
Education Committee

HB 1872

Brief Description: Enhancing student learning opportunities and achievement.

Sponsors: Representative Santos.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Expands the goals of the Basic Education Act to include focusing on the educational performance of students and high expectations for all students.
- Directs school districts to consider using increases in student achievement funds for reducing primary grade class sizes.
- Phases-in funding for voluntary all-day kindergarten by providing support for low income students in schools with the highest poverty levels.
- Creates three demonstration projects: comprehensive K-3 foundations programs, an English as a Second Language instruction field study and project, and health-related career academies in high schools.

Hearing Date: 2/8/07

Staff: Barbara McLain (786-7383).

Background:

The Washington Learns comprehensive education study, chaired by Governor Gregoire, issued final recommendations in November 2006. The Governor proposes implementation of a number of the recommendations regarding enhancing student learning opportunities and achievement through her proposed budget for the 2007-09 biennium and proposed legislation.

Basic Education Act Goals. As currently stated in statute, the goal of the Basic Education Act for Washington's schools is to "provide students with the opportunity to become responsible citizens, to contribute to their own economic well-being and to that of their families and communities, and

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to enjoy productive and satisfying lives." The statute then describes the four student learning goals that form the basis of Washington's learning standards.

Student Achievement Funds. Initiative 728, approved by the voters in 2001, authorized school districts to use the student achievement funds under the initiative for the following purposes: a) reduced class size in grades K through 4; b) selected class size reduction in grades 5 through 12; c) extended learning opportunities; d) professional development for educators; e) early learning; or f) school facilities improvements related to class size reduction or extended learning.

Kindergarten. School districts can offer a full-day kindergarten program, but the state's basic education funding model allocates monies for kindergarten students only for 180 half-days of instruction. Districts offering full-day programs can supplement their basic education monies with local dollars, student achievement funds, tuition payments, or other resources.

Demonstration Projects. One of the recommendations of the Washington Learns report was to redesign classrooms in grades K through 3 to group children based on their abilities rather than follow automatic grade-to-grade promotion and allow them more exposure to arts, science, music, foreign languages, and other subjects.

Another recommendation was for the Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI) to implement a regional best practices demonstration project for English language learners that coordinates curriculum, assessment, teacher training, and family involvement.

The report also recommended support for high school career academies to enable 11th and 12th grade students to focus their studies and training on a particular occupational field. Academies could be supported by public-private partnerships of employers, industry associations, higher education institutions, and school districts.

Summary of Bill:

Basic Education Act Goals. Included in the goal of the Basic Education Act is: "to develop a public school system that focuses more on the educational performance of students and includes high expectations for all students."

Student Achievement Funds. Beginning with the 2007-08 school year, school districts must consider using increases in student achievement funds for reducing primary grade class sizes in grades K through 4.

Kindergarten. Beginning with the 2007-08 school year, funding for voluntary all-day kindergarten programs supports students qualifying for free and reduced price lunch and is phased-in beginning with schools with the highest percentages of these students.

School districts receiving all-day kindergarten program support must:

1. provide an instructional program of at least 1,000 hours;
2. provide a curriculum that assists students in acquiring academic, communication, social, and emotional skills; and provides hands-on learning experiences;
3. establish learning environments that are developmentally appropriate and promote creativity;
4. demonstrate strong connections with early learning community providers; and
5. participate in kindergarten readiness activities.

Demonstration Projects.

Primary Education Projects. Ten demonstration projects are authorized for schools with students in grades K through 3 to develop and implement comprehensive K through 3 foundations programs. At least two of the projects must be in schools participating in the public-private early learning partnerships in the Highline and Yakima school districts. The SPI selects project participants.

Grant applicants must demonstrate school and district commitment and support for the project; a history of using data to guide decision making; a plan for using learning improvement days to support the project; successful linkages with early learning providers; a general implementation plan; and a commitment to use district resources, including student achievement funds, to reduce class sizes in grades K through 3.

Program resources provided for the demonstration projects support implementation of a full-day kindergarten program, class sizes of one teacher to 18 students, a half-time instructional coach, and professional development time. Characteristics of a comprehensive K through 3 foundations program are described.

The Washington State Institute for Public Policy (Institute) must evaluate the primary demonstration projects by examining the degree to which students thrive in the education environment, student progress, the program components most important to student success, and staff satisfaction. An interim report is due November 1, 2008, with a final report due December 1, 2009. The demonstration projects expire September 1, 2010.

English as a Second Language (ESL) Project. The goals of the ESL demonstration project are to: a) recommend competencies in developing academic English skills in English language learners that all teachers should acquire in teacher preparation programs; b) identify components of a professional development program that builds teacher competence in developing academic English skills; and c) identify practices to coordinate instruction among ESL teachers and classroom teachers.

The ESL demonstration project uses two strategies: 1) a field study of an ongoing project in schools and districts where Spanish is the predominant other language; and 2) a project that provides professional development and planning time to approximately three large schools with many first languages among the students. The SPI selects the participants for the large school project, and participants must partner with an institution of higher education or professional development provider with expertise in supporting student acquisition of academic English.

The Institute must conduct the field study and gather information from the project schools, as well as review current literature regarding best practices. An interim report on the Institute's findings is due November 1, 2008, with a final report due December 1, 2009. The ESL demonstration project expires September 1, 2010.

Career Academies. A health-related career academies grant program is created. The pathways offered must result in students acquiring preparation and certification to enter the workforce in a health-related career or to enroll in postsecondary education and training programs after graduation. The grant program is competitive, must be administered by an experienced nonprofit health organization, and must use a public-private partnership to create the pathways.

The grant program:

1. requires participation of high school and district staff, public and private institutions of higher education, employers, industry and labor associations, and philanthropic organizations;
2. provides resources for start-up activities only;
3. requires matching funds and services from program partners; and
4. requires applicants to describe community interests, program content and outcomes, implementation steps, roles of each partner, general budget, and a plan for sustaining the program after the first year.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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