk of being retained.

The promotion and retention policy must be adopted at a public meeting.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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