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**ENGROSSED SUBSTITUTE SENATE BILL 5850**

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**State of Washington 68th Legislature 2024 Regular Session**

**By** Senate Ways & Means (originally sponsored by Senators Braun, Wellman, Frame, Hasegawa, Hunt, Kuderer, Mullet, Randall, Torres, Valdez, and C. Wilson)

AN ACT Relating to supporting students who are chronically absent and at risk for not graduating high school; amending RCW 28A.175.025, 28A.175.035, and 28A.175.105; and adding a new section to chapter 28A.310 RCW.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  A new section is added to chapter 28A.310 RCW to read as follows:

(1) Subject to the availability of amounts appropriated for this specific purpose, each educational service district must work in collaboration with the office of the superintendent of public instruction to develop and maintain the capacity to offer training and coaching for educators and other school district staff, including those designated under RCW 28A.225.026 to address excessive absenteeism and truancy, on the development of robust early warning systems to identify and locate students who are chronically absent and connect them with the necessary supports to reengage them in academic learning. The training and coaching must include collecting, analyzing, and reporting early warning data, including attendance and other relevant data.

(2) For the purposes of this section:

(a) "Necessary supports" may include engagement with families; academic, systemic, and economic supports; adequate and appropriate clothing; food and nutrition; transportation; connecting students to behavioral and physical health supports; and incentives and celebrations of students' attendance and engagement in the classroom.

(b) "Students who are chronically absent" means students who miss 10 percent or more of their school days for any reason including excused and unexcused absences and suspensions.

**Sec.**  RCW 28A.175.025 and 2007 c 408 s 2 are each amended to read as follows:

(1) Subject to the availability of funds appropriated for this specific purpose, the office of the superintendent of public instruction shall create a grant program and award grants to local partnerships of schools, families, and communities ((~~to begin the phase in of~~)) for a statewide comprehensive dropout prevention, intervention, and retrieval system including supports for students who are chronically absent. This program shall be known as the building bridges program.

((~~(1)~~)) (2) For purposes of RCW 28A.175.025 through 28A.175.075, a "building bridges program" means a local partnership of schools, families, and communities that either provides the supports under subsection (3) of this section or provides all of the following programs or activities under this subsection, or both:

(a) A system that identifies individual students at risk of dropping out from middle through high school based on local predictive data, including state assessment data starting in the fourth grade, and provides timely interventions for such students and for dropouts((~~, including a plan for educational success as already required by the student learning plan as defined under RCW 28A.655.061~~)). Students identified shall include foster care youth, youth involved in the juvenile justice system, and students receiving special education services under chapter 28A.155 RCW;

(b) Coaches or mentors for students as necessary;

(c) Staff responsible for coordination of community partners that provide a seamless continuum of academic and nonacademic support in schools and communities;

(d) Retrieval or reentry activities; and

(e) Alternative educational programming, including, but not limited to, career and technical education exploratory and preparatory programs and online learning opportunities.

((~~(2) One of the grants awarded under this section shall be for a two-year demonstration project focusing on providing fifth through twelfth grade students with a program that utilizes technology and is integrated with state standards, basic academics, cross-cultural exposures, and age-appropriate preemployment training. The project shall:~~

~~(a) Establish programs in two western Washington and one eastern Washington urban areas;~~

~~(b) Identify at-risk students in each of the distinct communities and populations and implement strategies to close the achievement gap;~~

~~(c) Collect and report data on participant characteristics and outcomes of the project, including the characteristics and outcomes specified under RCW 28A.175.035(1)(e); and~~

~~(d) Submit a report to the legislature by December 1, 2009~~))

(3) When community-based organizations, tribes, and community and technical colleges are awarded grants to support students who are chronically absent under this section, grant funds may also be used for the following strategies and supports:

(a) Proactive engagement with all families about the impact of attendance on student outcomes;

(b) Clear, supportive, and solution-oriented communication with families and caregivers of students who are chronically absent;

(c) Visits to families of students who are chronically absent;

(d) Academic, systemic, and economic supports for the families of students who are chronically absent, including removing barriers to students attending school as well as tutoring and mentoring students who are reengaging in the classroom;

(e) Connecting students to behavioral and physical health supports; and

(f) Incentives and celebrations of students' improved attendance and engagement in the classroom.

(4) For the purposes of this section, "students who are chronically absent" has the same meaning as in section 1 of this act.

**Sec.**  RCW 28A.175.035 and 2011 c 288 s 9 are each amended to read as follows:

(1) The office of the superintendent of public instruction shall:

(a) Identify criteria for grants and evaluate proposals for funding in consultation with the workforce training and education coordinating board;

(b) Develop and monitor requirements for grant recipients to:

(i) Identify students who ((~~both fail the Washington assessment of student learning~~)) score below basic on the statewide student assessment as defined in RCW 28A.655.230 and drop out of school;

(ii) Identify their own strengths and gaps in services provided to youth;

(iii) Set their own local goals for program outcomes;

(iv) Use research-based and emerging best practices that lead to positive outcomes in implementing the building bridges program; and

(v) Coordinate an outreach campaign to bring public and private organizations together and to provide information about the building bridges program to the local community;

(c) In setting the requirements under (b) of this subsection, encourage creativity and provide for flexibility in implementing the local building bridges program;

(d) Identify and disseminate successful practices; and

(e) Develop requirements for grant recipients to collect and report data, including, but not limited to:

(i) The number of and demographics of students served including, but not limited to, information regarding a student's race and ethnicity, a student's household income, a student's housing status, whether a student is a foster youth or youth involved in the juvenile justice system, whether a student is disabled, and the primary language spoken at a student's home;

(ii) ((~~Washington assessment of student learning~~)) Statewide student assessment scores;

(iii) Dropout rates;

(iv) On-time graduation rates;

(v) Extended graduation rates;

(vi) Credentials obtained;

(vii) Absenteeism rates;

(viii) Truancy rates; and

(ix) Credit retrieval((~~;~~

~~(f) Contract with a third party to evaluate the infrastructure and implementation of the partnership including the leveraging of outside resources that relate to the goal of the partnership. The third-party contractor shall also evaluate the performance and effectiveness of the partnerships relative to the type of entity, as identified in RCW 28A.175.045, serving as the lead agency for the partnership; and~~

~~(g) Report to the legislature by December 1, 2008~~)).

(2) The office of the superintendent of public instruction may require the recipient of grant funding under RCW 28A.175.025 to report the impacts of the recipient's efforts in alignment with the measures of the Washington school improvement framework.

(3) In performing its duties under this section, the office of the superintendent of public instruction is encouraged to consult with the ((~~work group identified~~)) graduation: a team effort partnership advisory committee established in RCW 28A.175.075.

((~~(3)~~)) (4) In selecting recipients for grant funds appropriated under RCW 28A.175.135, the office of the superintendent of public instruction shall use a streamlined and expedited application and review process for those programs that have already proven to be successful in dropout prevention.

**Sec.**  RCW 28A.175.105 and 2021 c 164 s 7 are each amended to read as follows:

The definitions in this section apply throughout RCW 28A.175.100 through 28A.175.110 unless the context clearly requires otherwise:

(1) "Dropout reengagement program" means an educational program that offers at least the following instruction and services:

(a) Academic instruction, including but not limited to preparation to earn a high school equivalency certificate as provided in RCW 28B.50.536 in accordance with rules adopted under RCW 28A.305.190, academic skills instruction, and college and work readiness preparation, that generates credits that can be applied to a high school diploma from the student's school district or from a community or technical college under RCW 28B.50.535 and has the goal of enabling the student to obtain the academic and work readiness skills necessary for employment or postsecondary study. A dropout reengagement program is not required to offer instruction in only those subject areas where a student is deficient in accumulated credits. Academic instruction must be provided by teachers certified by the Washington professional educator standards board or by instructors employed by a community or technical college whose required credentials are established by the college;

(b) Case management, academic and career counseling, and assistance with accessing services and resources that support at-risk youth and reduce barriers to educational success, such as:

(i) Academic related supports, such as covering test fees, calculators, and laboratory and other school supplies;

(ii) Nonacademic supports, such as adequate and appropriate clothing; adequate and reliable access to food and nutrition; and transportation, including bus passes, gas vouchers, and subsidized parking; and

(iii) Connecting students to behavioral and physical health supports; and

(c) If the program provider is a community or technical college, the opportunity for qualified students to enroll in college courses that lead to a postsecondary degree or certificate. The college may not charge an eligible student tuition for such enrollment.

(2) "Eligible student" means a student who:

(a) Is at least sixteen but less than twenty-one years of age at the beginning of the school year;

(b) Is not accumulating sufficient credits toward a high school diploma to reasonably complete a high school diploma from a public school before the age of twenty-one or is recommended for the program by case managers from the department of social and health services or the juvenile justice system; and

(c) Is enrolled or enrolls in the school district in which the student resides, or is enrolled or enrolls in an institutional education program as defined in RCW 28A.190.005 or a nonresident school district under RCW 28A.225.220 through 28A.225.230.

(3) "Full-time equivalent eligible student" means an eligible student whose enrollment and attendance meet criteria adopted by the office of the superintendent of public instruction specifically for dropout reengagement programs. The criteria shall be:

(a) Based on the community or technical college credits generated by the student if the program provider is a community or technical college; and

(b) Based on a minimum amount of planned programming or instruction and minimum attendance by the student rather than hours of seat time if the program provider is a community-based organization.

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