

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5418

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Education, February 22, 1999

Title: An act relating to K-12 accountability and assistance.

Brief Description: Changing school accountability and assistance provisions.

Sponsors: Senators McAuliffe, Rasmussen, Patterson and Kohl-Welles; by request of Governor Locke, Superintendent of Public Instruction and Commission on Student Learning.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Education: 1/21/99, 2/15/99, 2/22/99 [DPS, DNPS].

Brief Summary of Bill

- The Commission on Academic Achievement is created and may establish accountability goals and recommend school districts requiring school assistance, recognition, and intervention.
- Assistance is provided to schools through a regional helping corps and the Accountability Implementation Funds (AIFs) for school staff to improve student learning.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5418 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators McAuliffe, Chair; Eide, Vice Chair; Bauer, Brown, Goings, Kohl-Welles and Rasmussen.

Minority Report: Do not pass substitute.

Signed by Senators Benton, Finkbeiner, Hochstatter, Sellar and Swecker.

Staff: Susan Mielke (786-7422)

Background: *The Commission on Student Learning (CSL):* CSL consists of three members of the State Board of Education (SBE) and eight Governor appointees. The primary duties of CSL are to identify what all public school students should know and be able to do (the Essential Academic Learning Requirements (EALRs), develop student assessments to test EALRs, and develop a statewide school accountability system. CSL is required to make recommendations regarding a statewide accountability system by June 30, 1999. CSL expires on June 30, 1999. CSL must transfer EALRs, the completed assessments and the assessments in development to SPI before it expires.

Goals: In 1998, the Legislature required each school district and school to establish a goal to increase the percentage of students who meet or exceed the reading standard on the fourth grade Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) and establish annual increments to meet the goal.

Certificate of Mastery (COM): The SBE must determine that the high school assessment system is reliable and valid before successful completion of the high school assessment leads to a COM.

Reporting: Each school district must annually report, in writing, the district's progress toward meeting the reading goals to the parents, community and local media.

The Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI) must report by school and school district the fourth grade WASL results to schools, school districts and the Legislature, including posting the results on the SPI Internet site.

The Center for the Improvement of Student Learning (CISL): In the 1993 Education Reform Act, CISL was created within the office of SPI to serve as a clearinghouse for successful education restructuring programs and best practices to improve student learning as well as provide training and consultation services. SPI must annually report to CSL on the activities of the CISL.

Student Learning Improvement Grants (SLIGs): In the 1993 Education Reform Act, the Legislature created SLIGs for the 1994-95 school year through the 1996-97 school year to provide staff development and planning to improve student learning. The Legislature has funded some form of SLIGs since 1993.

Accountability Task Force: CSL convened an Accountability Task Force to develop recommendations for a statewide school accountability system. CSL adopted the task force recommendations on October 19, 1998. The bill draft contains the recommendations.

Summary of Substitute Bill: Provisions for a statewide school accountability system are enacted.

The Commission of Academic Achievement (CAA): The Commission on Academic Achievement (CAA) is created to provide oversight of the accountability system. Membership is the SPI, one member of the SBE and seven members appointed by the Governor. The CAA may appoint staff and has rule-making authority. The duties of the CAA are to: (1) establish and revise statewide academic goals; (2) annually review the reporting system and recommend changes as necessary; (3) recommend to SPI which school districts require additional state-level assistance, recognition and intervention; (4) hear concerns about interventions; and (5) recommend changes to the accountability policy. There is an emergency clause for this section to take effect immediately.

Commission on Student Learning (CSL): The CSL is abolished. The duties for the EALRs and the assessments become the duties of SPI.

Goals: The CAA may establish and revise statewide goals in additional content areas and grade levels.

Certificate of Mastery (COM): The CAA, not SBE, determines whether the high school assessment system is reliable and valid before successful completion can lead to a COM.

Reporting: Each school district must annually report the district's progress toward meeting the reading goal to the parents and community at a public meeting, in addition to the written reports required to the parents, community and local media. Schools and school districts with fewer than ten students in a grade level will not be required to report the progress toward meeting the goals, but must report plans to improve student performance.

SPI must report to the public, schools, school districts, and the Legislature all WASL results by school and school district using two methods: (1) the percent of students meeting the standards; and (2) a learning improvement index that shows changes in student performance within the four performance levels: (a) well below standard; (b) below standard; (c) meets standard; (d) above standard. SPI must also report other specified data. SPI must ensure that the data is complete and accurate prior to reporting. SPI must monitor the percentage and the number of special education and limited English students exempt from taking the assessments to ensure compliance with the exemption guidelines.

Beginning in December 2000, CAA must annually report to the legislative education committees on the progress that has been made in achieving the reading goal and on the setting of other goals. CAA must annually review the reporting system and recommend improvements to SPI.

The Center for the Improvement of Student Learning (CISL): The information to be provided by CISL is expanded to include information on systems to analyze student assessment data and technology systems. CISL must also develop and maintain an Internet web-site to provide access to information. CISL's training services are expanded to include regional summer institutes. The annual report by SPI to CSL on the activities of CISL is eliminated.

Student Learning Improvement Grants (SLIGs): The SLIGs statute is repealed.

Accountability Implementation funds(AIFs): To the extent funds are appropriated, SPI must allocate funds to school districts to provide time for school staff to develop and implement student learning improvement plans. The plans must be available to the public. Activities for expenditure of the AIFs are listed and must minimize the use of substitute teachers. The School for the Blind and the School for the Deaf are eligible to receive AIFs.

Helping Corps: A regional "helping corps" of school improvement coordinators and specialists is created to provide schools and school districts with school improvement assistance. A statewide school improvement coordinator directs the corps. Types of assistance to be provided are listed. The specialists are not permanent employees, but serve on a rotating basis for one to three years.

State Recognition: SPI must annually recognize schools and school districts based on improvements in WASL results and criteria recommended by CAA.

State Intervention: School districts have the primary responsibility for intervening in schools with large numbers of students who are not achieving EALRs. Beginning in 2001-02, CAA must evaluate elementary schools in which students are showing little or no improvement.

CAA must evaluate middle and high schools three years after assessments are mandatory. CAA must use other information in addition to assessment results to determine whether to recommend additional state-level assistance. If, after a reasonable period of time, a district's efforts have failed to improve student achievement, then CAA may recommend that SPI intervene in the school district. SPI may intervene and take appropriate corrective actions.

Consolidated planning: SPI must consolidate and streamline the requirements for major state and federal categorical and grant programs and increase the use of electronic applications and reporting.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: The substitute retains the reporting requirements, the accountability implementation funds, the expanded duties of CISL, the helping corp and the school recognition and intervention provisions in the original bill. The substitute bill creates the CAA to establish and revise statewide academic goals and to recommend to SPI school districts requiring assistance, recognition, and intervention. The substitute bill deletes the provisions establishing a process for districts and schools to set fourth grade goals for mathematics, providing two-year grants to struggling schools to develop and implement improvement plans, modifying the Learning Assistance Program by expanding the types of activities permitted and changing the allocation of funds to be based solely on poverty; and requiring a performance incentive study.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date: Section 602 takes effect immediately. The rest of the bill takes effect ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: This bill is important to continue the momentum of education reform. It is a positive, not a punitive approach. The accountability system sets clear expectations for schools to meet. The system is straightforward and easy to understand. It requires continuous improvement which is what we all want from our schools. The system is fair because it is not based solely on test scores. However, low test scores will trigger a deeper examination into what the schools are doing. Help will be provided prior to any intervention. There needs to be a credible oversight committee to make judgments about school performance and also to improve the accountability system as we learn more. The change in the funding for the LAP is necessary to remove a disincentive since under the current system when students are successful the schools lose their LAP funds.

Testimony Against: Concern exists that it is too early to implement the accountability system. We are still in a transition phase. Not all the assessments are complete or valid. Sufficient support systems and information systems are not in place yet. The accountability system should be piloted or phased-in. There are other existing entities that could provide the oversight duties for the system. If there is an Accountability Oversight Committee, then the membership should be diverse and include parents and educators. The LAP funding should not be changed to be based solely on poverty. The change does not provided stable funding and every student who needs assistance is not poor.

Testified: PRO: Steve Mullin, WA Roundtable; Lynn Nixon, HP-American Electronics Association; Rainer Houser, AWSP; Barbara Mertens, WASA; Jim Keene, Clarkston School District; Barbara Casey, WPTA (concerns); Neal Supple, SBE.