

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5024

As of February 1, 2023

Title: An act relating to establishing parents' bill of rights related to their child's public education.

Brief Description: Establishing parents' bill of rights related to their child's public education.

Sponsors: Senators Dozier, Boehnke, Braun, Holy, McCune, Schoesler, Short, Warnick, Wilson, J. and Wilson, L..

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Early Learning & K-12 Education: 2/01/23.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires school districts and public schools to post certain assessment results on the home page or landing page of their websites.
- Provides parents and legal guardians with a child receiving a public education certain rights regarding access to specified information and being communicated with based on their preferences.
- Directs the Washington State School Directors' Association to update a model policy and procedure regarding accessibility through remote participation in and recordings of school board meetings, and encourages school districts to amend their policies and procedures to incorporate the elements of the model.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION

Staff: Ailey Kato (786-7434)

Background: Assessments. The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) is a survey of student achievement in core subject areas. NAEP measures what students

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across the country know and can do in ten subject areas, including math, reading, writing, and science.

Smarter Balanced assessments for English language arts and math are administered to students in grades 3 through 8 and 11 for the purposes of federal and state accountability.

Parental Access to Classrooms. Current state law requires every school district board of directors to adopt a policy assuring parents access to their child's classroom and school sponsored activities for observing class procedures, teaching material, and class conduct. Such observation may not disrupt the classroom procedure or learning activity.

Open Public Meetings Act. In 2022, the Open Public Meetings Act was amended. Public agencies are encouraged to provide increased public observation and participation in meetings through real-time telephonic, electronic, Internet, or other readily available means of remote access that does not require an additional cost to access the meeting. Public agencies are also encouraged to make an audio or video recording of, or to provide an online streaming option for, all regular meetings, and to make recordings available for a minimum of six months.

Summary of Bill: Assessment Results. School districts and public schools must post on the home page or landing page of their websites the following information:

- the reading and math results of NAEP by state and school district if available; and
- the English language arts and math results of the Smarter Balanced, or any other statewide student assessment.

Parental Rights. Parents and legal guardians with a child receiving a public education have the following rights in addition to any other rights provided by law:

- to have access to what their child is being taught in school including access to classroom and school sponsored activities, and access to curricula and instructional materials for review either online or an alternative method;
- to have information on who is teaching their child, including guest speakers;
- to have online access to the name and organization or affiliation of the individuals or other entities that have curriculum-related contracts and are receiving public funding;
- to have access to and the ability to participate in regular and special business meetings of school boards in accordance with the Open Public Meetings Act and may include the elements of a model policy and procedure; and
- to be communicated with regarding their child based on the parent and legal guardian's preferences, which may be indicated during the registration process.

The Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction and public schools must post these rights online. All the information that must be available online must be posted in a convenient place on each school district and public school website.

Model Policy and Procedure. By September 1, 2023, the Washington State School

Directors' Association must update a model policy and procedure to be aligned with the Open Public Meetings Act's provisions and require accessibility through remote participation and recordings, which must be available online for a minimum of six months.

School districts are encouraged to amend their policies and procedures to incorporate the elements of the model.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members: No.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: Parents are the primary stakeholder in their child's education. Many parents want to be more involved in school and school board meetings, and they want easier access to information. There is no place where parents can find information about their specific child's school and curriculum, and they feel frustrated. Many parents are not aware of the state educational agencies and would not think to look at those websites. Schools can be an intimidating place for some parents. Greater transparency in schools serves the public good, especially since K-12 education funding is a significant portion of the budget. Publishing the assessment results better allows parents to evaluate the effectiveness of the schools. Posting information on websites supports an informed citizenry. School staff are directed to lie to families when it comes to students' gender identity. Most educators want to build partnerships with families, but existing law is making them keep certain information confidential, which is not in the best interest of the students. It is a fundamental right for parents to control the education, care, and upbringing of their children. It is important to give parents the decision to opt in to programs instead of opt out.

CON: Teachers respect the important partnership between parents and teachers to help support the individual needs of students. However, this bill could result in a significant increase in workload including posting instructional materials and communicating with parents in their preference. Parents already have rights, and they should work to build a meaningful relationship with educators. Educators of color are self-censoring themselves because of anti-critical race theory rhetoric. Parents need to be involved in the process of curriculum development but not interrupting teachers' daily lives.

OTHER: It is important to have rights spelled out and in one place. However, there is concern about the operational aspect of this bill because it may be restating the law. Public schools are supposed to be working with parents in a relationship with mutual respect, but many families have lost trust in public schools and are leaving. This bill will help restore trust in public schools. Parents need meaningful school choice.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Perry Dozier, Prime Sponsor; Julie Barrett, Conservative Ladies of Washington; Nancy Button; Laurie Layne; Jeannie Magdua, Conservative Ladies of Washington; Dave Olwell; JoAnn Tolentino; Hannah Ordos.

CON: Tracy Castro-Gill, Washington Ethnic Studies Now; Oliver Miska; Vicki Skeels; Julie Salvi, Washington Education Association.

OTHER: Liv Finne, Washington Policy Center; Mike Hoover, Washington State School Directors' Association.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: PRO: Nancy Button.