

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5864

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Early Learning & K-12 Education, February 26, 2007

Title: An act relating to kindergarten transition plans.

Brief Description: Creating kindergarten transition plans.

Sponsors: Senators Oemig, McAuliffe, Rasmussen and Eide.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Early Learning & K-12 Education: 2/12/07, 2/26/07 [DPS, DNP].
Ways & Means: 3/01/07.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5864 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators McAuliffe, Chair; Tom, Vice Chair; Eide, Hobbs, Kauffman, Oemig, Rasmussen and Weinstein.

Minority Report: Do not pass.

Signed by Senators Holmquist, Ranking Minority Member; Brandland, Clements, Hewitt and Zarelli.

Staff: Kimberly Cushing (786-7421)

SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

Staff: Bryon Moore (786-7726)

Background: Currently in Washington, school districts may establish uniform entry qualifications, including but not limited to birth date requirements, for admission to kindergarten programs. These requirements may provide for exceptions based upon the ability or need of an individual student. However, the districts must comply with any rule adopted by the Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI) that authorizes a preadmission screening process as a prerequisite to granting exceptions to the uniform entry qualifications for kindergarten. The SPI allows school districts to adopt regulations that provide for individual exceptions to the uniform entry qualifications.

In 2006, the Washington Legislature created the Department of Early Learning (DEL) and directed the Director of DEL to participate in the creation and governance of a non-

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governmental private-public partnership focused on supporting the government's investments in early learning and promoting school readiness and success.

Summary of Bill (Recommended Substitute): The SPI must work with DEL to develop kindergarten transition plans. This includes developing the format and content of the plans, as well as training materials. The purpose of the plans is to help kindergarten teachers, parents, and early learning providers work together to understand and plan for the social and academic development of kindergartners. The plans should help support children as they transition from early learning to kindergarten, and they should be useable by parents, early learning and child care providers, preschools, and kindergartens.

The SPI is required to seek input on the development of the plans from the same categories of people who were on the Washington Early Learning Council or would be on an early learning advisory council and representatives from the K-12 community.

Beginning in September 2007 the plans should be ready for use. The plans may initially be used in demonstration sites under a private-public partnership, in schools receiving state support for all-day kindergarten, and in primary-level demonstration projects. The plans will be implemented statewide by the 2009-10 school year, and they will also be available for voluntary use in child care, preschool, and other early learning programs.

The SPI, DEL, and the private-public partnership must report its findings and recommendations for statewide implementation to the education committees of the Legislature by December 31, 2008.

EFFECT OF CHANGES MADE BY EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION COMMITTEE (Recommended Substitute): The requirement for the SPI and DEL to develop the plans for use beginning in September 2007 remains the same. However, the requirement that the plans must be developed no later than the 2008-09 school year is removed. Instead of waiting until the completion of the demonstration sites, the SPI must report its findings and recommendations for statewide implementation of the plans by December 31, 2008.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony on Original Bill: PRO: The bill creates an important pipeline at the early end of education, coordinating agencies and helping children move smoothly through the system. A transition plan makes more sense than a test that determines whether or not a child is ready for kindergarten, and it helps students be more prepared for kindergarten and teachers be more prepared for the students. The legislation reaches out to all children by requiring the plans to be based on research that acknowledges cultural differences. The hidden costs must be considered, which include identifying where preschools feed into kindergarten and coordinating time for a child's early learning provider, kindergarten teacher, and parent to talk. The pilots should be completed before a transition plan is chosen.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Oemig, prime sponsor; Lucinda Young, Washington Education Association; Kyra Kester, Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction; Jerry Bender, Association of Washington School Principals.