

HOUSE BILL ANALYSIS

HB 2084

Title: An act relating to the learning assistance program.

Brief Description: Providing for a learning assistance program.

Sponsors: Representatives Quall and Talcott.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Meeting Date: February 22, 1999.

Bill Analysis Prepared by: Susan Morrissey (786-7111).

Background: Washington's Learning Assistance Program (LAP) has been in operation for eighteen years. The program is designed to help students in kindergarten through ninth grade who need additional time and assistance to achieve basic skills in reading, mathematics, and language arts. Schools districts apply to the office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) for program funds. OSPI must approve the districts' program plan before any funds are released. The plan may include a variety of activities and services targeted to struggling students. However, it must include the following activities: consulting teachers, instructional support staff, in-service training for classroom teachers and parents, tutoring assistance, counseling services, and special instructional programs.

Since the second Doran decision in 1983, funding for the LAP has been considered part of the state's basic education program. The Legislature has appropriated \$121,224,000 for the program for the 1997-99 biennium. The budget provided a funding rate of \$378.33 per full-time student for the 1997-98 school year and \$378.88 per full-time student in the 1998-99 school year. The money is allocated to school districts using a formula that includes both student achievement on the fourth and eighth grade norm-references tests and a poverty factor. The formula is included in the state's biennial budget. Once the districts have received the funding, they may distribute it as necessary to assist eligible low-performing students anywhere in their districts. During the 1997-98 school year, the program served a reported 124,210 students.

Summary of Bill: The **Learning Assistance Program** is refocused to help low-performing students in kindergarten through ninth grade who meet one of two criteria. The program will assist students who did not meet the standard on the Washington Assessment of Student Learning. The program will also help students who need

additional assistance in order to meet the state's academic standards in reading, writing, mathematics and communication.

School districts must apply to OSPI for LAP funds. The districts must develop a plan for the funding. The plan will include one new component, procedures for involving families and community members in the education of students participating in the program. OSPI will continue to distribute LAP funds to districts based on student performance and a poverty factor. School districts will use the funds to help students who the district has identified as those in need of additional assistance. The districts may also use the funding to implement a school-wide program in certain schools. Schools with a school-wide program must have a high percentage of either low-performing students or students from low-income households. OSPI will develop the criteria for determining schools that districts may select for school-wide programs.

Schools are given additional flexibility in the types of services and activities they may use to help eligible students. In addition, schools may expand the types of assistance provided in the LAP program. Funding may be used for full-day kindergarten, the support of volunteer coordinators, and for extended learning opportunities. Extended learning opportunities include assistance provided before and after schools, on weekends, and during summer and vacation periods. The extended learning opportunities may be provided by teachers, staff, and paid and volunteer tutors. Schools may continue to fund special instructional programs, such as nationally validated models based on practices that have proven effective with low-performing students and students from low-income households.

School districts are strongly encouraged to minimize the use of activities in which children are removed from their regular classroom to receive special instruction under the LAP program. The districts are encouraged to use extended learning opportunities to the extent possible.

OSPI will conduct an annual evaluation of the LAP programs conducted in each district. The superintendent will use student performance data, including data from the state's required norm-referenced tests and the WASL. OSPI will determine additional types of data used in the evaluation process. School districts cannot receive waivers from requirements to provide data for program evaluations.

Differences between Redesigned Program and Current Law:

The program will no longer be focused on students who need help to meet basic skills in reading, mathematics and language arts. Schools may select participants through a variety of assessments and criteria instead of sole reliance on norm-referenced achievement tests given in fourth and eighth grades. Program definitions are revised. Services and activities funded through the program must be those that have been proven effective with the types of students served. The types of activities funded are expanded and schools are not required to include any particular type of service or

activity. The types of permissible tutoring assistance is expanded. A requirement that SPI recommend a new allocation formula by the 1997-98 school year is removed. Reporting and evaluation requirements are refined. And permissible waivers of the program requirements are modified.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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