

FINAL BILL REPORT

ESHB 1113

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Synopsis as Enacted

Brief Description: Concerning school attendance.

Sponsors: House Committee on Education (originally sponsored by Representatives Ortiz-Self, Kloba and Pollet; by request of Superintendent of Public Instruction).

House Committee on Education
Senate Committee on Early Learning & K-12 Education

Background:

Compulsory School Attendance. Children and youth who are at least eight years old and under 18 years old must attend public school unless they fall within certain exceptions, such as attending private school or receiving home-based instruction. If a parent enrolls a six-year-old or seven-year-old child in public school, the child must attend school, and the parent is responsible for ensuring the child attends.

Truancy Petitions. When a student who is at least eight years old and under 18 years old has unexcused absences from school, public schools and school districts must work with the student and student's parent to eliminate or reduce the unexcused absences. If the student continues to have unexcused absences, the school district must eventually file a truancy petition and supporting affidavit with the juvenile court alleging a violation of the compulsory attendance law.

For a student who is a least eight years old and under 17 years old, the school district must file a truancy petition against the parent, the student, or both the parent and student not later than the seventh unexcused absence in a month or not later than the tenth unexcused absence in a school year.

After a student who is six years old or seven years old has seven unexcused absences in a month or 10 unexcused absences in a school year, the school district must file a truancy petition against the parent of the student.

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

Community Truancy Boards. When a truancy petition is filed, it must be initially stayed by the juvenile court and the student and the student's parent must be referred to a Community Truancy Board (CTB) or other coordinated means of intervention. A CTB is composed of members of the local school district community who receive training on specified topics. The CTBs must, among other things: identify barriers to student attendance, recommend methods for improving attendance, and suggest enrollment in a different education program. If the CTB fails to reach an agreement, or if the parent or student does not comply with the agreement within the timeline set by the CTB, the CTB returns the case to the juvenile court.

Educational Opportunity Gap Oversight and Accountability Committee. In 2009 the Educational Opportunity Gap Oversight and Accountability Committee (EOGOAC) was created to synthesize the findings and recommendations from achievement gap studies and recommend policies and strategies in at least seven areas to close the gap. Legislation enacted in 2016 directed the EOGOAC to develop recommendations related to CTBs, including cultural competence training and best practices for parent and community involvement.

Restorative Justice. In 2012 the Legislature added a definition of restorative justice to the Juvenile Justice Act. "Restorative justice" is defined in statute as practices, policies, and programs informed by and sensitive to the needs of crime victims that are designed to encourage offenders to accept responsibility for repairing the harm caused by their offense by providing safe and supportive opportunities for voluntary participation and communication between the victim, the offender, their families, and relevant community members.

Summary:

Truancy Petitions. Deadlines for filing truancy petitions are modified. For 6-year-old and 7-year-old children enrolled in public school and for students who are at least 8 years old and under 17 years old, the school district must file a truancy petition after the student's seventh unexcused absence within any month during the current school year and not later than the fifteenth unexcused absence during the school year.

Corresponding changes from the fifth and tenth unexcused absence to the seventh and fifteenth unexcused absence are made in relation to the deadline for a parent filed truancy petition and with regard to collection of data on the number of enrolled students that meet the unexcused absence thresholds.

Guidance to Reduce Student Absences. The OSPI must develop and publish best practice guidance to eliminate or reduce student absences and to otherwise implement compulsory school attendance laws. The guidance must focus on student and family engagement, be based in restorative justice practices, and emphasize integration of student and family

support systems. The guidance must be developed in consultation with the EOGOAC and updated periodically.

Community Engagement Board. Beginning August 1, 2021, the term "community truancy board" is changed to "community engagement board."

Rules. The OSPI is authorized to adopt rules necessary to carry out the purposes of the compulsory attendance laws.

Votes on Final Passage:

House	77	20
Senate	36	13

Effective: April 26, 2021
August 1, 2021 (Sections 7-15)