

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1598

As Reported By House Committee On:

Education

Title: An act relating to prohibiting the use of certain psychological techniques in the classroom.

Brief Description: Prohibiting educational methods that involve dissociative mental states.

Sponsors: Representatives Sterk, Johnson, Talcott and Mulliken.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Education: 2/14/97, 3/3/97 [DPS].

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 8 members: Representatives Johnson, Chairman; Hickel, Vice Chairman; Linville; Quall; Smith; Sterk; Sump and Talcott.

Minority Report: Without recommendation. Signed by 3 members: Representatives Cole, Ranking Minority Member; Keiser, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; and Veloria.

Staff: Bronwyn Mauldin (786-7093).

Background: All certificated employees of school districts, including teachers, school counselors, and principals, must meet certain requirements established by the State Board of Education. Some certificated employees must also be licensed by specified national or regional professional organizations.

Certificated employees, including teachers and counselors, may have their certificates revoked for any of the following acts of unprofessional conduct:

- Falsifying or deliberately misrepresenting professional qualifications;
- Using alcohol or controlled substances on school premises;
- Disregarding professional standards;
- Violating a written contract;

- Engaging in sexual misconduct; or
- Engaging in unauthorized professional practices.

A teacher whose certificate to teach has been revoked may appeal that decision to the State Board of Education.

If a district superintendent determines that there is probable cause for a certificated employee to be discharged, the employee must first be notified in writing, specifying the cause or causes. The employee may request a hearing before an neutral arbitrator. Classified employees also have a right to appeal a termination decision of any school official or school board.

Summary of Substitute Bill: Educational practitioners are prohibited from using any curricula or methods that produce or advocate a dissociative mental state, or hypnosis. A dissociative mental state is defined as a state where mental processes have been isolated and split off from the main personality, or have lost their normal thought-affect relationship.

An educational practitioner who uses any method or curriculum that advocates or produces dissociative states is in violation of professional practices, and is subject to the same penalties as for other acts of unprofessional conduct.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: The original bill included a list of specific methods prohibited by the act, including progressive relaxation and guided imagery, and definitions of those methods. Penalties for violation of the act were suspension without pay for at least ten days for the first offense, and dismissal with forfeiture of all state licenses for subsequent violation.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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

Testimony For: Spending class time on psychological techniques and activities takes away from time which should be spent on basic education. These methods are medical practices, and it is dangerous for unqualified teachers to use them on children in inappropriate classroom settings. These are Eastern religious practices, and religion has no place in public schools. Teachers should not use these methods without first obtaining parental permission.

Testimony Against: Many developmentally disabled students need progressive relaxation techniques to enable them to engage in classroom activities. A tighter definition of guided imagery– is needed.

Testified: Representative Sterk, prime sponsor; Muriel Tingley, Washington Parents Coalition for Academic Excellence (pro); Jamie Robinson, student (pro); Marda Kirkwood, Citizens United for Responsible Education (pro); Tani Zarelli, citizen (pro); Jean Ameluxen, Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (con); Gloria Clark, citizen (pro); Karen Munz, citizen (pro); Carol Brown, citizen (pro); Brian Carlton, citizen (pro); Lloyd Gardner, citizen (pro); and Chris Shardelman, citizen (pro).