AN ACT Relating to supporting students who are chronically absent and at risk for not graduating high school; adding a new section to chapter 28A.310 RCW; creating new sections; and providing expiration dates.

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

NEW SECTION. Sec. 1. 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 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, "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.

NEW SECTION.  Sec. 2.  (1) Subject to the availability of amounts appropriated for this specific purpose, the office of the superintendent of public instruction shall establish a grant program to support students who are chronically absent.

(2)(a) The purpose of the grant program is to provide funding to support strategies to identify and locate students who are chronically absent and connect them with the necessary supports to reengage them in academic learning.

(b) Grant funds may be used for the following strategies and supports:
   (i) Proactive engagement with all families about the impact of attendance on student outcomes;
   (ii) Clear, supportive, and solution-oriented communication with families and caregivers of students who are chronically absent;
   (iii) Visits to families of students who are chronically absent;
   (iv) 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; and
   (v) Incentives and celebrations of students' improved attendance and engagement in the classroom.

(3) Community-based organizations and tribes may apply for these grants.

(4) The office of the superintendent of public instruction may adopt rules for the grant program established under this section.

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

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

(7) This section expires December 31, 2026.

NEW SECTION.  Sec. 3.  (1) Subject to the availability of amounts appropriated for this specific purpose, the office of the superintendent of public instruction must allocate funding to educational service districts, school districts, and public schools
to help eliminate barriers to high school completion for students who are 16 to 21 years of age, are severely deficient in academic credits, unable to graduate high school with their peer group, and enrolled in a statewide dropout reengagement program as defined in RCW 28A.175.105. Given that these students have varied needs, the use of these funds are flexible and can be used for supports such as:

(a) Academic supports such as covering testing fees, calculators, and laboratory and other school supplies;

(b) Adequate and appropriate clothing, including specific items needed for particular courses, such as work boots, gloves, and other items;

(c) Adequate and reliable access to food and nutrition; and

(d) Transportation, including bus passes, gas vouchers, and subsidized parking.

(2) The office of the superintendent of public instruction must allocate funding on a per-student basis to educational service districts, school districts, and public schools based on student enrollment in a statewide dropout reengagement program as defined in RCW 28A.175.105. The allocation of funding for either small school districts or rural school districts, or both, must be differentiated and include a base amount of funding.

(3) The office of the superintendent of public instruction may adopt rules to implement this section.

(4) For the purposes of this section, "public schools" has the same meaning as in RCW 28A.150.010.

(5) This section expires December 31, 2026.