

HOUSE BILL REPORT

2SSB 5508

As Reported By House Committee On:

Education

Title: An act relating to reading accountability.

Brief Description: Enacting the third grade reading accountability act.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Ways & Means (originally sponsored by Senators Hochstatter, Oke, Morton, Swecker, Finkbeiner, Horn, Stevens and Schow).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Education: 4/1/97, 4/4/97 [DP].

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 9 members: Representatives Johnson, Chairman; Hickel, Vice Chairman; Keiser, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Linville; Quall; Smith; Sterk; Sump and Talcott.

Minority Report: Without recommendation. Signed by 2 members: Representatives Cole, Ranking Minority Member; and Veloria.

Staff: Joe Hauth (786-7111).

Background: There is general agreement that reading is a fundamental basic academic skill. Research suggests that students who do not achieve reading literacy by third grade fall behind their classmates and are less successful in school.

Current law encourages school districts to test second grade students to help identify students in need of academic skills assistance. The Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI) must annually conduct a standard, norm-referenced assessment of fourth, eighth, and 11 grade students' academic reading skills.

Summary of Bill: A third grade reading goal is established. By 2002, 90 percent or more of all third grade students will read at or above grade level by the end of their third grade.

School districts must use classroom-based assessments to annually evaluate kindergarten through second grade students.

The SPI must develop a standardized, norm-referenced, third-grade reading assessment. The assessment must be available to school districts and parents of the students tested before May 15 of each year.

Beginning in spring of 1998, school districts must use the standardized reading assessment conducted by the SPI to annually assess the reading level of its third grade students. Each school must establish a building baseline of reading ability based on the 1998 test results.

Each school is expected to make an annual incremental improvement. The annual incremental improvement is that increase in the number of third grade students, reading at or above grade level, needed to progress from the 1998 building baseline to the state reading goal by 2002.

Seven levels of accountability for achieving the reading goal are identified:

- (1) Parents: Parents are recognized as a child's first and most influential teacher. School districts must encourage and support parents in reading to their children at least 20 minutes a day from birth through third grade.
- (2) State: The SPI must report annually to the Legislature and public on statewide progress toward the reading goal, provide information to school districts regarding best practices in reading, and confer with the Commission on Student Learning to assure consistent approaches.
- (3) Professional Organizations: The SPI must coordinate with relevant professional organizations and report to the Legislature on professional support of the reading goal.
- (4) Principals: Elementary school principals are expected to play a leadership role in reaching the reading goal.
- (5) Teachers: Third grade teachers must annually report the child's reading level beginning in June 1998.
- (6) Schools: Schools must annually report to the community the number, actual percent, and adjusted percent of third grade students reading at or above third grade level, and the distribution and range of all reading scores by monthly increments on the third grade reading assessment.

- (7) School Districts: School districts must report third grade reading test results to the Superintendent of Public Instruction annually, beginning in October 1998.

Financial incentives are provided to school buildings for the purpose of improving reading ability and reaching the reading goal. Beginning in the 1999-2000 school year, school districts receive \$4,000 for each elementary school achieving its annual incremental improvement, and \$2,000 for each elementary school achieving one-half of its annual incremental improvement. School districts with schools that maintain the reading goal will continue receiving \$4,000 per elementary school annually. The SPI must adopt rules to prorate the amounts for schools with a third grade full-time equivalent enrollment of fewer than 75 students.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on March 21, 1997.

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

Testimony For: The third grade reading accountability act provides system levels of accountability, in support of education reform. A silent mass of students aren't succeeding. If they are not reading by third grade they are unlikely to succeed. Statewide, the reading scores are flat, but the Kennewick School District, on which this bill is modeled, has had improved performance. This bill is aimed at making adults accountable for children's reading success.

Testimony Against: *This bill needs several changes. This is a significant effort that requires time. Let's move the current system forward. The Superintendent of Public Instruction proposes an alternative. Have the Commission on Student Learning come back to the Legislature with recommendations for a statewide accountability system. The fourth grade reading assessment should be moved to the third grade.*

Testified: *Lynn Fielding, Kennewick School Board Member (pro); and Bob Butts, Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (con).*