

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1369

As Reported by House Committee On: Education

Title: An act relating to using school days for meeting with parents and families as part of the Washington inventory of developing skills.

Brief Description: Using school days for meeting with parents and families as part of the Washington inventory of developing skills.

Sponsors: Representatives Lytton, Walsh, Kagi, Maxwell and Tharinger; by request of Superintendent of Public Instruction.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Education: 2/7/13, 2/14/13, 2/15/13 [DP].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Authorizes schools that are administering the Washington Inventory of Developing Skills to use up to five days at the beginning of the 180-day school year required under Basic Education, to meet with parents and families as required in the parent involvement component of the inventory.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 21 members: Representatives Santos, Chair; Stonier, Vice Chair; Dahlquist, Ranking Minority Member; Magendanz, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Bergquist, Fagan, Haigh, Hargrove, Hawkins, Hayes, Hunt, Klippert, Lytton, Maxwell, McCoy, Orwall, Parker, Pike, Pollet, Seaquist and Warnick.

Staff: Barbara McLain (786-7383).

Background:

Washington Inventory of Developing Skills (WaKIDS).

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

State funding to support all-day kindergarten is being phased in, beginning in schools with the highest percentage of low-income students. As of the 2012-13 school year, 222 schools received funding to implement all-day kindergarten, serving approximately 18,000 students.

Legislation enacted in 2011 requires that, if funding is provided, all schools offering state-funded all-day kindergarten must administer a kindergarten readiness assessment, the WaKIDS, at the beginning of the school year. One of the components of the WaKIDS is Family Connections, which involves a meeting between the teacher and the child's family to share information about the child's interests, needs, and family culture, as well as the classroom and school the child is attending. The meeting typically takes between 30 minutes and one hour.

Basic Education Waivers.

One of the statutory Basic Education requirements is that school districts must offer 180 school days of instruction per year. The State Board of Education (SBE) is charged with assuring compliance with Basic Education provisions, but is also authorized to grant waivers under certain circumstances.

A school day is defined as "each day of the school year on which pupils enrolled in the common schools of a school district are engaged in academic and career and technical instruction planned by and under the direction of the school." The SBE's interpretation is that a full day of parent-teacher conferences is not considered a "school day" because the statute implies that all pupils must be engaged in instruction for at least some portion of the day.

A number of school districts using the WaKIDS have wanted to schedule the Family Connections component over the course of a full day. Sixteen school districts applied for and received waivers from the SBE in 2012 for between one and five school days for this purpose.

There is a provision in current law that allows school districts to schedule the last five school days of the year for non-instructional purposes for students who are graduating from high school.

Summary of Bill:

Within the 180-day school year required under Basic Education, schools that are administering the WaKIDS are authorized to use up to five school days at the beginning of the year to meet with parents and families as required in the parent involvement component of the inventory.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) This bill is about providing a great start to school for children, parents, and teachers. The move to all-day kindergarten is a dramatic increase in available instructional hours. Using up to five days at the beginning of the year to meet with families is not a dilution of instruction. Building a relationship with families at the beginning of the year is a kindergarten teacher's primary goal. Many parents do not trust the system or the teacher. Until families meet the teacher face to face, and the teacher has the opportunity to welcome the parents, they do not open up.

When teachers meet separately with the parents, the parent is made to feel as though they are the experts. It is important to confirm that they are the child's first teacher. The teacher listens and learns. This allows the teacher to create a partnership with the parents. The first day of school was filled with confidence instead of tears. Parents know what to expect. Teachers report it was the best start of the school year they had ever experienced. This would provide the opportunity for schools to back up their commitment to families and children without additional funds or burden. The extra time allows the school support team to prepare for the diverse needs of children.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Lytton, prime sponsor; Randy Dorn, Superintendent of Public Instruction; Jene Jones, Northeast Tacoma Elementary School; Kelly Marks; Kaye Marshall, Mount Baker School District; Jenna Serr and Gretchen Saunders, James Sales Elementary; and Israel Vela, Kent School District.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: Sarah Francis, Moms Rising; Lauren Hipp, Thrive by Five Washington; Amy Blondin, Department of Early Learning; Jen Estroff, Children's Alliance; Daniel Carillo, United Way of King County; and Frank Ordway, League of Education Voters.