

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 6010

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As Passed Senate, May 16, 1995

**Title:** An act relating to the learning assistance program.

**Brief Description:** Affecting the funding formula for the learning assistance program.

**Sponsors:** Senators McAuliffe and Rinehart.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Education: 2/21/95, 2/24/95, 2/28/95 [DP].

**First Special Session:** Passed Senate, 5/16/95, 35-10.

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

**Majority Report:** Do pass.

Signed by Senators McAuliffe, Chair; Pelz, Vice Chair; Gaspard and Rasmussen.

**Staff:** Leslie Goldstein (786-7424)

**Background:** The Learning Assistance Program (LAP) is a state-funded remediation program for students in grades K-9 who need extra help in school to acquire basic skills. The state distributes funding for the program to school districts based on the percentage of students scoring in the bottom 25 percent on the fourth and eighth grade tests.

In 1990-91, 22.4 percent of the 4th grade students scored in the lowest quartile on a nationally normed test. A new test was implemented in 1991-92. The number of students scoring in the lowest quartile increased to 25.2 percent and is estimated to grow to 29 percent by 1994-95. Questions have been raised about the validity of the test due to the fact that the number of students scoring in the bottom quartile increased at the same time the new test was implemented. Due to concerns about the validity of the test, the funding formula was revised in the 1993-95 legislative budget to discount questionable test results.

In the budget, the Superintendent of Public Instruction was required to make recommendations to the Legislature on a new funding formula consistent with the new assessment system developed by the Commission on Student Learning. This study was due by the 1995-97 biennium, but the superintendent could request a delay if the assessment system was not developed. Since the assessment system was not developed, the superintendent did not make recommendations.

A study of LAP by the Legislative Budget Committee suggested that an option for changing funding for LAP might include changing the formula by adding a factor for poverty or other demographic measures associated with low educational achievement.

**Summary of Bill:** Beginning with the 1995-96 school year, the distribution formula for funds is based upon both an assessment of students and a poverty factor.

The Superintendent of Public Instruction must develop recommendations for a new allocation formula for the program not later than the 1997-98 school year. The recommendations are based upon the initial implementation of the new assessment system for reading, writing, communication, and mathematics.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Not requested.

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

**Testimony For:** None.

**Testimony Against:** The funding formula for the learning assistance program is based upon test scores while the funding formula for the federal program is based upon poverty. These different practices work and should not be changed. Achievement data should be given greater weight. If poverty data are used, the data should be used only if census data are collected more frequently.

**Testified:** Duncan MacQuarrie, OSPI (con).