

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2865

As Reported by House Committee On:
Human Services & Early Learning

Title: An act relating to informing families of kindergarten readiness standards.

Brief Description: Informing families of kindergarten readiness standards.

Sponsors: Representatives Chambers, Shewmake, Dent, McCaslin, Callan, Gildon, Senn and Eslick.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Human Services & Early Learning: 2/4/20, 2/7/20 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Directs the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction to develop a guide for parents and caregivers that outlines ways to help children be prepared for kindergarten.
- Requires specified state agencies to provide the guide to certain households with 3- and 4-year-old children and to licensed child care providers.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES & EARLY LEARNING

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 13 members: Representatives Senn, Chair; Callan, Vice Chair; Frame, Vice Chair; Dent, Ranking Minority Member; Eslick, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; McCaslin, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Corry, Goodman, Griffey, Kilduff, Klippert, Lovick and Ortiz-Self.

Staff: Dawn Eychaner (786-7135).

Background:

Washington Kindergarten Inventory of Developing Skills.

The Washington Kindergarten Inventory of Developing Skills (WaKids) is a kindergarten readiness assessment administered to students enrolled in state-funded full-day kindergarten.

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.

The WaKids assessment is administered by teachers near the beginning of the school year and is used to connect teachers with families and to determine a child's skills in six domains:

- social-emotional;
- physical;
- cognitive;
- language;
- literacy; and
- mathematics.

Parents may excuse their children from participating in the assessment. In the 2017-18 school year, just over 46 percent of entering kindergarteners who participated in the assessment demonstrated kindergarten readiness in all six domains. The Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) notifies school districts of the requirement to implement WaKids and provides schools with guidance related to administering WaKids.

Child Profile.

The Department of Health (DOH) administers the Child Profile Health Promotion System (Child Profile), a program that mails age-specific information to parents of children under the age of 6. The materials include age-specific reminders for parents about well-child checkups and immunizations.

Apple Health for Kids.

The Health Care Authority (HCA) administers Apple Health, the state-federal Medicaid program that provides health care for eligible low-income individuals. Apple Health for Kids is available at low or no cost for children whose families meet income eligibility criteria.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

By September 1, 2020, the OSPI must develop a guide for parents and caregivers that outlines ways to help children to become socially, emotionally, and cognitively prepared for kindergarten. The OSPI must post the guide online in the top 10 languages spoken by families enrolled in the kindergarten through twelfth grade (K-12) school system. The OSPI must review the guide and update it as needed by July 15 of each year.

The OSPI must provide an electronic brochure of the guide at no cost to state agencies that provide or contract for direct services for parents, caregivers of dependent children, and guardians of 3- and 4-year-olds, including the Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF), the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS), the DOH, and the HCA.

The DCYF must annually provide the guide to all known parents, caregivers of dependent children in out-of-home care, and guardians of 3- and 4-year-olds served by the DCYF and DCYF contractors. In addition, the DCYF must provide the guide to family day care providers and child care centers who are licensed to care for 3- and 4-year-old children.

The DSHS must annually provide the guide to all known parents, caregivers of dependent children in out-of-home care, and guardians of 3- and 4-year-olds eligible for and receiving public assistance.

The DOH must annually include the guide in Child Profile health promotion materials sent to households with 3- and 4-year-old children.

The HCA must annually provide the guide to all known parents, caregivers of dependent children in out-of-home care, and guardians of 3- and 4-year-olds enrolled in the Apple Health for Kids program.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

The substitute bill:

- replaces references to the WaKids assessment with language describing ways in which parents and caregivers can help children be ready for kindergarten;
- replaces references to "kindergarten readiness guidelines" and "guidelines" with "parent guide;"
- requires the OSPI to make the parent guide available online by September 1, 2020, in the top 10 languages spoken by families enrolled in the K-12 school system;
- requires the DCYF to provide the parent guide to licensed family day care providers and child care centers serving 3- and 4-year-old children; and
- clarifies that agencies are to provide the guide to all known parents, rather than all parents, of 3- and 4-year-olds who are served by the DCYF, receiving public assistance through the DSHS, or enrolled in Apple Health.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Preliminary fiscal note available.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) Families need kindergarten readiness standards in their hands so they can keep the guidelines in the back of their minds in the teachable moments they have with kids. Families should not be forced to study up on these standards and hope they meet them the day before kindergarten. Washington ranks 37th for preschool funding, and many 3- and 4-year-olds do not have access to preschool. Only 46 percent of children are ready for kindergarten in all six WaKids domains. The WaKids inventory is about the whole child, and notifying parents of what is being assessed in other areas of growth and development makes sense. Since WaKids is an observational assessment by a teacher; it is subjective. Parents should be informed how their kids will be assessed and what schools do with that information. Parents, guardians, and caregivers are critical to the development of young learners and they need information in order to be prepared for kindergarten. Not all families

have access to the materials, and the OSPI is committed to sharing resources with agency partners. The assessment is observational, and school districts require professional development time to ensure teachers are prepared to meet students where they are at when they enter kindergarten. Districts provide families with packets about WaKids, but it occurs at the time of kindergarten registration, which may lead to the sense of needing to "cram" for the test.

(Opposed) None.

(Other) The achievement gap between children with disabilities and without disabilities is not getting smaller. The bill could be strengthened by adding entities to the list of agencies involved in the process, including counties and the Developmental Disabilities Administration. Too many preschool kids with disabilities are only offered the option of a segregated setting, and science shows that inclusive environments are beneficial to all kids.

Persons Testifying: (In support) Representative Chambers, prime sponsor; Kari Pendray, Brigid Collins Family Support Center; Jenny Plaja, Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction; and Sharon Hanek.

(Other) Adrienne Stuart, Developmental Disabilities Council.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: