

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2170

As Reported By House Committee On:
Education

Title: An act relating to special services demonstration projects.

Brief Description: Extending the duration of special services demonstration projects.

Sponsors: Representatives Sommers, Silver, Ogden, Fuhrman, Dunshee, Dorn, Brough, B. Thomas, L. Johnson and J. Kohl; by request of Legislative Budget Committee.

Brief History:

Reported by House Committee on:
Education, January 28, 1994, DPS.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 17 members: Representatives Dorn, Chair; Cothorn, Vice Chair; Brough, Ranking Minority Member; B. Thomas, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Brumsickle; Carlson; G. Cole; Eide; Hansen; Holm; Jones; Karahalios; J. Kohl; Patterson; Pruitt; Roland; and L. Thomas.

Staff: Robert Butts (786-7111).

Background: Special education demonstration pilot projects were created in 1991 as the result of a Legislative Budget Committee study. The purposes of the projects are to: 1) develop methods to use resources efficiently and increase student learning; 2) promote noncategorical approaches to special services program design, funding and administration; 3) develop efficient and cost effective means for identifying students as specifically learning disabled to increase the proportion of resources devoted to classroom instruction; 4) avoid unnecessary labeling of students; and 5) provide for a means to grant waivers from state rules, especially those exceeding federal requirements.

The legislation was amended in 1992 to clarify that the intent of the projects is to discourage unnecessary labeling of students while still providing state funding for needed services. Provisions were added permitting districts that

have projects designed to reduce unnecessary labeling of students as handicapped to use prior handicap enrollments as the basis for funding during and two years after the project.

Between 10 and 25 projects are authorized. In 1991, three projects were approved: Seattle, Edmonds and Olympia. Seattle withdrew from the project in August of 1993. In 1992, six more projects were approved in Battle Ground, Clover Park, North Central ESD Reading Recovery Cooperative (Bridgeport, Chelan, Manson, Omak, Tonasket, and Wenatchee), Northshore, Stanwood and Vancouver.

The Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction is required to do an interim study in 1993 and a final study in 1995.

The current program expires in July 1, 1996.

Summary of Substitute Bill: Districts that have projects designed to reduce unnecessary labeling of students as handicapped can use the prior handicapped enrollment as the basis for funding. The restriction on using this only during the duration of the project and two years after the project is removed. References permitting this option to be used for projects approved in 1991 or after 1992 are deleted.

A new program option is added. This would permit districts that have more than 4 percent of their students with specific learning disabilities before participating in the project to continue to receive funding based upon 4 percent of their enrollment without labeling students.

Unnecessary and outdated funding language is removed.

The selection advisory committee is authorized to request proposals for up to 10 more projects.

The expiration date of the program is changed from January 1, 1996, to September 1, 2001.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: Technical changes were made. Outdated and unnecessary funding language was removed.

Fiscal Note: Requested January 17, 1994.

Effective Date of Substitute Bill: The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect immediately.

Testimony For: Too often, compliance drives instruction, not the needs of children. This program, however, provides school districts funding flexibility, which allows us to provide better instruction and service to our students. Complete elimination of student labeling needs to be pursued. Once labeled, the likelihood of academic failure increases.

Testimony Against: None.

Witnesses: Matt Temmel, Legislative Budget Committee; Steve Fink, Edmonds School District (supports); Rudy Crew, Superintendent, Tacoma (supports); Bill Hulten, Olympia School District (supports); John Pearson and Jane Dailey, Superintendent of Public Instruction; and Dwayne Slate, Washington State School Directors' Association (supports).