
Education Committee

SSB 5241

Brief Description: Concerning the educational success of youth who are homeless or in foster care.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Early Learning & K-12 Education (originally sponsored by Senators Carlyle, O'Ban, Darneille, Hasegawa and Wellman).

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Modifies provisions governing school district requirements for the on-time progression and graduation of qualifying dependent students and extends the provisions to homeless students.
- Directs the Superintendent of Public Instruction to adopt and distribute rules related to the school district requirements.

Hearing Date: 3/13/17

Staff: Ethan Moreno (786-7386).

Background:

Course Waivers for Students Dependent Pursuant to the Juvenile Court Act.

In order to facilitate the on-time grade level progression and graduation of students who are found dependent under the Juvenile Court Act (JCA), an act that governs dependency cases and certain provisions related to foster care services, school districts must either waive specific courses if similar coursework has been completed in another school district or provide reasonable justification for denial. If a waiver is not granted to a student who would qualify to graduate from the sending school district, the receiving school district must use best efforts to provide an alternative means of acquiring required coursework so that graduation may occur on time.

As specified in the course waiver provisions, school districts are encouraged to consolidate unresolved or incomplete coursework and provide opportunities for credit accrual through local

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classroom hours, correspondence courses, and other options. If a student who is transferring at the beginning or during the student's junior or senior year is ineligible to graduate from the receiving school district after all alternatives have been considered, the sending and receiving districts must ensure the receipt of a diploma from the sending district if the student meets the graduation requirements of the sending district.

Homeless Students.

Legislation adopted in 2016 (ch. 157, Laws of 2016, enacted as 3SHB 1682) established a grant program administered by the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) to increase the identification of homeless students and the capacity of the school districts to provide related support. Provisions governing the grant program define "homeless students" as students without a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence as set forth in the federal McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Act (McKinney-Vento Act).

The McKinney-Vento Act defines homeless children as "individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence." The McKinney-Vento Act provides examples of children who would fall under this definition, including:

- 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 campgrounds due to lack of alternative accommodations;
- children and youth living in emergency or transitional shelters;
- children and youth awaiting foster care placement; and
- children and youth living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, or bus or train stations.

The Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction.

In addition to its constitutional charge of supervising all matters pertaining to public schools, the Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI) and its office has numerous and broad responsibilities prescribed in statute, including:

- making rules and regulations necessary for the administration of public education requirements;
- preparing courses of study and other materials and books for the discharge of education duties;
- fulfilling financial responsibilities, including distributing legislatively allocated funds to districts for the operation of the public school system, and awarding numerous state and federally funded grants; and
- satisfying numerous reporting and other duties assigned by the Legislature.

Summary of Bill:

Provisions governing school district requirements for the on-time progression and graduation of dependent students under the JCA are modified and extended to homeless students. In order to eliminate barriers and facilitate the on-time progression and graduation of students who are homeless or are dependent under the JCA, school districts must, in addition to waving specific courses or providing an alternative means of acquiring required coursework consolidate partial credit, unresolved, or incomplete coursework and provide opportunities for credit accrual in a manner that eliminates academic and nonacademic barriers for the student. The term "homeless"

is defined using provisions governing the OSPI's grant program for identifying homeless students and the capacity of districts to provide support.

If a student has been unable to complete an academic course and receive full credit because of a withdrawal or transfer, school districts must grant partial credit for coursework completed before the withdrawal or transfer, and the receiving school must accept those credits. The receiving school must also apply the credits to the student's academic progress or graduation or both, and allow the student to earn credits regardless of the student's date of enrollment in the receiving school.

The SPI is directed to adopt and distribute to all school districts lawful and reasonable rules prescribing the substantive and procedural obligations of school districts to implement the provisions governing the on-time progression and graduation of students who are homeless or are dependents under the JCA.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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