

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2378

As Reported By House Committee On:
Education

Title: An act relating to accountability and collaboration in higher education and K-12 education.

Brief Description: Charging school districts for precollege classes taken at state-supported institutions of higher education.

Sponsors: Representatives Dunn, Carlson and D. Sommers.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Education: 2/4/98, 2/6/98 [DPS].

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 6 members: Representatives Johnson, Chairman; Hickel, Vice Chairman; Smith; Sterk; Sump and Talcott.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 4 members: Representatives Cole, Ranking Minority Member; Linville; Quall and Veloria.

Staff: Susan Morrissey (786-7111).

Background: During the 1995-96 academic year, about 16 percent of students at Washington's public colleges and universities received some remedial instruction. About 96 percent of the students attended a community or technical college.

About 20 percent of the students in community colleges enrolled in at least one remedial course. Of those students, about 58 percent were over the age of 21 and had been out of high school for over three years. The system typically offers remedial courses in mathematics, and some combination of the following: English, writing, reading, grammar, and spelling.

About 11 percent of the freshmen at the public baccalaureate institutions enrolled in at least one remedial course. The baccalaureates typically offer remedial courses in

intermediate algebra and English composition. The remedial course most frequently taken is mathematics.

All of the colleges and universities allow students to enroll concurrently in remedial and college-level courses. The overwhelming majority of remedial students take one remedial course during their first college term.

During the 1995-96 academic year, the public colleges and universities spent almost \$30,000,000 on remedial education. This amounted to about 7 percent of their total expenditures for instruction that year. Almost 97 percent of the money was expended at community and technical colleges. These colleges spent \$29,015,460 that year. The six public baccalaureate institutions spent \$870,635 during the same year.

The 1995 Legislature directed the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges and each baccalaureate institution to prepare an annual report on students who, within three years of high school graduation, enrolled in a precollege class in a public college or university. The institutions and the board were required to provide the report to the Superintendent of Public Instruction, the Commission on Student Learning, and to each high school that granted diplomas to the graduates. The first report was required by September 30, 1997.

Summary of Substitute Bill: Beginning with the fall 1998 academic term, public colleges and universities will assess a charge to school districts that granted diplomas to recent high school graduates who subsequently enrolled in precollege classes in the college or university. The precollege classes are defined as high school level classes or instruction in mathematics, grammar, reading spelling, writing, and English. English as a Second Language is not considered a precollege class. Recent high school graduates are students who, within three years of high school graduation, enroll in a high school level precollege class.

The school districts must reimburse the colleges and universities at the rate established for Running Start students, plus 7 percent. The districts must use funds from special levies or other nonstate sources to pay the charges. The governing boards of the baccalaureate institutions and the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges, in consultation with the Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI), will determine billing and reporting requirements.

Beginning with the fall 1998 academic term, recent high school graduates enrolled in high school level precollege classes will not pay tuition for those classes. Colleges and universities will not include the students in official enrollment reports and will not receive any state funding for them.

Each institution of higher education will continue to report to the high school that granted a diploma to a recent high school graduate who subsequently enrolled in a precollege class at the institution. The report will no longer be required on an annual basis.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: Charges to school districts will be based on funding levels established for the Running Start program rather than on the cost to the colleges of providing the precollege classes. SPI is not required to become involved in collecting money from districts and distributing it to colleges. Charges will begin in 1998 rather than 2000. State funding cannot be used to pay the charges. Colleges cannot receive state funding for recent high school graduates enrolled in precollege classes. Current reporting requirements are modified to conform with the billing cycles that may result from the legislation.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 29, 1998.

Effective Date of Substitute Bill: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: A high school diploma should be more than a certificate of attendance. Graduates right out of high school should have the basic skills necessary to meet minimum college entrance requirements. This legislation holds schools accountable for graduating students who need to be immediately remediated in the knowledge and skills they should have received in high school. Washington's taxpayers have already paid the public schools to provide the education, so they shouldn't have to fund the same class twice. Students who have been out of high school for some time may need to brush up on academic skills, so they are not included in this legislation. It sends a strong message to high schools that a diploma should have some relations.

Testimony Against: The success of high schools cannot be measured from enrollment in college remedial classes. Enrollment levels in the Running Start program greatly exceed the number of full-time equivalent students enrolled in remedial classes. The proposed measure is not the best way to approach accountability. Better approaches would include supporting education reform efforts and enhancing partnerships between the K-12 and higher education systems. This legislation will penalize high schools that are unable to offer certain college preparation courses. The community college system's open door policy allows any student, regardless of academic preparation to enroll in college level classes. The legislation does not hold students accountable for decisions they make to neglect college preparation classes. It punishes all kids for the problems of a few. It is also illegal since it presents schools with an unfunded mandate. It does not recognize the cost of providing this education at some colleges and universities.

Testified: Representative Carlson, sponsor; Rainer Houser, Association of Washington School Principals (con); Jean Ameluxen and Duncan MacQuarrie, Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (con); Jonathan Bill, citizen (con); Dwayne Slate, Washington State School Directors' Association (con); and Martha Lindley, Central Washington University (concerns).