

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6048

As of February 20, 2009

Title: An act relating to education.

Brief Description: Concerning the state's education system.

Sponsors: Senators Oemig, Jarrett, McAuliffe, Hobbs, McDermott, Franklin, Kohl-Welles and Haugen.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Early Learning & K-12 Education: 2/23/09.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION

Staff: Susan Mielke (786-7422)

Background: Under article IX, section 1 of the Washington State Constitution, "It is the paramount duty of the state to make ample provision for the education of all children residing within its borders . . ." The courts have interpreted this to mean that the state must define a program of basic education and amply fund it from a regular and dependable source. The courts have found that local levies are not regular or dependable and may only be used for enrichment programs beyond basic education. The courts have concluded that once the Legislature has established full funding for the program of basic education it may not reduce such funding, even in periods of fiscal crisis. However, the Legislature is required to review, evaluate, and revise the program of education and its funding in order to meet the current needs of the children in the state. The state must also provide a general and uniform system of public schools under article IX, section 2 of the Constitution.

In 2007 the Legislature created a task force to review the definition of basic education, review all current basic education funding formulas, develop options for a new funding structure and all the necessary formulas, propose a new definition of basic education, and make recommendations to the Legislature by December 1, 2008. The task force issued its final report on January 14, 2009, which included five minority reports.

Summary of Bill: The Legislature finds ample evidence of a need for continuing to refine the program of basic education that is funded by the state and delivered by the school districts. The Legislature intends to continue to fulfill the state's constitutional obligation to define and fund a program of basic education and to establish a general and uniform system

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of public schools. However, the Legislature finds that in some instances this requires tailoring basic education to reflect certain needs and circumstances of each school district, which provides a rational basis for differences in order to promote equity and uniformity of educational opportunity. The Legislature further finds that a successful system of public education must provide the opportunity for local communities to support local schools and enrich education programs even though local levy authority remains outside the state's obligation for basic education.

The Legislature intends to build upon previous efforts of the Legislature and the work of others; however, an implementation strategy must be determined for the instructional program; financial experts must develop the details of the funding formulas that are based on prototypical schools; changes to the systems of educator certification, evaluation, mentoring, and compensation must be established; a data and reporting system must be designed; the capacity of districts to help schools improve student achievement must be increased; and a system in which the state and school districts share accountability for achieving the state educational standards requires new mechanisms that will clearly define the relationship of expectations for the state, school districts, and schools. The Legislature intends to monitor the development progress and begin a schedule for implementation in the 2011-12 school year. It is the Legislature's intent that when the system has the capacity to fully implement these enhancements they will be included in a definition of basic education.

The Legislature further intends to address additional issues that are of importance to the Legislature but are not part of a basic education.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

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