

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 3136

As Reported by House Committee On:

Education

Title: An act relating to facilitating parental involvement in education for immigrant families.

Brief Description: Providing for a study of school information available to immigrant families.

Sponsors: Representatives Simpson, D., Chase, Sullivan and McCoy.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Education: 2/2/04, 2/5/04 [DP].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Directs the Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI) to report on the feasibility of helping districts provide school information and documents in languages other than English for immigrant parents.
- Describes some of the information the SPI should consider during the preparation of the report.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 6 members: Representatives Quall, Chair; McDermott, Vice Chair; Haigh, Hunter, Rockefeller and Santos.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 5 members: Representatives Talcott, Ranking Minority Member; Tom, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Anderson, Cox and McMahan.

Staff: Susan Morrissey (786-7111).

Background:

According to a December 2003 report from the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), during the 2001-02 school year Washington's Transitional Bilingual

Instruction Program (also called the LEP program) served 72,215 students across the state. There was a modest growth from the previous year in the number of students served, but the rate of program growth was the lowest in 15 years. The LEP students are not evenly distributed across the state. Twenty-three school districts each enroll more than 1,000 LEP students, while some districts serve few if any English language learners. In 21 school districts, LEP students comprise 25 percent or more of the districts' students.

During the 2001-02 school year, students in LEP programs spoke 190 different languages. Spanish was spoken by 61 percent of all LEP students and seven other languages were each spoken by 1,000 students or more. The languages are Russian, Ukrainian, Vietnamese, Korean, Somali, Tagalog, and Cambodian. Speakers of the seven languages comprised about 24 percent of all LEP students. The number of students speaking some languages (Russian and Ukrainian) has grown considerably. The number of students speaking other languages (Vietnamese, Somali and Cambodian) continues to decline.

In 51 school districts, Spanish was the first language of at least 95 percent of the LEP students. In 25 districts, students speak 20 or more languages.

Almost half of the students in the LEP program are enrolled in kindergarten through third grade. Most of the students receive English-as-a-second-language instruction from instructional aides instead of bilingual instruction from a certificated bilingual teacher. During the 2001-02 school year, school districts received an extra \$707 for each LEP student.

Summary of Bill:

The SPI will report to the Governor and the Legislative Fiscal and Education Committees on the feasibility of having the state provide direct support to school districts for the translation of school information into the languages most commonly understood by large segments of the districts' immigrant parents. The report is due by October 31, 2005.

In preparing the report, the SPI will work with school directors, organizations concerned with the language barriers faced by immigrant parents, and other interested groups. The Superintendent will consider a number of factors, including:

- The number of languages spoken by large segments of immigrant parents throughout the state, in first class districts, and in each educational service district;
- A recommended percentage of parents that could be used to create a threshold for providing documents in an immigrant family's first language;
- A set of strategies and best practices districts could use to communicate in a family's first language;
- The type of information and documents that should be available in more than one

- language; and
- The cost to school districts of providing school information in the languages most commonly understood by immigrant parents. The funding information should include an estimate of current expenditures and of any additional expenditures needed to expand the number of languages or translated materials.
-

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Testimony For: Many districts have significant numbers of immigrant children who come from families in which English isn't spoken. Too many of these children are underachieving educationally and are among the children included in the achievement gap. School districts are struggling with effective ways to create partnerships with non-English speaking families. Creating school information and documents in the families' first languages would help create those partnerships. Although many districts are eager to provide the information in their parents' first languages, they lack the resources or support to do so. This legislation will help the state discover what it will take to provide the districts with the tools they need to make those translations when the districts' have large populations of immigrant families' that speak the same language.

Testimony Against: None.

Persons Testifying: (In support) Representative Simpson, prime sponsor; and Greg Williamson; Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.