

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5497

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Early Learning & K-12 Education, February 7, 2007
Ways & Means, February 21, 2007

Title: An act relating to dropout prevention, intervention, and retrieval.

Brief Description: Authorizing a statewide program for comprehensive dropout prevention, intervention, and retrieval.

Sponsors: Senators McAuliffe, Holmquist, Rasmussen, Oemig, Pridemore, Zarelli, Weinstein, Eide, Hobbs, Keiser, Fraser, Hewitt, Tom, Kauffman, Clements, Hargrove, Kilmer, Franklin, Kohl-Welles and Shin; by request of Superintendent of Public Instruction.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Early Learning & K-12 Education: 1/31/07, 2/07/07 [DPS-WM].
Ways & Means: 2/21/07 [DPS-EDU].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5497 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

Signed by Senators McAuliffe, Chair; Tom, Vice Chair; Holmquist, Ranking Minority Member; Brandland, Clements, Eide, Hewitt, Hobbs, Kauffman, Oemig, Rasmussen, Weinstein and Zarelli.

Staff: Kimberly Cushing (786-7421)

SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5497 as recommended by Committee on Early Learning & K-12 Education be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Prentice, Chair; Fraser, Vice Chair, Capital Budget Chair; Brandland, Carrell, Hatfield, Hobbs, Honeyford, Keiser, Kohl-Welles, Oemig, Parlette, Rasmussen, Regala, Roach, Rockefeller and Schoesler.

Staff: Bryon Moore (786-7726)

Background: Under current state law, each school district is required to report to the Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI) the number of students in grades nine through twelve who drop out of school over a four-year period. Additionally, school districts must

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report the dropout rates of students in each of the grades nine through twelve, disaggregated by ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, disability status, and the causes or reasons attributed to students for having dropped out of school. SPI is required to annually report these dropout statistics to the Legislature.

The State Board of Education may adopt, by rule, dropout reduction goals for students in grades seven through twelve. The board must present these goals to the Legislature in a time frame that would allow the Legislature to take statutory action if necessary.

Summary of Bill: Subject to the availability of funds, the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) must create a grant program to phase in a statewide comprehensive dropout prevention, intervention, and retrieval system. The program will be known as the Building Bridges Program and is a local partnership of schools, families, and communities. The partnerships provide the following programs and activities: a system that identifies students at risk of dropping out from middle through high school and that offers timely interventions; coaches or mentors for students; staff that coordinates the partners; retrieval or reentry activities; and alternative educational programming.

OSPI must identify criteria for grants and evaluate proposals with the Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board (Workforce Board). OSPI must develop and monitor requirements for grant recipients to identify strengths, gaps, and goals; use emerging best practices; and coordinate an outreach campaign. OSPI must identify and disseminate successful practices; develop requirements for grant recipients to collect and report data; and contract with a third party to evaluate the partnership. By December 1, 2008, OSPI must report to the Legislature.

In awarding grants, OSPI must prioritize schools or school districts with dropout rates above the state average and award grants in different areas of the state. An eligible recipient must be a school district, a tribal school, an area workforce development council, an educational service district (ESD), an accredited institution of higher education, a vocational skills center, a federally recognized tribe, a community organization, or a nonprofit corporation. The recipients will act as a lead agency for the local partnership, and a school district must be identified within the partnership. To be eligible, grant applicants must build or demonstrate a commitment to building a broad-based partnership that includes a broad array of stakeholders; demonstrate how the grant will enhance dropout services already in place; provide a 25 percent match; track and report data required by the grant; and describe how the dropout prevention, intervention, and retrieval system will be sustained after initial funding.

ESDs, working with area workforce development councils, must help identify effective intervention strategies and provide training on subjects such as cultural competency, diverse learning styles, collecting and using performance data, and designing functional sustainability plans.

OSPI must establish a state-level work group that consists of one representative from the Workforce Board, career and technical education, the Department of Social and Health Services, juvenile courts, the Employment Security Department, accredited institutions of higher education, ESDs, the area workforce development councils, parent and educator associations, the Department of Health, local school districts, youth organizations, federally recognized tribes and urban tribal centers, and the minority commissions. The state-level

work group must develop and track performance measures and benchmarks for each partner organization. Beginning December 1, 2007, the work group must annually report to the Legislature and Governor with recommendations for implementing emerging best practices regarding prevention, intervention, and retrieval programs; requiring additional resources; and eliminating fiscal, legal, and regulator barriers that prevent coordination of local and state programs.

EFFECT OF CHANGES MADE BY RECOMMENDED SUBSTITUTE AS PASSED COMMITTEE (Early Learning & K-12 Education): Students who are homeless and students who do not speak English as their primary language are added to the category of students who have lower graduation rates than average. Dropouts with students at risk of dropping out are included among those receiving timely interventions. "Adjudicated youth" is replaced with "youth involved in the juvenile justice system." OSPI is required to develop dropout retrieval programs for students that both fail the Washington Assessment of Student Learning and drop out of school, and requires school districts to make an effort to identify the eligible students. The type of demographic data is specified and "truancy rates," "extended graduation rates," and "credentials obtained" is added to the data that grant recipients must collect and report. OSPI is required to prioritize schools or districts with both dropout rates and truancy rates above the statewide average. It is clarified that the partnerships must consider an effective model for school-community partnerships. Prosecutors and defenders are included in the local partnerships and state-level work group.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony (Early Learning & K-12 Education): PRO: Dropouts are a significant problem in our state. Each year, 5 percent of high school students drop out. Students who drop out are at a significant disadvantage in today's workforce. Keeping youth in school will make a difference in their lives and strengthen communities. Young people are being given up on if they do not get a diploma within four years. Many obstacles contribute to dropping out: mental health, homelessness, poverty, high mobility, juvenile delinquency, drug and alcohol abuse, domestic violence, and boredom. We need a systemic approach to address such a pervasive problem. Programs that are successful have strong community support, funding, one-to-one connection with an adult, and a variety of activities for students. Across the state, many successful organizations and partnerships have been working in the field of drop prevention for years and would fit perfect with this grant program. Individual local efforts on drop out prevention may be effective but are not economically efficient, equitable, or sustainable. A statewide infrastructure already exists with the nine ESDs. The bill does not address drop out retrieval; however, it truly speaks to prevention and intervention and is a good starting point.

OTHER: The bill targets adolescents instead of students in early grades because most current resources target the early years. Beginning in sixth grade, schools can accurately identify individual students who will drop out and can then build best practices programs around this data.

Persons Testifying (Early Learning & K-12 Education): PRO: Senator McAuliffe, prime sponsor; Martin Mueller, OSPI; Brad Garner and Sue Ambler, Snohomish County Workforce Development Council (WDC); Becky Ballbach, Everett Public Schools; Maureen Enges, Everett School District; Joe Ingoglia, Boys and Girls Clubs of Thurston County; Scott Nelson, Washington Alliance of Boys and Girls Clubs; Ryan Spiller, Washington Health Foundation; Pat Martinez, Learning Center North; Melinda Gioupngo, YouthCare; Linda Thompson-Black, Communities in Schools; Terry Munther, ESD 101; Brandi Stewart Wood, Southwest Washington WDC; Kay Potter and Kris Neal, Battleground School District; Kathleen Graham, grandparent; Wendy Buttler and Jeanne Bennett, ESD 112; Cindy Wardlow, Kelso School District; Liz Frausto, Puget Sound ESD; Valinda Jones, Franklin Pierce Schools; Tim Probst, Washington Workforce Association.

OTHER: Wes Pruitt, Workforce Board.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony (Ways & Means): PRO: This bill is designed with a dual purpose in mind. It focuses on improving academic performance and it is also about preventing and avoiding dropouts. The research demonstrates the significant impact that dropouts have on society. By avoiding a student leaving school before they graduate, the state would be contributing to a sizable difference in the income of the individual. The various elements of the bill are designed to provide a holistic approach to addressing this problem. The regional component is crucial to supporting this effort.

OTHER: Concern exists around sustaining current dropout retrieval programs delivered by the community colleges that are already serving students. The Legislature needs to make sure those existing programs continue before creating a new program.

Persons Testifying (Ways & Means): PRO: Senator McAuliffe, prime sponsor; Isabel Munoz-Colon, OSPI; Mick Moore, Puget Sound ESD.

OTHER: Pat Martinez, Learning Center North.