

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5212

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Education, February 1, 1999

Title: An act relating to school safety plans.

Brief Description: Providing for school safety plans.

Sponsors: Senators McAuliffe, Eide, Winsley, Thibaudeau, Franklin, Rasmussen and Costa.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Education: 1/18/99, 2/1/99 [DPS].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5212 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators McAuliffe, Chair; Eide, Vice Chair; Bauer, Benton, Brown, Finkbeiner, Goings, Hochstatter, Kohl-Welles, Rasmussen, Sellar, Swecker and Zarelli.

Staff: William Bridges (786-7424)

Background: Current law requires the State Board of Education, upon the advice of the Washington State Patrol's Director of Fire Protection, to adopt and distribute rules concerning the evacuation of schools during a "sudden emergency." Pursuant to this authority, the State Board has issued rules requiring local school boards and governing bodies of private schools to develop and practice evacuation plans. These plans are to be taught periodically to all school personnel and practiced as frequently as may be necessary.

Under current law, the State Military Department is responsible for comprehensive emergency management. "Comprehensive emergency management" means the preparation and implementation of all civilian emergency functions, including responding to "disasters caused by all hazards, whether natural, technological, or human caused."

Summary of Substitute Bill: Requires Consultations with State Military Department. The State Board of Education must consult with the State Military Department, in addition to the State Patrol, when developing emergency plans for school districts and schools.

Specifies Types of Emergencies. In addition to natural disasters, emergency plans must cover violent acts and serious injuries or death of students and staff.

Requires the Development and Evaluation of Emergency Plans. The State Board of Education must issue rules directing school districts to: (1) develop, manage and evaluate site-based plans to deal with emergency conditions; and (2) develop and update emergency plans at least once every five years. In addition, the State Board is required to develop standards for emergency plans, which must include the following: (1) who to contact in an

emergency; (2) evacuation procedures; (3) procedures for responding to emergencies; and (4) procedures for training students and certificated and classified staff.

Creates School Safety Grants. A program of school safety grants is created to be administered by the Superintendent of Public Instruction. The safety grants are used by school districts to (1) update and develop emergency plans for every school, (2) train staff in implementing the plans, (3) acquire materials, and (4) practice the plans. The safety grant program expires June 30, 2003.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: The bill is amended to provide that the Legislature intends to improve school safety by helping,– rather than encouraging,– school districts to revise and update their safety plans. Demonstrated need– is removed as a requirement for school safety grants.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not Requested.

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

Testimony For: According to recent surveys, students do not feel safe in school, which adversely affects their learning environment. Current rules requiring crisis plans in schools only contemplate natural disasters. Schools need plans and training to deal with violent acts. This bill is necessary to assist schools in preparing and implementing those plans. The following suggestions were made: (1) the word "encouraging" in the intent section should be replaced with "requiring"; (2) a youth safety center should also be created; and (3) "demonstrated need" should not be a requirement for receiving safety grants.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: PRO: Senator McAuliffe, prime sponsor; Judy Hartmann, Tacoma Public Schools; Tom Kelly, OSPI; Barbara Mertens, WA Assn. of School Administrators; John Pope, WA Assn. of School Principals; Sherri Williams, Public School Employees.