

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2849

As Reported By House Committee On:
Education

Title: An act relating to student achievement accountability.

Brief Description: Enhancing student achievement accountability.

Sponsors: Representatives Talcott, Johnson, B. Thomas, Kastama, L. Thomas, Benson, Lambert, Alexander, Robertson, Pennington, McDonald, Lisk, Cairnes, Radcliff, Ballasiotes, Zellinsky, Backlund, D. Schmidt, Delvin, Carlson, Sump, Chandler, Smith and Thompson.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Education: 1/27/98, 2/3/98 [DPS].

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 10 members: Representatives Johnson, Chairman; Cole, Ranking Minority Member; Keiser, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Linville; Quall; Smith; Sterk; Sump; Talcott and Veloria.

Minority Report: Without recommendation. Signed by 1 member: Representative Hickel, Vice Chairman.

Staff: Susan Morrissey (786-7111).

Background: On November 1, 1997, the Commission on Student Learning presented to the Legislature the commission's recommendations on K-4 reading accountability. The recommendations were developed by the commission's accountability task force and adopted unanimously by the commission. In its letter transmitting the recommendations, the commission stated that it would complete recommendations for the overall accountability system in 1998, including provisions for rewards, assistance and intervention. The commission recommended that the Legislature defer action on rewards and sanctions until the full report is completed.

The commission and its task force recommended that each school board develop a three-year, district-wide goal to decrease by at least 25 percent the percentage of students who

did not meet the fourth grade reading standard on the fourth grade assessment. Each school board would also specify annual district-wide increments toward the goal. Each elementary school in the district would establish its own goal for fourth grade students. Those goals would be approved by the school board. The aggregate of the goals adopted by each school would meet or exceed the district-wide improvement goal.

The commission and its task force also recommended a system for each school board to use to disseminate information about its goals to the Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI), the media, parents, guardians, and other interested parties. Finally, the commission and its task force recommended that, by the end of the three-year period covered by the goals, SPI and the school districts review progress toward achieving the goals and reset goals for the next three-year period.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

ESTABLISHMENT OF READING ACCOUNTABILITY GOALS

Each school board will meet new requirements to improve young students' reading skills and to report on the district's improvement efforts to parents and other interested parties. Each school board will meet the following requirements:

- Establish a three-year district-wide goal to decrease by at least 25 percent the number of students who did not meet the reading standard on the fourth grade assessment of student learning;
- Specify yearly district-wide percentage improvements toward the goal;
- Approve three-year goals adopted by each elementary school in the district. The aggregate of the goals adopted by each school must meet or exceed the district-wide improvement goal.
- Use the district's results on either the 1997 or 1998 fourth-grade test as the baseline for improvement.
- Report on the district's reading improvement goals and on its plans for and progress toward meeting the goals. The reports will be distributed to parents, community members, the Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI) and the press. The legislation specifies how often the board must report to each entity and the contents and method of communication for each report.

School district and elementary school reading improvement goals must be developed by December 15, 1998. By December 1, 2000, the SPI will report to the House and Senate Education Committees on the progress that has been made toward achieving the

three-year reading goal. The report will include recommendations on setting reading goals for the ensuing three years.

These requirements expire on July 1, 2006.

ADMINISTRATION OF ASSESSMENTS

Beginning with the 1998-99 school year, districts will administer the second grade reading test annually during the fall. Existing language that encouraged districts to conduct a second grade test is removed.

SPI will prepare and conduct a norm-referenced standardized achievement test in reading and mathematics for third grade students. The test will be given twice to students who test substantially below grade level in reading the first time the test is given. The results of both reading tests will be provided to the students' parents. SPI will determine the standard for testing substantially below grade level. SPI will report to the Legislature annually on the third grade rather than fourth grade test results.

REPORTING ASSESSMENT RESULTS

By September 10 of each year beginning in 1998, SPI will report the results of the fourth grade assessment to schools, school districts, and the Legislature. SPI will also post test results for each school on the superintendent's Internet site. The reports will include results by school and school district, including changes over time.

These requirements expire on July 1, 2006.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: The final year of the three-year period for working toward the first reading goal is clarified. The minimum goal for improving the percentage of students who did not meet the reading standard is revised from 33 to 25 percent. SPI's reporting rate for the results of the fourth grade assessment is moved from August 1 to September 10 of each year beginning in 1998. The third grade test in reading will be given twice only to students who test substantially below grade level the first time the test is given.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 23, 1998.

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

Testimony For: The results of the fourth grade reading assessment indicated that our state needs to make a concerted effort to improve the reading skills of Washington's

elementary school students. School districts can use the assessment results to craft intervention plans to improve the reading skills of students who failed to meet the reading standard. The plans need to attack these skill deficits expeditiously and with ambition. The districts also need to share the plans and their results with parents, SPI, and the public. The norm-referenced test now given to students in the fourth grade should be moved to the third grade and used as a diagnostic tool. Students who score below standard on the third grade test should be retested later, with the results of both tests provided to parents. The results of the fourth grade assessments should be available to the public through a variety of means, including the Internet.

Testimony Against: The goals required in the reading plan are higher than those recommended by CSL and its accountability task force. These goals may well be unrealistic. The required plan is premature. CSL has not yet completed its recommendations for incentives and interventions. The reporting requirements for districts are prescriptive. The requirement to test third grade students twice is cumbersome and unnecessary.

Testified: Representative Talcott, prime sponsor; Terry Bergeson, Superintendent of Public Instruction (pro with concerns); Joe Dear, Governor's office (pro with concerns); Lee Ann Prielipp, Washington Education Association (con); Jim Hager, Washington Association of School Administrators (con); Tom Vander Ark, Federal Way School District (con); and Joe Pope, Association of Washington School Principals (pro with concerns).