

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1569

As Reported By House Committee On:
Education

Title: An act relating to improving mathematics proficiency.

Brief Description: Establishing an excellence in mathematics grant program.

Sponsors: Representatives Keiser, Talcott, Schual-Berke, Carlson, Quall and Regala.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Education: 2/11/99, 2/22/99 [DP].

Brief Summary of Bill

- The Excellence in Mathematics Grant program is established to improve the mathematics skills of struggling students in fifth through seventh grades.
- Grants will be used to benefit students in elementary and middle schools in which students performed below the state standard on the mathematics section of the fourth or seventh grade assessment of student learning. Grants may also be used in elementary schools that send students to middle schools in which students did not meet the state's mathematics standard.
- Participating schools must use research-based instructional models and help evaluate the effectiveness of the instructional models selected.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 14 members: Representatives Quall, Democratic Co-Chair; Talcott, Republican Co-Chair; Haigh, Democratic Vice Chair; Schindler, Republican Vice Chair; Carlson; Cox; Keiser; Rockefeller; Santos; D. Schmidt; Schual-Berke; Stensen; Sump and Wensman.

Staff: Susan Morrissey (786-7111).

Background:

A number of reports have suggested that the mathematics instruction provided to elementary and middle school students in Washington and throughout the rest of the country needs to be improved. The Third International Mathematics and Science study shows that, although fourth grade students scored above average in mathematics, eighth grade students scored well below average. The study also found that the mathematics curriculum in middle and junior high schools may be a weak link in public education throughout this country.

In addition to the findings of these studies, reports from the Commission on Student Learning indicate that Washington's fourth and seventh grade students scored poorly on the mathematics component of the 1998 assessment of student learning. Students who took the assessment, on average, had their lowest scores on the mathematics component of the test. Fewer than 31 percent of the students met the fourth grade proficiency standard. Of the students who took the seventh grade trial mathematics assessment in 1998, only 20 percent met or exceeded the state proficiency standard.

Summary of Bill:

The Excellence in Mathematics Grant program is established to improve the mathematics performance of elementary, middle, and junior high school students. The program is intended to provide teachers with assistance in using teaching methods that have proven results gathered through empirical research. The program will be administered by the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI). It will be targeted to students and teachers in the fifth through seventh grades in schools in which students performed below standard on the fourth or seventh grade mathematics assessments. OSPI will appoint a committee to develop an application and review process for grant awards and to oversee the design and implementation of the evaluation of the program. The types of expertise that must be represented on the committee are described. The committee may receive mileage and per diem.

If funding is appropriated, the OSPI will make grants available to schools and school districts by September 1, 1999, and September 1 of each ensuing year. Grants will be awarded for a three-year period. In order to qualify for a grant, each applicant must meet certain conditions. An applicant must document that the instructional model the applicant intends to use has proven results gathered through empirical research. An applicant must agree to assist in evaluation of the effectiveness of the instructional models selected. The applicant must provide evidence of a significant number of students who are not achieving mathematics proficiency at grade level, as measured by the fourth or seventh grade assessments, or both. If results from the fourth grade assessment are not available, the applicant may use results from the fourth grade California Test of Basic Skills. Finally, the applicant must show that the funds will be used for instruction in the fifth, sixth, or seventh grades.

The OSPI will contract with an independent contractor who will distribute a literature review of best practices in mathematics instruction and staff development for elementary and middle school teachers. If funding is specifically provided for this purpose, the program will be evaluated by an independent contractor. The contractor will conduct a multi-year evaluation of the effectiveness of the instructional models, using achievement on the fourth and seventh grade assessments for the evaluation. The contractor's other responsibilities are also described. The OSPI will share with participants relevant information and reports provided by the independent contractor.

By December 1, 2001, and every two years thereafter, the OSPI will report on the program to the Legislature and the Governor. The reports will include information on the following aspects of the program: implementation strategies, instructional methods, and results.

The OSPI may use up to 5 percent of any appropriated funds for program administration. Funding appropriated for the program is not part of the state's basic education program. Any funds appropriated for this program must be used to supplement and not supplant federal or state instructional monies.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on February 2, 1999.

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

Testimony For: Only 20 percent of Washington's seventh grade students met the state's standards on the 1998 Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL). This result, while expected, is a cause for grave concern for parents, educators, and future employers. Eighth grade is a critical juncture for the future academic direction of young students. Successful completion of rigorous mathematics courses is the single best predictor of college attendance and success. This legislation will provide teachers with the tools necessary to teach math effectively. It preserves local control and flexibility while ensuring that the program will fund instructional models based on sound research and best practices.

Testimony Against: Although the goal of this program is laudable, it is based on student performance on the WASL. The WASL is a shaky foundation upon which to determine students' math skills. The program should be expanded to include students in kindergarten through seventh grade.

Testified: (Support) Rep. Keiser, prime sponsor; Ginnie DeForest, American Association of University Women; Linda Krumins, citizen; Beverly Neitzel,

Commission on Student Learning; Barbara Casey, Washington State Parent Teacher Association; and Dennis Schaiz, Pacific Science Center.
(Opposed) Marda Kirkwood, Citizens United for Responsible Education.