

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6171

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Early Learning, K-12 & Higher Education, January 20, 2006
Ways & Means, February 6, 2006

Title: An act relating to preparing bilingual and special education teachers.

Brief Description: Creating a demonstration project to help prepare bilingual and special education teachers.

Sponsors: Senators McAuliffe, Schmidt, Rasmussen and Kohl-Welles.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Early Learning, K-12 & Higher Education: 1/16/06, 1/20/06 [DP-WM].
Ways & Means: 1/31/06, 2/6/06 [DPS].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING, K-12 & HIGHER EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

Signed by Senators McAuliffe, Chair; Weinstein, Vice Chair, Early Learning & K-12; Schmidt, Ranking Minority Member; Benton, Berkey, Carrell, Delvin, Eide, Kohl-Welles, Pflug, Rasmussen, Rockefeller, Schoesler and Shin.

Staff: Stephanie Yurcisin (786-7438)

SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6171 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Prentice, Chair; Fraser, Vice Chair, Capital Budget Chair; Doumit, Vice Chair, Operating Budget; Zarelli, Ranking Minority Member; Brandland, Fairley, Kohl-Welles, Parlette, Pflug, Pridemore, Rasmussen, Regala, Roach, Rockefeller, Schoesler and Thibaudeau.

Staff: Bryon Moore (786-7726)

Background: Classified school employees are personnel who do not hold a professional education certificate issued by the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction or are employed by a school district in a position that does not require such a certificate. There is concern about the shortage of qualified, certificated teachers in the areas of bilingual education and special education, and it is believed that classified employees, who have already expressed a commitment and interest in working for the public schools, could be good candidates for certification in these shortage areas.

In 2000 and 2001, the Legislature provided \$1 million to fund a conditional scholarship demonstration project for classified employees to become teachers. This program has not been funded since 2001.

The Legislature has sporadically funded a statutory conditional teacher's scholarship program. In 2005-2007, the Legislature provided \$500,000 for the program. This program is open to anyone seeking a teaching certificate, although priority has generally been given to participants seeking certification or an endorsement in math, science, technology, special education, bilingual education, or participants willing to work in a shortage area.

Three alternative routes exist to earn teacher certification. Prospective teacher candidates using one of these alternative routes can earn certification in a shorter time than through a traditional program. Two of the three routes are specific to classified school employees.

Summary of Substitute Bill: A demonstration project is created that helps classified public K-12 school employees to earn a teaching certificate with an endorsement for bilingual or special education. This project will provide conditional scholarships through the future teachers conditional scholarship program and loan repayment program or through one of the alternative routes to teacher certification.

The Higher Education Coordinating Board (HEC Board) will submit findings by January 2008 to the Legislature and the Governor about the impact of this demonstration project on entrants into the teaching profession in the shortage areas of bilingual education and special education.

The alternative route conditional scholarship program and the future teachers conditional scholarship program are amended to allow the funds provided for the demonstration project to be distributed within the applicable rules, as determined appropriate by the HEC Board in consultation with the Professional Educators Standards Board.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: The \$1 million state general fund appropriation is removed.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

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

Testimony For: These staff members are committed to our students and understand the challenges and rewards of working with children. Staff who become certified through the alternative route have an entire year with a mentor, which is a big benefit. The focus on bilingual education and special education is appropriate given shortage areas in our state. Perhaps the language that gives the choice of where to allocate the money to the HEC Board and the PESB needs to be tightened up. Other suggested changes were to substitute the word "educator" for "teacher" and to be sure that this demonstration project coordinates with the "Incentives" program.

Testimony Against: None.

Who Testified: PRO: Senator Rosemary McAuliffe, prime sponsor; Christie Perkins, Washington State Special Education Coalition; Bob Cooper, Washington Association for Colleges of Teacher Education; Lucinda Young, Washington Education Association; Dan Steele, Washington State School Directors' Association; John Klarik, Higher Education Coordinating Board.