

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SHB 1569

As Passed Legislature

Title: An act relating to improving mathematics proficiency.

Brief Description: Establishing an excellence in mathematics grant program.

Sponsors: By House Committee on Education (Originally sponsored by Representatives Keiser, Talcott, Schual-Berke, Carlson, Quall and Regala).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

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

Appropriations: 3/4/99, 3/6/99 [DPS].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 3/10/99, 98-0.

Senate Amended.

Passed Senate: 4/12/99, 47-0.

House Concurred.

Passed Legislature.

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- The Excellence in Mathematics Training Program is created to provide training in effective, research-based mathematics instruction for elementary and middle school teachers.

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).

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 31 members: Representatives Huff, Republican Co-Chair; H. Sommers, Democratic Co-Chair; Alexander, Republican Vice Chair; Doumit, Democratic Vice Chair; D. Schmidt, Republican Vice Chair; Barlean; Benson; Boldt; Carlson; Clements; Cody; Crouse; Gombosky; Grant; Kagi; Keiser; Kenney; Lambert; Linville; Lisk; Mastin; McIntire; McMorris; Mulliken; Parlette; Regala; Rockefeller; Ruderman; Sullivan; Tokuda and Wensman.

Staff: Jack Daray (786-7178).

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 Training Program is established. The purpose of the program is to improve the mathematics skills of elementary, middle, and junior high school students by providing their teachers with training in effective, research-based instructional methods. The Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) will develop and implement the training programs in mathematics instruction and assessment. In selecting teachers to participate in the program, OSPI will give priority to teachers from schools and school districts in which a significant portion of the students performed below standard on one or more mathematics assessments.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on February 2, 1999.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed. However, the bill is null and void unless funded in the budget.

Testimony For: (Education) 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.

(Appropriations) (Original bill) Students are having serious difficulty with the mathematics portion of the new state tests. Students and teachers need resources to help training in teaching skills and learning approaches aligned to the new standards and content of the tests.

Testimony Against: (Education) 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.

(Appropriations) None.

Testified: (Education) (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.

(Education) (Opposed) Marda Kirkwood, Citizens United for Responsible Education.

(Appropriations) Representative Keiser, prime sponsor; Representative Quall, sponsor; Representative Talcott, sponsor; Karen Davis, Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction; and Rainer Houser, Association of Washington School Principals.