

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SSB 6593

As Reported By House Committee On:
Education

Title: An act relating to the learning and life skills program for court-involved youth.

Brief Description: Creating the learning and life skills grant program.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Education (originally sponsored by Senators Pelz, M. Rasmussen, Skratek and McAuliffe).

Brief History:

Reported by House Committee on:
Education, February 24, 1994, DP.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: 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; Pruitt; Roland; Stevens and L. Thomas.

Staff: Robert Butts (786-7111).

Background: Learning centers, which were not funded in the 1993-95 budget, provided educational programs for some students who were under the jurisdiction of the court system. The learning centers were operated jointly by local school districts and the Division of Juvenile Rehabilitation in the Department of Social and Health Services. The programs operated for a 220-day school year.

There were six learning centers located in Yakima, Walla Walla, Spokane, Everett, Seattle and Tacoma. During the 1991-93 biennium, \$1.9 million was appropriated to the Superintendent of Public Instruction for six school districts to operate the education program at the centers and \$400,000 was appropriated to the Department of Social and Health Services to provide facilities and staff support for the program.

Summary of Bill: The Learning and Life Skills grant program is created. The program is administered by the Department

of Social and Health Services (DSHS) to help court-involved youth gain the necessary life and educational skills to obtain a certificate of educational competency, obtain employment, return to a school program, or enter a postsecondary education or job training program.

A "court-involved youth" is a person under 21 who, within the past 24 months, has served a court-imposed sentence or been on probation or parole, or who is currently involved in a legal proceeding.

DSHS is to award grants to selected districts. The grant funds shall be used for facilities and case management services. During the 1994-95 school year, only districts that had programs on or before June 1, 1993, are eligible for grants.

To be eligible for grants, school districts must agree to use state education dollars and federal dollars generated by the students participating in the program.

School districts also must agree to:

- 1) serve only court-involved youth in the program;
- 2) give priority to those students who have few other educational options;
- 3) design a program to meet the specific needs of court-involved youth and the specific needs of individual students;
- 4) collaborate with courts and community organizations;
- 5) clearly define program goals;
- 6) keep attendance records; and
- 7) participate in an evaluation of the program.

DSHS may withhold grant funds if the terms of the agreement are not met, and the department is to periodically evaluate the program. The evaluation is to include a specified list of measures and outcomes.

Fiscal Note: Requested January 27, 1994.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed. However, the bill is null and void unless funded in the budget.

Testimony For: In retrospect, a mistake was made when funding for learning centers was eliminated from the 1993-95 budget. In cutting the centers, we reduced the educational program for 400 seriously at-risk youth. In addition, these students do not fit into regular high schools. This legislation will provide the resources to reinstate and strengthen the educational programs for these young people.

Testimony Against: None.

Witnesses: Senator Pelz, prime sponsor; Jack Paul, Tacoma Public Schools; Don Felder, Seattle Schools; and Wayne Johnson, Superintendent of Public Instruction.