

FINAL BILL REPORT

SSB 5953

PARTIAL VETO

C 141 L 92

SYNOPSIS AS ENACTED

Brief Description: Improving the common school system.

SPONSORS: Senate Committee on Education (originally sponsored by Senator Bailey)

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

BACKGROUND:

Beginning in August 1992, school teachers will be required to have a master's degree prior to obtaining a continuing teaching certificate. This requirement was imposed to enhance teaching as a profession and to improve the state's educational system. Teachers and others have questioned whether the master's requirement will, in fact, achieve these two objectives.

Currently, new teachers are subject to a one year probationary period. It is suggested that this is not enough time for new teachers to grow into the job or for their supervising administrators to make an adequate evaluation of their capabilities.

Throughout the state there are a number of local initiatives underway to improve the education of and educational experience for students. However, systemic educational restructuring will still take time. Toward that end, in mid-1991, the Governor appointed a Council on Education Reform and Funding. The Council will provide recommendations to the Governor and Legislature in December 1992.

In preparing the recommendations, the Council is developing student learning goals. These goals are intended to be the foundation for development of a comprehensive assessment and accountability framework that will determine what students need to know and to be able to do as they progress through the school system. To carry forward the findings and recommendations of the Council, it is suggested that a temporary commission be established to facilitate the development of a comprehensive assessment and accountability framework that will determine what students need to know and to be able to do.

Many think that current state-imposed requirements place too much emphasis on complying with requirements and not enough emphasis on what, and whether, students are learning. In

their view, the state should dramatically reduce its current requirements, but hold school districts accountable for the educational achievement of their students. It is also proposed that the general powers of school boards should, consistent with law, be greater in latitude to give districts more flexibility in designing and redesigning educational programs for students.

SUMMARY:

PART I - Enhancing the Teaching Profession

The master's degree requirement for continuing teacher certification is repealed. The statutory limitation on the length of validity of initial certificates is repealed.

The period of nonrenewal of employment contract for teachers and other nonsupervisory certificated personnel is extended from one to two years. Persons who have completed at least two years of certificated employment in another district in Washington are subject to one year of probation when transferring to another district.

The State Board of Education, in conjunction with the Governor's Council on Education Reform and Funding, is directed to study current requirements for the certification of teachers and administrators, and present to the Legislature by December 1, 1992, options for improving the current certification system.

PART II - Commission on Student Learning

A nine-member Commission on Student Learning is established. The current Governor appoints three members by July 1, 1992, the State Board of Education self-selects three members to serve on the Commission, and the next Governor appoints the remaining three members by February 1, 1993. Educators, business leaders, and parents are to be represented on the Commission.

The Commission begins its substantive work only after the 1993 Legislature takes action by July 1, 1993, to ratify the student learning goals recommended by the Governor's Council on Education Reform and Funding in its final report due December 1, 1992. If the Legislature does not so act, the Commission and the modification of basic education requirements in 1998 shall be null and void.

The Commission is required to coordinate its activities with the State Board of Education and the state Superintendent, seek advice broadly from the public, and report annually to the Legislature and the State Board of Education. The Commission terminates September 1, 1998.

The Commission must establish technical advisory committees to assist the Commission with its major responsibilities. The Commission undertakes the following responsibilities only if the Legislature adopts student learning goals by July 1, 1993:

1. Identify essential academic learning requirements for elementary and secondary students. At a minimum, these requirements shall include reading, writing, speaking, science, history, geography, mathematics, and critical thinking. In developing these essential learning requirements, the Commission shall incorporate the student learning goals identified by the Governor's Council on Education Reform and Funding.
2. Present to the State Board of Education (SBE) and the state Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI) state-wide elementary and secondary academic assessment systems to determine if students are mastering the learning requirements. The elementary assessment system is presented to the SBE and SPI by December 1, 1995, and implemented beginning the 1996-97 school year unless delayed or prevented by the Legislature. Mastery of each component of the learning requirements is required before students can progress in subsequent components.

The secondary assessment is presented to the SBE and SPI by December 1, 1996, and implemented in the 1997-98 school year, unless the Legislature acts to delay or prevent implementation. The secondary assessment shall lead to a certificate of mastery. The certificate of mastery is required for graduation.

3. By December 1, 1996, recommend to the Legislature, SBE and SPI a statewide accountability system to evaluate accurately and fairly the level of learning occurring in schools. The Commission shall also recommend to the Legislature steps that should be taken to assist districts and schools in which learning is significantly below expected levels of performance.
4. Develop strategies to assist educators in helping students master the essential learning requirements.
5. Establish a Quality Schools Center to plan, implement, and evaluate a professional development process. The center shall: have an advisory council; coordinate its activities with the SBE and SPI; employ and contract with individuals committed to quality reform; develop a six-year plan; and use best practices research regarding instruction, management, curriculum development, and assessment.
6. Develop recommendations on the time, support and resources needed by schools and districts to help students achieve the essential learning requirements, and estimate the expected cost of implementing the academic assessment systems during the 1995-97 biennium and beyond.
7. Develop recommendations for repeal or amendment of federal, state, and local laws and rules that inhibit schools.

8. Develop recommendations for the Higher Education Coordinating Board for entrance requirements that would assist schools in adopting strategies designed to help students achieve the essential learning requirements.

PART III - School Board Powers

School boards are given broad discretionary power to adopt policies (that are not in conflict with other laws) that provide for the development and implementation of programs and practices that benefit the education of citizens and promote the effective, efficient, or safe maintenance and operation of school district programs, activities, services, or practices. School boards must give prior notice before adopting policies and provide reasonable opportunity for public written or oral comment.

Any school or school district may receive a waiver from the statutory requirements pertaining to school building self-study, teacher classroom contact hours, and the basic education program hour requirements. To receive the waiver the school district must submit to the State Board of Education a plan for restructuring its educational program or the educational program of individual schools in the district. The plan must include specific standards for increased student learning the district expects to achieve, how the district plans to achieve the higher standards and eliminate learning disparities based on gender and ethnicity, and how the district will determine if the standards are being met. The plan does not have to be approved by the State Board. Waivers shall be renewed every three years upon the SBE receiving a renewal request from the school district board of directors. If a district intends to waive the program hour offerings requirement, it must provide at least a district-wide annual average of 1,000 instructional hours for grades one through 12, and 450 instructional hours in kindergarten.

The student learning objectives law is repealed.

PART IV - Student Assessment and Learning Opportunities

If a student's scores on the state 4th, 8th, or 11th grade tests indicate the student needs help in identified areas, the district must adjust the curriculum in the identified areas. Districts shall notify parents of their child's performance on the state tests.

The statutory state minimum high school graduation requirements are repealed, and the State Board of Education again is directed to establish state high school graduation requirements in rule.

For a seventh or eighth grader to receive high school graduation credit for taking a high school class, the content of the class must exceed the requirements of a seventh or eighth grade class.

PART V - Basic Education Amendments, Effective 1998

Effective September 1, 1998:

1. The goal of the Basic Education Act is to provide students with an opportunity to master the essential learning requirements as identified by the Commission on Student Learning.
2. Basic education program hours offering requirements are amended to require a total instructional offering of 450 hours for students enrolled in kindergarten, and a district-wide annual average total instructional offering of 1,000 hours for students enrolled in grades one through 12. The instructional program shall include the essential learning requirements and such other subjects and activities the school district determines.
3. The requirements for school building self-study and teacher contact hours are repealed.

The amendments and repealers cited above shall become effective September 1, 1998, unless a law is enacted stating that a school accountability and assessment system is not in place.

VOTES ON FINAL PASSAGE:

Senate	28	21	
House	96	0	(House amended)
Senate	33	14	(Senate concurred)

EFFECTIVE: June 11, 1992

Partial Veto Summary: A December 1, 1992 deadline for the Council to submit its recommended student learning goals to the Legislature is vetoed since the Executive Order creating the Council includes the same deadline. Language making both the Commission on Student Learning and the 1998 Basic Education Act amendments null and void if the Legislature does not take action by July 1, 1993, to adopt the Council's recommended student learning goals is also vetoed. (See VETO MESSAGE)