
Education Committee

HB 1511

Brief Description: Concerning the learning assistance program.

Sponsors: Representatives Lytton, Sullivan, Dolan and Santos.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Specifies that school districts are no longer required to prioritize Learning Assistance Program (LAP) funding to improve reading literacy in early elementary grades.
- Increases the number of hours allocated to support the LAP to 2.4 hours per week.
- Adds two components to the LAP to allocate additional funding to schools with high concentrations of certain student populations.

Hearing Date: 2/13/17

Staff: Megan Wargacki (786-7194).

Background:

Prototypical School Funding Formula.

Legislation enacted in 2009 and 2010 redefined basic education and restructured the public kindergarten through twelfth grade school funding formula. The school funding formula allocates funding to school districts based on assumed levels of staff and other resources necessary to support a "prototypical" school that serves an assumed number of students at defined elementary, middle, and high schools levels. The use of prototypical schools is intended to illustrate the level of resources needed to operate a school of a particular size using commonly understood terms such as class size, hours of instruction, and specified staff positions.

Districts have discretion over how the money is spent, subject to some limits. In addition to the school-specific staffing that is allocated through the prototypical school funding formula, the formula includes per student allocations for materials, supplies and operating costs. The state also provides support and additional instruction time for certain student groups through categorical program funding.

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.

Learning Assistance Program. The Learning Assistance Program (LAP) supports students who are below standard in English language arts and mathematics. The goal is to help students meet grade level standard by providing readiness and behavior supports. The LAP uses research-based best practices designed to increase student achievement. The LAP funding must focus first on kindergarten through fourth grade students who are struggling with reading. Districts can use 5 percent of LAP funds for services to students and families provided by external organizations if the services are aimed at reducing barriers to learning and increasing engagement. The LAP funding can also support students who are not on track to meet graduation requirements.

The prototypical school funding formula allocates funding to support 2.3975 hours per week of supplemental instruction in a class of 15 students. Funding appropriated for these purposes may only be used for these purposes. The funding allocation is based on poverty as measured by the percentage of students in the school district who were eligible for free or reduced-price meals in the prior school year. During the 2015-16 school year, 144,014, or 13.3 percent of, public school students received LAP services.

Transitional Bilingual Instruction Program. The Transitional Bilingual Instruction Program (TBIP) provides supplemental instruction and services for students whose primary language is other than English, and additional supports for students to transition out of the TBIP once they have demonstrated language proficiency.

The prototypical school funding formula allocates funding to support 4.778 hours per week of supplemental instruction in a class of 15 students for each student eligible for and enrolled in the TBIP. The state also funds an additional three hours of supplemental instruction for up to two years immediately after the student has exited the TBIP. Funding appropriated for these purposes may only be used for these purposes. As of May 2016, 117,233, or 10.8 percent of, public school students were eligible for TBIP.

Dependent Child.

The Juvenile Court Act defines a dependent child as one who:

- has been abandoned;
- is abused or neglected by a person legally responsible for the care of the child;
- has no parent, guardian, or custodian capable of adequately caring for the child, such that the child is in circumstances which constitute a danger of substantial damage to the child's psychological or physical development; or
- is receiving extended foster care services.

Homeless Students.

Although the term "homeless" is found in the school code, it is not defined there. The federal McKinney-Vento Act (Act) defines homeless children as "individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence." The Act provides examples of children who would fall under this definition:

- children and youth sharing housing due to loss of housing, economic hardship or a similar reason;
- children and youth living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camp grounds due to lack of alternative accommodations;
- children and youth living in emergency or transitional shelters;

- children and youth abandoned in hospitals;
- children and youth whose primary nighttime residence is not ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation;
- children and youth living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations; and
- migratory children and youth living in any of the above situations.

Prior to December 10, 2016, children awaiting foster care placement were also considered homeless under the Act. In the 2015-16 school year, 39,671, or 3.7 percent of, public school students were homeless as defined under the Act; this is a 90.9 percent change from the 2008-09 school year.

Free and Reduced Price Meals.

In order for students to qualify for free school meals, their family's income must be at or below 130 percent of the federal poverty level. Students whose families have an income between 130 percent and 185 percent of the federal poverty level are eligible for reduced-price meals. As of May 2016, the number of public school students eligible for Free or Reduced Price Meals (FRPM) was 477,828, or 44.0 percent.

Summary of Bill:

School districts are no longer required to prioritize LAP funding to improve reading literacy in early elementary grades, but LAP funds may continue to be expended for these purposes.

The number of hours that prototypical school funding formula allocates to support the LAP is increased by 0.0025 hours to 2.4 hours per week.

Two new components are added to the LAP and specified to be within the program of basic education. These components allocate additional funding to schools with high concentrations of certain student populations. To qualify for the first concentration allocation, a school building must have a combined percentage of students eligible for FRPM in the prior school year and students eligible for the TBIP that exceeds the state average.

To receive the second concentration allocation, a school district must document its enrollment of foster students and homeless students and must expend the additional allocation for those students for LAP services or for related services to foster or homeless students. Foster student means a student who is dependent under the Juvenile Court Act. Homeless student means a student who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence.

The minimum allocation for each new component must provide to each level of prototypical school the resources to offer, on a statewide average, 2.4 hours per week of supplemental instruction in a class of 15 LAP students. Funding appropriated for these purposes may only be used for these purposes. In addition, the concentration allocations must be used in the qualifying school building and cannot supplant existing spending.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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