
Education Committee

ESSB 5889

Brief Description: Providing flexibility in the education system.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Early Learning & K-12 Education (originally sponsored by Senators Hobbs, McAuliffe, McDermott and Oemig).

Brief Summary of Engrossed Substitute Bill

- Repeals, modifies, or suspends for two years certain laws related to notice and reporting by the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction and school districts, and required actions by school districts in the areas of curriculum, courses, assessments, and student plans.
- Modifies certain notice and reporting requirements by permitting online access to information to be sufficient, unless written information is specifically requested by a parent.

Hearing Date: 3/20/09

Staff: Barbara McLain (786-7383)

Background:

Title 28A of the Revised Code of Washington contains most of the laws pertaining to Washington's public school system. School districts are political subdivisions of the state whose structure, duties, and responsibilities are established by state law, with functions to be carried out under the direction of elected boards of directors. The Superintendent of Public Instruction is assigned by the state Constitution to have supervision over all matters pertaining to the common schools, but most of the duties of the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) are established in law.

There are a number of laws requiring the OSPI to provide information to school districts or requiring school districts to provide information to parents and students about health issues,

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educational options, and state policies. Other laws direct school districts to take certain actions in the areas of curriculum, courses, assessments, and student plans.

Summary of Bill:

A number of laws related to information, notice and reporting, and required actions by school districts in the areas of curriculum, courses, assessments, and student plans are repealed, suspended, or modified.

The following requirements are repealed:

- the OSPI must provide information about immunization requirements;
- the OSPI must include information in traffic education courses on the proper use of the left-hand lane, motorcycle awareness, and driving safely among bicyclists and pedestrians;
- any course in Washington State history and government must include content areas such as commerce, the Constitution, state geography, and state history and culture;
- the OSPI must require districts to annually inform high school students that employers may request transcripts;
- school districts are encouraged to adopt curriculum for a family preservation education program;
- on or before January 1, 2002, the OSPI must make a report on grants awarded under the Washington Civil Liberties Public Education Program;
- school districts must provide information about the Running Start programs to students in grades 10 through 12, including online courses; and
- student learning plans are required for 5th and 8th through 12th grade students who were not successful on the Washington Assessment of Student Learning or who may not be on track to graduate due to credit deficiencies or absences.

The following requirements are suspended until July 1, 2011:

- school districts must require visual and auditory screening and prepare or provide records. There is an exception to the suspension where screening is required by federal law for students with disabilities or in order to provide services to low-income children;
- the OSPI must provide a manual of the Common School Code to public agencies within the common school system and sell it to other public and nonpublic agencies;
- the OSPI must provide an annual report to the Legislature on the educational experiences and progress of students in foster care;
- school districts must provide all high school students with the option to take a common math college readiness test, beginning in the fall of 2009 and subject to funding; and
- the OSPI, by the 2010-11 school year, must develop assessments of the technology learning standards and make them available for voluntary use.

The following requirements are also suspended:

- school districts must conduct classroom-based assessments in civics in elementary grades, suspended until the 2010-11 school year; and
- the OSPI must provide high schools with contact information for programs offering college credit, and high schools must publish entrance requirements and the availability of local programs that lead to college credits, suspended until the 2011-12 school year.

The following requirements are modified to allow online notice or information, or to provide written information only at the request of a parent:

- the OSPI must provide online notice of the State Board of Health rules regarding contagious diseases only when there are significant changes;
- the OSPI must provide online access to, rather than printing and distributing, rules and forms for visual and auditory screening;
- public and private schools must provide online access to information about the meningococcal and human papillomavirus diseases, unless a parent specifically requests the information in writing;
- schools must provide online information to students and parents about compulsory attendance laws, unless a parent specifically requests the information in writing;
- the OSPI must annually provide online access to information regarding enrollment options, unless a parent specifically requests the information in writing;
- school districts must annually provide online information about intradistrict and interdistrict enrollment options, unless a parent specifically requests the information in writing;
- schools must provide written notice of the school's pesticide use policy and methods on request rather than annually; and
- schools must provide online information to parents about opportunities available to students through educational pathways, unless a parent specifically requests the information in writing.

The following requirements are modified:

- a school district that has received approval for its plan for using funds for the Learning Assistance Program is not required to resubmit a plan unless the district has made a significant change. The OSPI must establish guidelines defining a "significant change;" and
- verification reports regarding classroom-based assessments can require districts to report only information needed to assure compliance.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available for substitute bill.

Effective Date: The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect immediately.