Washington State
House of Representatives
Office of Program Research

BILL
ANALYSIS

Education Committee

E2SSB 5941

Brief Description: Regarding a comprehensive education data improvement system.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Ways & Means (originally sponsored by Senators Oemig, Kastama, Jarrett, McAuliffe, Marr, Hobbs and Tom).

Brief Summary of Engrossed Second Substitute Bill

- Declares Legislative intent to establish a comprehensive K-12 education data improvement system for financial, student, and educator data.

- Specifies the intended data elements and data capacity of the data improvement system.

- Establishes a K-12 Data Governance Group within the Education Research and Data Center of the Office of Financial Management and assigns responsibilities.

- Requires, to the extent data is available, the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) to make detailed reports on the magnitude of spending per student and by student, available on the internet.

- Requires the OSPI to submit a preliminary report by November 15, 2009, and a final report by September 1, 2010, for a phase-in plan and cost estimates for implementing the data improvement system.

Hearing Date: 3/24/09

Staff: Barbara McLain (786-7383)

Background:

Education Data.
Over the last ten years, the demand has grown for more and better data about student achievement. This includes data about student characteristics that might affect achievement, data collected at an individual student level to enable monitoring of progress over time, and data about various external variables, such as teachers and resources spend on instructional programs,

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that have an impact on achievement. In order for this information to be used for program evaluation or public policy decisions, there must be a common list of the required data elements, computer systems at the district and state level capable of storing and compiling the data so that all of the variables can be analyzed, and people at the school and district level assigned to enter the data and assure its accuracy.

The current core student records system (CSRS) contains student-level data submitted monthly by school districts, but the system is limited in the number of data elements collected and its ability to link data across separate systems, including those containing data about teachers or finances. A new comprehensive education data and research system (CEDARS) has been under development since 2006 which will significantly increase the state's education data capacity and link with a new certification system (e-Cert) containing data about teachers. The CEDARS system and the e-Cert system are expected to be implemented in the 2009-10 school year.

Less work has been done regarding K-12 financial data. As funds are appropriated, the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) continues to transition the state apportionment system to a modern software platform. Various education finance reform proposals envision using school-level financial data for both allocation and monitoring. School-level financial data does not currently exist consistently across the state and at present neither school districts nor the OSPI have the capacity to collect it.

In 2007, the Legislature directed a K-12 Data Feasibility Study to examine opportunities for additional data collection and capacity. One of the recommendations of the report issued in January of 2009 was creation of a clear K-12 data governance structure to better manage the demand for additional school district data.

Education Research and Data Center.
In 2007, an Education Research and Data Center (Data Center) was created within the Office of Financial Management. The purpose of the Data Center is to serve as a hub for data originating from the various education sectors: early learning, K-12, two and four-year higher education, and workforce training and employment. The Data Center does not collect data, but develops data sharing agreements with the various education and workforce agencies and conducts longitudinal analysis using the merged data, with a focus on what happens to students as they transition between one sector and another.

The Legislative Evaluation and Accountability Program Committee (LEAP) also participates in the Data Center. The LEAP is the Legislature's independent source of information and technology for developing budgets, communicating budget decisions, and tracking revenue, expenditure, and staffing activity of state agencies.

Summary of Bill:

Education Data.
It is the Legislature's intent to establish a comprehensive K-12 data improvement system for financial, student, and educator data. The objective of the system is outlined. It is the further intent to provide independent review and evaluation of the system by assigning review and monitoring responsibilities to the Data Center and the LEAP. It is the intent that the data system

specifically service reporting requirements for teachers, parents, superintendents, school boards, the Legislature, the OSPI, and the public.

It is the Legislature's intent that the K-12 data improvement system include the following:
- comprehensive educator information, with numerous variables specified;
- capacity to link educator assignment information with educator certification information;
- common coding of courses and major areas of study;
- robust student information, with various variables specified and a subset of elements to serve as a dropout early warning system;
- capacity to link educator information with student information;
- a common, standardized structure for reporting the costs of programs at the school and district level;
- separate accounting of state, federal, and local revenues and costs;
- information linking state funding formulas to school district budgeting and accounting, including procedures to support a prototypical school budgeting model;
- information that is centrally accessible and updated regularly; and
- an anonymous, non-identifiable replicated copy of data that is updated at least quarterly and made available to the public.

It is the Legislature's goal that all school districts have the capability to collect state-identified common data and export it in a standard format to support the K-12 data improvement system and that the system be developed to provide the capability to make reports as required under the bill. It is the Legislature's intent that school districts collect and report new data elements to satisfy the requirements of the system only to the extent funds are available for this purpose.

To the extent data is available, the OSPI must make the following reports available on the internet, which must be run on-demand against current data or run on the most recent data:
- the percentage of data compliance and data accuracy by school district;
- the magnitude of spending per student, by student, estimated according to a specified algorithm that creates an estimated prorated fraction for each student of each teacher or human resource element serving that student, with each human resource element listed or accessible through online tunneling, plus an estimated prorated fraction for each student of classroom costs, transportation costs, and all other resources in the district that support any component that makes up more than five percent;
- the cost of K-12 basic education and special education, estimated using the same algorithm;
- improvement on statewide assessments, computed as specified;
- number of students per classroom teacher on a per-teacher basis, classroom teachers per student on a per-student basis, and percentage of classroom teacher per student on a per student basis; and
- the cost of K-12 education per student by district sorted by federal, state, and local dollars.

All reports must contain data to the extent it is available and must include documentation of which data are not available or are estimated. Reports must not be suppressed because of poor data accuracy or completeness.

K-12 Data Governance.

A K-12 Data Governance Group is established within the Data Center to assist in the design and implementation of a K-12 education data improvement system for financial, student, and educator data.

The K-12 Data Governance Group has the following responsibilities:
- identify critical research and policy questions to be addressed by the K-12 data improvement system;
- identify reports and other information that should be on the internet in addition to those required from the OSPI under the bill;
- create a comprehensive needs requirement document detailing the specific information and technical capacity needed by districts to meet the Legislature's expectations for a K-12 data improvement system;
- conduct a gap analysis of current and planned information compared to the needs requirement document, including the extent that existing data can be transformed into canonical form and where existing software can be used;
- focus on financial and cost data necessary to support new K-12 financial models and on assuring the capacity to link data across systems; and
- define the operating rules and governance structure for K-12 data collection, including delineating coordination, delegation, escalation authority, business rules, performance goals, standards for privacy, a standard data dictionary, data collection priorities, and ensuring data accuracy and compliance.

The K-12 Data Governance Group must also establish minimum standards for K-12 data systems. Data elements may be specified as "to the extent feasible" or "to the extent available" to collect more data from districts that have the capacity to submit it. Districts that can submit data identified as "desirable" must do so. Nothing requires that a data dictionary or reporting should be hobbled to the lowest common set. Funding from the Legislature must establish which subset data are absolutely required.

The work of the K-12 Data Governance Group must be periodically reviewed and monitored by the Data Center and the LEAP.

The OSPI must submit a preliminary report to the Legislature by November 15, 2009, including the analysis by the K-12 Data Governance Group and preliminary options for addressing identified gaps. A final report, including proposed phase-in and preliminary cost estimates for implementing a comprehensive data improvement system must be submitted by September 1, 2010.

Education Research and Data Center.
The Data Center, in consultation with the LEAP and the other participating education agencies, must identify the critical research and policy questions intended to be addressed by the Data Center and the data needed to address them. The Data Center must also monitor and evaluate the various data collection systems to ensure they are flexible, able to adapt to evolving needs for information, and include data that are needed to conduct the analyses of the critical research and policy questions identified.

Annually, the Data Center provides a list of data elements and quality improvements to the K-12 Data Governance Group that have been identified as necessary to answer critical research and

policy questions. Within three months of receiving the list, the K-12 Data Governance Group returns a feasibility analysis, and the Data Center submits a recommendation to the Legislature for any statutory changes or financial resources needed to collect or improve the data.

The Data Center and the OSPI must take all actions necessary to secure federal funds to implement the bill.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available. New fiscal note requested on March 13, 2009.

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