

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2418

As Reported By House Committee On:
Education

Title: An act relating to reading improvement.

Brief Description: Requiring coursework in comprehensive beginning reading instruction as a prerequisite to teacher certification.

Sponsors: Representatives Johnson, Talcott, Sterk, Sump, Mulliken, Lambert, Carlson, Thompson, Smith, McCune, Benson, O'Brien and Mason.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Education: 1/22/98, 2/3/98 [DP].

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 6 members: Representatives Johnson, Chairman; Hickel, Vice Chairman; Smith; Sterk; Sump and Talcott.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 5 members: Representatives Cole, Ranking Minority Member; Keiser, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Linville; Quall and Veloria.

Staff: Susan Morrissey (786-7111).

Background: The State Board of Education (SBE) has the authority to approve teacher preparation programs and define requirements for teacher certification. Persons wishing to teach in public or private schools of this state must be certified by the board. Applicants for teacher certificates must graduate from a state-approved college or university teacher preparation program, hold appropriate degrees and licenses, and complete additional course work for subject and grade level endorsements.

Teacher Certification

The SBE has adopted rules that describe some of the types of skill and knowledge a candidate for teacher certification must possess. In addition, the board has adopted rules specifying some of the endorsements required for persons teaching at different grade levels. Currently, the board has approved over 40 endorsements to the teaching

certificate, each requiring successful completion of at least 24 college quarter credits or their equivalent. Essential areas of study are identified for some but not all of the credits required to earn an endorsement. A prospective teacher has the following grade-level endorsement options:

- preschool through grade three in the subject areas of early childhood education or early childhood special education;
- kindergarten through grade eight in elementary education which includes all subject areas taught in those grades;
- kindergarten through grade 12 in one or more of the following: reading, English as a second language, bilingual education, or eight other subject areas;
- grade four through grade 12 in English/language arts, English, or approximately 27 other subject areas.

The SBE has adopted rules that specify some of the areas of study that must be taken to receive certain endorsements. For example:

- An endorsement in elementary education requires successful completion of course work in child growth and development, classroom organization and management, and instructional methods in reading, mathematics, language arts, and six other subject areas.
- A reading endorsement requires successful completion of course work in reading development, reading diagnosis and prescription, children and adolescent literature, instructional methods in reading, and instructional methods in reading in the content areas.

The SBE has embarked upon a process to reduce the total number of endorsements from 40 to about 15. Reading is included in the proposed list of 15 endorsement areas. The board is establishing a committee for each of the currently contemplated endorsements. The committees will recommend the areas of study that are essential to each endorsement. The board is also considering a rule to increase the minimum number of credits required to earn an endorsement from 24 to 45 quarter credits. The board hopes to adopt new endorsement requirements by the end of 1998.

Approved Teacher Preparation Programs

The SBE has adopted rules that describe the responsibilities of approved teacher preparation programs. One of the rules requires colleges to place their emphasis in preservice teacher preparation programs on effective teaching. The board requires approved programs to offer course work that allows the candidates to acquire a specified

list of knowledge and skills, especially knowledge and skills related to the state's Student Learning Goals and Essential Academic Learning Requirements.

In addition to SBE requirements, state law also requires preparation programs to include course work on issues of abuse. The content of the course work is prescribed. The course must discuss the identification of physical, emotional, sexual, and substance abuse, information on the impact of abuse on behavior and on the responsibilities of teachers to report abuse.

The board requires approved programs to ensure that candidates for certification have completed course work in schools and society, human growth, development and learning, and American school law. Some of the topics that must be covered in the course work are also described in the rules. The board is beginning to implement approval standards for performance-based preparation programs for teachers, administrators, and educational staff associates. The course work requirements described here will probably be removed when the board adopts its rules for performance-based programs.

Summary of Bill: After August 31, 2000, before a teaching candidate is certified to teach in an elementary school, the candidate must successfully meet two requirements. The person must complete course work in beginning reading instruction and pass a reading instruction competence exam administered by the SBE.

Required Course Work in Beginning Reading Instruction

The content of the course work in the required beginning reading instruction is described. The course work will include study of research on the acquisition of reading skills and the skills needed by proficient readers. The course work will consist of the study of organized, systemic, explicit skills. The skills include:

- phonemic awareness and decoding;
- a strong literature, language, and comprehension component with a balance of oral and written language;
- diagnostic techniques that assess a student's accuracy and fluency levels;
- early intervention techniques; and
- guided practice in a school setting.

Reading Instruction Competency Assessment

The SBE is responsible for the development, purchase, administration, scoring, and reporting of scores for the reading instruction competency assessment. The board may involve the SPI in its implementation of these responsibilities. The board must involve teachers, administrators, and representatives of institutions of higher education in the development and implementation of the assessments. Before administering any proposed

assessments, the board must submit them to the education committees of the House of Representatives and Senate for review.

By June 30, 1999, the SBE will ensure that candidates seeking initial certification to provide instruction in elementary grades will take and pass a reading instruction competency assessment. The assessment will measure the candidates ability to teach beginning reading skills effectively. The candidates must be able to demonstrate mastery of instructional methods that are based on reliable and replicable teaching strategies. The assessment will measure the candidates' abilities to provide the following:

- Explicit and systematic instruction in phonemic awareness for all kindergarten and first grade students, and application of phonemic awareness principles to beginning reading strategies;
- Explicit systematic decoding instruction and practice in using the decoding skills in decodable text materials;
- Explicit and systematic instruction in spelling and spelling patterns, and in the use of student created spelling to support beginning reading development; and
- Explicit instruction in reading comprehension skills.

Definitions

The following terms are defined:

- phonemic awareness instruction;
- explicit systematic decoding instruction;
- decodable text;
- diagnosis of a student's ability to decode;
- explicit and systematic instruction in spelling;
- vocabulary instruction; and
- instruction in reading comprehension skills.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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

Testimony For: Reading is a gateway skill. Without the ability to read, many of today's youngsters may be relegated to an economic underclass. The results of recent statewide reading assessments give cause for alarm. More than 38,000 fourth grade students did not meet the standard on the recent fourth grade reading assessment. Ninety percent of the students who are poor readers in the first grade will be poor readers in the third grade. Seventy-five percent of the students who are poor readers in fourth grade

will be poor readers in ninth grade. Students who are retained in third grade because they are reading below grade level have almost no chance of graduating from high school. Research shows that, in order to learn to read, the overwhelming majority of children need to have systematic explicit instruction in phonics. Many teachers say that they did not learn to teach reading in their teacher preparation programs. This legislation will ensure that colleges of education provide those teaching tools to future teachers, and that those teachers enter the classroom prepared to teach beginning reading skills.

Testimony Against: Although the SBE shares the concerns with reading instruction that led to the introduction of this legislation, the prescriptive approach in this proposal is unnecessary. The board has a keen desire to develop and implement a teacher assessment tool to test whether new teachers have the needed knowledge and skills to teach the children of tomorrow. Through using an assessment tool, the board believes that necessary changes will automatically be made in teacher preparation programs. There are a number of areas in the bill that need clarification. Teachers need a broad tool box of strategies to teach reading. The toolbox needs to include information on student development and different learning modes.

Testified: Representative Johnson, prime sponsor; Larry Davis, State Board of Education (concerns); and Judy Hartmann, Washington Education Association (con).