

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6581

As of February 7, 2008

Title: An act relating to qualifications for public school principals and vice principals.

Brief Description: Eliminating certification requirements for public school principals and vice principals.

Sponsors: Senators Kastama and Jacobsen.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Early Learning & K-12 Education: 2/06/08.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION

Staff: Roman Dixon (786-7438)

Background: Under current law, school districts are required to hire principals and vice-principals who hold valid administrative certificates. In addition, these administrators are required to hold or have previously held either valid teacher or educational staff associate certificates. Persons with educational staff associate certificates must also have demonstrated successful school-based instructional experience. Persons whose certificates were revoked, suspended, or surrendered may not be employed as public school principals or vice-principals.

Summary of Bill: The requirement that public school principals and vice principals hold either valid teacher certificates or valid educational staff associate certificates is eliminated. A school district may require additional training for individuals who are employed as public school principals or vice principals, who have not held a valid teacher certificate. The additional training required by the district must permit the individual to obtain the additional training within the first three years of employment as a principal or vice principal for the district. In addition, persons who held teaching positions whose certificates were revoked, suspended, or surrendered may not be employed as public school principals or vice principals.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 30, 2008.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: This bill is being brought because money won't solve the K-12 problem. Leadership is the problem. We need to move past the old idea

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that the principal is the best teacher in the school. It simply no longer applies. One problem with the old way of thinking is that the best teachers are pulled out of the classroom to become principals. In this scenario, students lose. Under this bill, local school districts are allowed to look to the private sector to find professionals to provide our schools with the much needed leadership they deserve.

CON: Principals are the instructional leaders of the school. While education is a science, it is foremost an art. Being an educator requires skills that cannot be gained from taking a class. Students aren't widgets that can be mass produced with little independent know how. If principals are going to lead schools, guide teachers, and maintain creditability with staff, principals need to know what they're talking about and have experience. Before enacting such a measure, the Legislature should try to integrate the idea into the Leadership Academy, which passed last year. Or possibly ask the Professional Educator Standards Board (PESB) to go back and update the information from its 2001 study around this issue. PESB would be happy to do it, free of charge.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Kastama, prime sponsor.

CON: Jerry Bender, Association of Washington School Principals; Lucinda Young, Washington Educators Association; Nasue Nishida, Professional Educator Standards Board; Bob Cooper, Washington Association of Colleges for Teacher Education; Barbara Mertens, Washington Association of School Administrators.