

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 6743

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As Reported By Senate Committee On:  
Early Learning & K-12 Education, February 06, 2008

**Title:** An act relating to autism awareness instruction for teachers of students with autism.

**Brief Description:** Regarding training and guidelines for teachers of students with autism.

**Sponsors:** Senators Rasmussen, McAuliffe, Tom and Shin.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Early Learning & K-12 Education: 1/28/08, 2/06/08 [DPS].

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION

**Majority Report:** That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6743 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators McAuliffe, Chair; Tom, Vice Chair; King, Ranking Minority Member; Brandland, Eide, Hobbs, Holmquist, Kauffman, McDermott, Oemig, Rasmussen and Weinstein.

**Staff:** Roman Dixon (786-7438)

**Background:** Under the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA), the federal government requires special education teachers to be highly qualified. "Highly qualified" means that the individual has met specific certification and licensure requirements. Washington State has adopted the federal standard. In addition, Washington also requires that special education teachers providing, designing, supervising, monitoring, or evaluating the provision of special education, possess substantial professional training. This requirement subjects a special education teacher to additional training requirements. However, under current law, neither IDEA nor Washington require teachers to receive instruction specific to autism awareness and methods of teaching students with autism.

**Summary of Bill (Recommended Substitute):** Training policy guidelines are created for schools to ensure that teachers responsible for children with autism are well prepared and up-to-date on the most effective methods of teaching children with autism.

Candidates for a Washington instructional certificate must satisfactorily complete instruction in autism awareness and methods of teaching students with autism at an accredited institution of higher education. All other teachers (of students with autism) are required to complete the autism awareness instruction by the 2010-11 school year as part of their professional

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development. In addition, the autism instructional requirements also apply to classified staff seeking a special education endorsement or certificate.

By September 1, 2008, the Professional Educator Standards Board (PESB) and the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) must develop and submit recommendations for autism awareness instruction to the Governor and the education committees of the Legislature.

By December 1, 2008, the OSPI must report the policy guidelines to school districts so that the districts can develop and adopt their policies.

By April 1, 2009, school districts must use the guidelines to develop and adopt district policies.

**EFFECT OF CHANGES MADE BY EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION COMMITTEE (Recommended Substitute):** It removes the professional educator standards board and makes the OSPI responsible for the development of the autism awareness and training policy guidelines. It also removes the provision referring to a one-year timeline for alternate route candidates. It removes the PESB and makes the OSPI responsible for professional development requirements. It makes the OSPI co-responsible for the development and submission of recommendations to the Governor and the education committees of the Legislature.

**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: Children with autism have different issues than those for whom the teachers of special education have been trained. These children can succeed with the proper instruction. If the training is not required, the teachers and administrators won't do it.

OTHER: Without looking at the fiscal note, it appears that getting all of the current teachers and paraeducators this training might be fairly costly. The PESB has created a specialty endorsement that provides the opportunity for existing teachers to enhance their skills. An instructor just needs to propose that a specialty endorsement be done for autism.

**Persons Testifying:** PRO: Senator Rasmussen, prime sponsor.

OTHER: Nasue Nishida, Professional Educator Standards Board; Lucinda Young, Washington Educators Association; Brian Jeffries, OSPI.