

HOUSE BILL REPORT

E2SSB 5625

As Passed House - Amended:

April 20, 2001

Title: An act relating to an academic achievement and accountability system.

Brief Description: Creating the K-12 academic achievement and accountability act.

Sponsors: By Senate Committee on Education (originally sponsored by Senators McAuliffe, Finkbeiner, Carlson and Kohl-Welles; by request of Governor Locke, Academic Achievement and Accountability Commission and State Board of Education).

Brief History:

Floor Activity:

Passed House - Amended: 4/20/01, 89-2.

Brief Summary of Engrossed Second Substitute Bill (As Amended by House)

- The A+ Commission may adopt goals to improve dropout rates and accelerate the achievement of students who are disproportionately underachieving academically.
- The A+ Commission will identify for state assistance schools and school districts in which a large percentage of students persistently fail to meet state standards. If a school in state assistance does not improve after one complete school year, Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI) may intervene. If a school is unsuccessful for three years, SPI will intervene.
- When a school or school district is under state assistance or SPI intervention, the district or SPI, as applicable, will have a number of tools to improve student learning, including monetary incentives for employees, the revision of personnel assignments, the transfer of employees, and the restructuring of the school calendar and instructional and programmatic approaches.
- Before a school or district is released from state assistance or SPI intervention, it must meet student achievement and improvement thresholds adopted by the A+ Commission for two years.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority/Minority Report: None.

Staff: Susan Morrissey (786-7111).

Background:

Accountability is the term used to describe the means by which the Legislature and members of the public can evaluate the effectiveness of the state's education system. An accountability system usually includes rewards for success and assistance and sanctions for lack of success. Until recently, the Legislature depended on a series of input-measures for accountability purposes. For example, schools have been accountable for the number of hours students sit in classrooms, the types of classes offered to students, and the number of hours teachers spend in classrooms. Beginning with the 2000-01 school year, some of those measures have been repealed.

With the passage of the ESHB 1209, the 1993 Education Reform Act, the state embarked on a new system to evaluate the effectiveness of the state's public education system. Under the new system, schools and school districts will be evaluated on the level of student learning that can be demonstrated by students in the school or district. The state uses a series of standardized tests or assessments for the evaluation. Students take nationally normed tests in the third, sixth, and ninth grades to see how their level of academic achievement compares to the achievement of students in other schools, school districts, and states. The nationally normed tests are considered to be tests of basic skills. Students also take criterion referenced tests in the fourth, seventh, and 10th grades to see whether they have met the state's learning standard for students at that grade level. The criterion reference tests, also called the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL), measures the students' achievement of the state's essential academic learning requirements. The new accountability system will use these test results and other data on student learning to determine the success of schools and school districts.

The accountability system is still under development. The system requires schools and school districts to report to parents and the community on test results. The system also requires schools to begin raising the level of student achievement in certain subjects. In addition, the system assigns a variety of responsibilities to the A+ Commission. These include the adoption and modification of improvement goals in reading, writing, mathematics, and other subjects in which a WASL has been developed. The commission will also adopt criteria to identify successful schools and school districts, those in need of assistance, and those in which a significant number of students persistently fail to meet state standards. The commission will identify the scores that indicate how well students are performing on the WASL. Finally, in addition to its other duties, the commission will identify schools and districts in which state intervention is necessary and will

describe a range of appropriate intervention strategies that might be used in those schools. The commission cannot intervene in a school or school district until the Legislature has authorized the intervention strategies that can be used in the system. Once the commission determines that intervention is necessary, the Superintendent or Public Instruction (SPI) will work with the school or school district to implement any intervention strategies identified by the commission for that particular school or district.

The legislation that created the A+ Commission included the basic skeleton of the state's accountability system. However, it deferred some decisions pending further study by the newly created commission. By September 5, 2000, the A+ Commission was required to report to the Legislature with specific recommendations on four elements of the system. The commission was required to recommend rewards for successful schools and school districts and any additional assistance measures needed by students and schools to raise student achievement. The commission was also directed to recommend a series of increasingly intensive state intervention strategies. Finally, the commission was required to advise the Legislature on any statutory changes needed by the SPI to implement the intervention strategies directed by the commission and authorized by the Legislature. The commission provided its report to the Legislature in November of 2000.

Summary of Amended Bill:

Duties of A+ Commission

The A+ Commission may set goals to improve middle and high school dropout rates once common definitions are in place. The commission may also adopt goals designed to accelerate the achievement of students who are disproportionately underachieving academically. The commission will adopt criteria to identify school districts that are eligible for and will receive state assistance. The commission will also adopt student performance and improvement thresholds to evaluate school and district progress under state assistance and SPI intervention. Finally, the commission may develop and analyze any information or data necessary to perform its responsibilities.

SPI's Accountability Duties

The SPI may appoint a proxy to carry out its duties under state assistance and SPI intervention. The SPI will also provide the commission with data and information that the commission deems necessary to perform its responsibilities. The SPI will also make available to schools information on models of excellence in instruction, management, capacity building, parent involvement, and other research-based strategies to improve student achievement.

State Assistance - Identification and Initial Planning

In each September, the A+ Commission will identify schools and districts for state assistance, based on the commission's criteria and the level of available appropriations. The SPI will notify school districts/schools of their eligibility for state assistance. Within

90 days after a school district is notified, the district will notify parents and staff of the assistance process, an educational audit will be conducted, a public hearing will be held to notify the community of the audit results and to allow an opportunity for input, and initial action steps will be planned to address issues raised in the audit. The audit will review the types and use of resources available to the school; the relationship of the school to its district, parents, and community; the curriculum and instructional materials available to the school; the roles and contributions of the schools employees; the needs of the students; and other indicators.

State Assistance - School Improvement Plan and Cooperative Agreement

Each school will develop a comprehensive school plan. The plan will include three-year student performance improvement goals established by the A+ Commission; measurable benchmarks; strategies to address the issues raised in the audit; and timeline for incrementally meeting the goals. The plan may also include monetary incentives for employees, the revision of personnel assignments, the transfer of employees and the restructuring of instructional and programmatic approaches. The plan may also include the voluntary and involuntary transfer of employees out of the school.

At least one month before start of next school year, the Superintendent of Public Instruction and the district will negotiate and adopt a performance agreement to implement the improvement plan.

State Assistance - Annual Performance Analysis

The progress of each school will be analyzed annually after a performance agreement has been in effect for one complete school year. For schools assisted in the 2001-03 biennium, the analysis will be based on progress toward reading improvement goals and a minimum percentile score on state mandated norm-referenced standardized tests, each as adopted by the commission. After the 2001-03 biennium, the progress of each school in state assistance will be based on all subject matter performance improvement goals and a minimum percentile score on state mandated norm-referenced standardized tests, each as adopted by the commission.

Once a school has been successful for two years, it is released from the list of identified schools. If the school is not successful in any year, SPI may intervene. In addition, SPI may intervene if a school or district does not complete the state assistance process in a timely fashion or conduct it in good faith. If, at the end of three years of state assistance, the school is still not meeting minimum student achievement thresholds, SPI will intervene.

SPI Intervention - Process and Improvement Tools

The SPI will prepare, and share with the school community, an intervention plan that includes a description of the strategies to be used in the school and district.

The SPI will have a variety of tools to use in intervention, including the use of monetary

incentives, the revision of personnel assignments, the restructuring of instructional and programmatic approaches, the reassignment and transfer of employees, and the withholding of non-basic education funds. The SPI may also remove the school from the district, close and redesign the school or assign a proxy to share governance of the school with the local school directors. The SPI may redirect funds from the school district to the school, adopt a peer review process for certificated employees, and use a new process for terminating the contract of certificated employees released for cause. In addition, SPI will have the authority, on behalf of the school district, to bargain a collective bargaining agreement addendum relating to the effect on school-specific issues of a component of the intervention plan. If an agreement is not reached in a reasonable period, either party may ask PERC to mediate.

SPI Intervention- Annual Performance Analysis

The progress of each school in SPI intervention will be based on all subject matter performance improvement goals and a minimum percentile score on state mandated norm-referenced standardized tests, each as adopted by the commission. Once a school has been successful for two consecutive years, it is released from SPI intervention.

State Assistance and SPI Intervention - Collective Bargaining

Components of school improvement plans, performance agreements, and intervention plans are educational policy decisions. When renegotiation of a collective bargaining agreement is required, a contract addendum will be negotiated relating to the effect of that component on school-specific issues. Whether a component requires renegotiation is a determination of the district superintendent or the Superintendent of Public Instruction, as applicable.

Student Transfer Options

At the beginning of the school year following a school's identification for state assistance or SPI intervention, students may transfer within and among school districts under the provisions of existing law. Students in class one districts have a strengthened opportunity to transfer within the district under these circumstances.

Report on Accountability Policies

By November 30, 2002, the A+ Commission will report to the Governor and the legislative education committees on intervention strategies used in other states and nations and on a uniform public school transfer policy for schools in state assistance or SPI intervention. The report will include a proposal for fully funding transportation alternatives for transferring students.

Recognition for Reaching Fourth Grade Reading Goals

The SPI will recognize and honor each school that has met or exceeded the state's fourth grade reading goal to reduce, by 25 percent in three years, the number of students who did not meet the fourth grade reading standard on the 1997 or 1998 Washington Assessment of Student Learning.

Amendments to Existing Laws

Laws that govern the responsibilities of school districts and SPI are revised to provide SPI the authority necessary to carry out an action identified in an intervention plan. The process for refusing to renew the employment contract of a certificated employee in a school under SPI intervention is revised. The laws governing the transfer of principals and other administrators is revised for a school under state assistance and SPI intervention. School districts and SPI are given the authority to adopt supplemental contracts for the recruitment and retention of certificated employees in school under state assistance and SPI intervention. Finally, the law adopting improvement goals for fourth grade reading and fourth and seventh grade math is repealed.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 30, 2001.

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

Testimony For: None.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: None.