
SUBSTITUTE SENATE BILL 5687

State of Washington

54th Legislature

1995 Regular Session

By Senate Committee on Education (originally sponsored by Senators Long, Rasmussen, Johnson, Bauer, Kohl, Finkbeiner, Fairley, C. Anderson, Hochstatter, Gaspard, Pelz, Prince and Winsley)

Read first time 03/01/95.

1 AN ACT Relating to the instruction in Braille reading and writing
2 to blind students; adding new sections to chapter 28A.155 RCW; and
3 creating a new section.

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

5 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** It is the goal of the legislature to
6 encourage persons who are blind or visually impaired to participate
7 fully in the social and economic life of the state, and to engage in
8 remunerative employment. The legislature finds that literacy is
9 essential to the achievement of this goal. Furthermore, the
10 legislature finds that literacy for persons who are blind or visually
11 impaired means the ability to read and write Braille with proficiency.
12 Therefore, it is the intent of the legislature that, in the education
13 of students who are blind or visually impaired, there shall be a
14 presumption that proficiency in reading and writing Braille is
15 necessary for satisfactory educational progress. The legislature
16 further intends that instruction in Braille reading and writing shall
17 be sufficient to enable each student who is blind or visually impaired
18 to communicate effectively and efficiently at a level commensurate with
19 such student's sighted peers of comparable grade level and ability.

1 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** Unless the context clearly requires
2 otherwise, the definitions in this section apply throughout sections 3
3 through 5 of this act.

4 (1) "Legally blind" means:

5 (a) Having a visual acuity of 20/200 or less in the better eye with
6 conventional correction or having a limited field of vision such that
7 the widest diameter of the visual field subtends an angular distance
8 not greater than twenty degrees;

9 (b) Having a physical condition with a medical expectation of
10 visual deterioration; or

11 (c) Being unable to read printed material at a competitive rate
12 with facility due to lack of visual acuity or other visual impairment.

13 (2) "Braille" means the system of reading and writing through touch
14 commonly known as standard English Braille.

15 (3) "Student" means any student who is legally blind or any student
16 eligible for special education services for the visually impaired as
17 defined in the individuals with disabilities education act, 20 U.S.C.
18 Sec. 1400 et seq.

19 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 3.** (1) Students may receive instruction in
20 Braille reading and writing as part of their individualized education
21 program.

22 (2) Each student who is blind shall be assessed to determine the
23 most appropriate learning media, including but not limited to Braille.

24 (3) No student may be denied the opportunity for instruction in
25 Braille reading and writing solely because the student has some
26 remaining vision.

27 (4) Nothing in this section requires the exclusive use of Braille
28 if other special education services are appropriate to meet the
29 student's educational needs. The provision of other appropriate
30 services does not preclude Braille use or instruction.

31 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 4.** (1) If Braille is to be provided as part of
32 a student's individualized education program, the program shall
33 specify:

34 (a) How Braille will be implemented through integration with normal
35 classroom activities;

36 (b) The date on which Braille instruction will begin;

1 (c) The level of competency in Braille reading and writing to be
2 achieved by the end of the period covered by the individualized
3 education program; and

4 (d) The duration of each session of Braille instruction.

5 (2) If Braille will not be provided to a child who is legally blind
6 or visually impaired, the reason for not incorporating it in the
7 individualized education program shall be documented.

8 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 5.** (1) A committee shall be formed to assist
9 the state board of education in determining teacher competencies in the
10 instruction of Braille to legally blind and visually impaired students.
11 The committee shall be composed of, but not limited to, a
12 representative of each of the following: The national federation of
13 the blind of Washington, the Washington council of the blind, and the
14 association for education and rehabilitation of the blind and visually
15 impaired of Washington. The board shall adopt the competencies in rule
16 by August 31, 1997. Once adopted they shall be distributed by the
17 board to every school district.

18 (2) Effective September 1, 1998, a school district shall assign
19 responsibility for teaching Braille to legally blind and visually
20 impaired students to a teacher only after the teacher has demonstrated
21 competency in Braille as specified under subsection (1) of this
22 section.

23 (3) School districts may use classified staff to provide
24 instruction in Braille if the individual has demonstrated competency in
25 Braille as specified under subsection (1) of this section.

26 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 6.** Sections 2 through 5 of this act are each
27 added to chapter 28A.155 RCW.

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