

HOUSE BILL REPORT

EHB 2607

As Passed House:
February 13, 2008

Title: An act relating to preparing teachers to teach English language learner students.

Brief Description: Requiring the professional educator standards board to convene a work group regarding English language learner students.

Sponsors: By Representatives Santos, Hasegawa, Ormsby, Anderson, Lantz, Hudgins, Upthegrove, Sullivan, Chase, Darneille and Simpson.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Education: 1/22/08, 1/29/08 [DPA].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 2/13/08, 97-0.

Brief Summary of Engrossed Bill

- Directs the Professional Educator Standards Board to develop recommendations to improve standards for teacher preparation and expected teacher competencies in how to teach English language learner students.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass as amended. Signed by 9 members: Representatives Quall, Chair; Barlow, Vice Chair; Priest, Ranking Minority Member; Anderson, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Haigh, Liias, Roach, Santos and Sullivan.

Staff: Barbara McLain (786-7383).

Background:

According to the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), 76,966 students were enrolled in the Transitional Bilingual Program (TBP) as of April 2007, representing 7.5 percent of total K-12 enrollment. These English language learner (ELL) students spoke 177 different languages, with two-thirds speaking Spanish as their first language.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Just over 10 percent of ELL students receive some form of bilingual education in two languages. The remaining students are served almost equally in one of two models: pull-out tutoring (often by an instructional assistant) or Sheltered English. Sheltered English relies on instruction only in English, primarily by the regular classroom teacher. The ELL students are taught language and academic content along with the rest of the class. According to the OSPI, more schools are adopting the Sheltered English model of instruction.

However, not all teachers have been trained in language acquisition theories or techniques for teaching both ELL students and native speakers at the same time. Legislation enacted in 2007 created a demonstration project for improving ELL instruction. Funding was provided for the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (NWREL) to study the competencies for developing academic English skills that all classroom teachers should acquire in initial teacher preparation programs and through professional development. An interim report is due November 1, 2008.

The Professional Educator Standards Board (PESB) is the state agency with responsibility and authority for policy and oversight of Washington's system of educator preparation and certification.

Summary of Engrossed Bill:

The PESB must convene a workgroup to develop recommendations to improve the knowledge and skills standards for teacher preparation and expected teacher competencies in how students acquire language, how to teach academic content to ELL students, and cultural competence.

The workgroup includes the Washington Association of Colleges for Teacher Education; the Migrant and Bilingual Education Office at the OSPI; school districts with significant numbers of ELL students of a single language and multiple languages; English as a Second Language, Bilingual Education, and classroom teachers; principals; and the Higher Education Coordinating Board. The PESB must invite participation from the NWREL, and the workgroup will be informed by the ELL demonstration projects authorized in 2007 and the NWREL's research and evaluation.

A report from the workgroup is due December 1, 2008.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) This is one of a series of bills stemming from the Education Committee's visit to Yakima last fall, and is one of the top four recommendations from the school superintendents there. The ELL students are the fastest growing segment of the student population, and we need to ensure that all teachers have an understanding of how students acquire language and how to teach academic subjects to ELL students. When a majority of instruction is done by non-certificated staff, it is difficult for students to achieve academic standards. The TBP provides some supplemental support, but most of the students' time is spent with the classroom teacher, who may not have any experience in language. This will be an opportunity for the PESB to serve as a convener and is consistent with the third goal of the PESB strategic plan. School districts have been trying to do this on their own through professional development. If teachers came in with these competencies, it would be a great benefit to students.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Santos, prime sponsor; Ricardo Sanchez, Latino/a Educational Achievement Project; Howard De Leeuw, Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction; Don Sloma, Washington Health Foundation; Nasue Nishida, Professional Educator Standards Board; Lucinda Young, Washington Education Association; and Richard Cole, Sunnyside School District.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.