

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1345

As Passed House:
March 5, 2015

Title: An act relating to adopting a definition and standards of professional learning.

Brief Description: Adopting a definition and standards of professional learning.

Sponsors: Representatives Lytton, Magendanz and Bergquist.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Education: 2/2/15, 2/19/15 [DPS].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 3/5/15, 91-7.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Defines "professional learning" as a comprehensive, sustained, job-embedded, and collaborative approach to improving teachers' and principals' effectiveness in raising student achievement.
- Provides additional descriptions of effective professional learning, and specifies content, context, and process standards.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 20 members: Representatives Santos, Chair; Ortiz-Self, Vice Chair; Reykdal, Vice Chair; Magendanz, Ranking Minority Member; Muri, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Stambaugh, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Bergquist, Caldier, Fagan, Gregory, Griffey, Hargrove, Hayes, S. Hunt, Kilduff, Lytton, McCaslin, Orwall, Pollet and Springer.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 1 member: Representative Klippert.

Staff: Cece Clynch (786-7195).

Background:

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

According to a meta-analysis of research conducted by the Washington State Institute for Public Policy, general professional development for teachers such as workshops, seminars and conferences does not have a positive benefit-to-cost ratio in terms of improving student achievement, although professional development that is focused on improving teaching in a specific academic content area such as mathematics, reading, or science does show benefits.

Some states, including Michigan, Kentucky, Idaho, and New Jersey, have adopted statewide definitions and standards for high-quality professional development or professional learning, and then encourage or require professional learning activities by schools and school districts to meet them. The definitions and standards in these states have been informed by the work of a national organization called Learning Forward.

Summary of Bill:

Findings and Intent.

Findings are made that:

- Effective professional learning enables educators to acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, practices, and dispositions needed to help students learn and achieve at higher levels.
- A clear definition of professional learning provides a foundational vision that sets the course for how state, regional, and local education leaders support professional learning in order to advance student learning. It also serves as a piece of critical infrastructure and an accountability measure.

Intent is expressed to adopt a statewide definition of effective professional learning. Each public school and school district should establish targeted, sustained, relevant professional learning opportunities that meet the definition and are aligned to state and district goals.

Definition.

The term "professional learning" means a comprehensive, sustained, job-embedded, and collaborative approach to improving teachers' and principals' effectiveness in raising student achievement. It also fosters collective responsibility for improved student performance and must comprise learning that is aligned with student learning needs, educator development needs, and school district or state improvement goals.

Professional learning is an ongoing process that incorporates differentiated, coherent, sustained, and evidence-based strategies that improve educator effectiveness and student achievement. Professional learning should include the work of established collaborative teams of educators who commit to work on an ongoing basis to accomplish common goals and who are engaged in a continuous cycle of professional improvement focused on:

- identifying learning needs using multiple sources of data;
- defining a clear set of learning goals;
- continuously assessing, through reflection, observation, and sustained support, the effectiveness of the professional learning in achieving learning goals, improving teaching, and assisting all students in meeting state academic learning standards;
- using formative and summative measures; and
- realizing the three primary purposes for professional learning: (1) individual improvement aligned with individual goals; (2) school and team improvement aligned

with school and team improvement; and (3) program implementation aligned with state, district, and school improvement goals and initiatives.

Facilitation of professional learning should be by well prepared school and district leaders, including curriculum specialists, central office administrators, principals, coaches, mentors, master teachers, and other teacher leaders. Professional learning may be supported by external expert assistance.

Standards are specified for content, process, and context of professional learning. Definitions are included for the terms: differentiated; job-embedded; student outcomes; and sustained.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) This bill was first brought forward last year. In the interim, a lot of work has been done with interested stakeholders. A lot is being asked of educators at this time, but the structures and supports available vary. Professional learning is very important. There is a need for funding, but first there is a need for a clear definition. The next step will be to appropriate the funds. There is still much latitude left for local control. This creates a definition that clarifies that professional development is for closing achievement gaps. An educator can review the data, and see what works, what doesn't work, and what works for other teachers. Growth comes from watching other teachers. This is job-embedded, and there is local control. The Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction supports this. It builds upon last year's bill, and provides a foundation. There is no consistency across the state around professional development. This bill communicates a strong vision, and sets its sights on more targeted investments. This work included the voices of many people and organizations. This will improve teacher practice and student achievement. Quality professional development allows an educator to provide his or her students with what they need. This is particularly important for students with unique learning needs. If school districts do not have a vision of professional development, the teachers in that district don't get what is effective or what is needed. This ensures the use of formative and summative assessments. It is much appreciated that it is tied to state learning standards. With this clear nexus, it will be up to the state to provide funding as part of basic education. As the State Board of Education has said, the state should support job-embedded professional development. This implements recommendations by the Quality Education Council. A study by the Washington Institute of Public Policy has shown that targeted professional development is beneficial and there is a high rate of return on investment. This is especially important when teachers are taking on new roles relative to science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) in order that their students get what they need to acquire good jobs. Currently, there are pockets of excellence but it is not universal.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Lytton, prime sponsor; Jene Jones, League of Education Voters; Jessica Vavrus, Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction; Ellen Hopkins, Learning Forward Washington; Rachel Johnson, Sumner School District; Shawn Lewis, Washington Education Association; Jack Archer, Washington State Board of Education; and Caroline King, Washington STEM.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.