

HOUSE BILL REPORT

E2SSB 6509

As Passed House - Amended:

March 6, 1998

Title: An act relating to training in reading instruction.

Brief Description: Requiring training for reading instruction.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Ways & Means (originally sponsored by Senators Hochstatter, Benton, Zarelli, Rossi, Swecker, Deccio, Johnson, Oke, McCaslin, Stevens, Morton, Roach and Schow).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Education: 2/19/98, 2/27/98 [DPA];

Appropriations: 2/28/98 [DPA(APP w/o ED)s].

Floor Activity:

Passed House - Amended: 3/6/98, 60-38.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass as amended. 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).

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Majority Report: Do pass as amended by Committee on Appropriations and without amendment by Committee on Education. Signed by 18 members: Representatives Huff, Chairman; Alexander, Vice Chairman; Clements, Vice Chairman; Wensman, Vice Chairman; Benson; Carlson; Cooke; Crouse; Dyer; Lambert; Lisk; Mastin; McMorris; Parlette; D. Schmidt; Sehlin; Sheahan and Talcott.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 13 members: Representatives H. Sommers, Ranking Minority Member; Doumit, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Gombosky,

Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Chopp; Cody; Grant; Keiser; Kenney; Kessler; Linville; Poulsen; Regala and Tokuda.

Staff: Jack Daray (786-7178).

Background:

Subcommittee on Reading Literacy

In response to widespread concern about test scores and reports of the low reading literacy rates of Washington students, the 1995 Legislature created the House Education Subcommittee on Reading Literacy. The subcommittee was directed to examine the reading literacy problem in depth and seek solutions. A report of the subcommittee, dated December 1997, summarizes its work during the ensuing three years.

The subcommittee reported that, since its initial review of reading practices in 1995, the Legislature has enacted several bills to improve reading literacy.

Legislation on Reading Instruction

- In 1996, the Legislature passed E2SHB 2909, which established a process to identify effective reading programs and directed the Center for the Improvement of Student Learning to share information about those types of programs. The legislation also provided grants to help teachers use effective reading programs and created a program to train elementary educators to use certain types of classroom-based assessments.
- In 1997, the Legislature passed ESHB 2042, which established a primary grade reading grant program to improve the use of research-proven beginning reading materials. The legislation also created a process to identify a collection of second grade reading tests and removed the requirement to develop a third grade reading assessment.
- In 1997, through the passage of ESB 6072, the Legislature changed the timelines for developing a student assessment system. In addition, it directed the Commission on Student Learning (CSL) to recommend a statewide accountability system for reading in kindergarten through fourth grade by November 1, 1997.

Fourth Grade Reading Test Results

Since the enactment of those measures, the CSL has reported the results of its first fourth grade assessment. In spring 1997, more than 270 school districts in Washington voluntarily administered the assessment. The assessment tested students in reading, writing, communication, and mathematics. Forty-eight percent of the students met or

exceeded the new reading standard. On its web page, the commission reported that "in many ways, the first-year test was a test of curriculum and school programs to see where change is needed rather than a test of students." In addition to the CSL's initial results, the House Education Subcommittee on Reading Literacy reported the findings of the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP). The NAEP reported that 44 percent of the fourth grade students in the state read below basic levels, meaning that they exhibit "little or no mastery of the knowledge and skills necessary to perform work at each grade level."

Research Results

During the summer and fall of 1997, the House Education Subcommittee on Reading Literacy reviewed research results on the basic cognitive processes underlying reading comprehension in early childhood. It also consulted a number of nationally recognized experts in reading research. The subcommittee's December 1997 report lists the key principles of effective reading instruction identified in the research:

- Begin teaching phonemic awareness directly at an early age (kindergarten);
- Teach each sound-spelling correspondence explicitly;
- Teach frequent, highly regular sound-spelling relationships systematically;
- Show children exactly how to sound out words;
- Use connected, decodable text for children to practice the sound-spelling relationships they learn; and
- Use interesting stories to develop language comprehension.

Subcommittee's Conclusions

After reviewing available research, visiting effective reading programs in a number of school districts, and consulting with parents, teachers, administrators, students, and researchers, the subcommittee reached several conclusions. According to the subcommittee's report, it found that continuing advances in research support basic reading programs that focus on:

- developing an awareness of phonemes, or letter sounds;
- understanding how sounds are connected to print;
- developing an understanding of the alphabetic principle; and
- translating these skills to applying phonics in reading and spelling.

Summary of Bill: The legislation will be known as the **Successful Readers Act**.

The Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI) will administer **two new programs** designed to improve the reading abilities of elementary school students. One program will fund professional development and related instructional materials in **beginning reading strategies**. The other program will provide grants to elementary schools that

wish to train teachers in ways to use **volunteer tutors and mentors** to help K-6 students read. Schools may apply for funding through both programs. Participating teachers in either program will receive a stipend.

Reading Instruction Funding Opportunities

Elementary schools may apply for funding to provide **teachers in kindergarten through second grade** with professional development and related instructional materials in beginning reading strategies. The funds may also be used to provide principals and volunteers in K-2 classrooms with professional development materials and training in beginning reading strategies. Schools that received funding from the Primary Grade Reading Grant program may not apply for funding through this program.

The application process for the funding is limited to verification that the intended professional development efforts will be provided by knowledgeable contractors, will include primary emphasis on beginning reading skills, and will not be used for intervention or remediation programs. The types of beginning reading-language arts skills that will receive **primary emphasis** are described and **terms are defined**.

SPI will **prioritize funding requests** using a stair-stepped priority system. For applications submitted before June 1, 1998, priority will be given first to those schools in which either fewer than 25 percent of the students met the reading standard on the fourth grade assessment or in which the average performance on the reading component of the Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills (CTBS) was in the bottom quartile for the previous three years. Second priority will go to schools in which either fewer than one-third of the students met the same standards, and third priority will go to schools in which fewer than one-half the students met those standards. After June 1, 1998, the program will be available to all schools on a first come, first served basis.

Grants for Volunteer Tutoring and Mentoring Programs

Elementary schools may apply for grants for programs that use volunteer tutors and mentors to help struggling readers in kindergarten through sixth grade. The programs must be research based and of proven effectiveness. In addition the programs must train teachers in the use of classroom volunteers and train teachers and volunteers in effective reading strategies. Finally, the programs must include established goals for a minimum number of hours that teachers and volunteers will spend with individual students during the summer, school breaks, and normal school hours. Participating schools must implement a plan to assess each student's reading ability before the student enters and after the student finishes the program. Participants must report program results to SPI. By March 1 and December 1999, SPI will report on the effectiveness of the grants to the Legislature.

Program Timelines and Other Important Details

By April 15, schools will be notified of the opportunities provided by the programs. By June 1, 1998, districts will provide a budget estimate to OSPI and OSPI will make initial awards for professional development in beginning reading strategies. Funds may be spent through the end of the 1998-99 school year. The definitions expire at the end of the 1998-99 school year or when funds are completely allocated, whichever is first. The programs expire on July 30, 2000. An emergency and a null and void clause are each included.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available. New fiscal note requested on March 1, 1998.

Effective Date: The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect immediately. However, the bill is null and void unless funded in the budget.

Testimony For: (Education) This legislation provides teachers with discretionary grants for training in reading strategies and the use of volunteer tutors and mentors. Children of professional people come to school having heard an average of about 2,100 words per hour. Children from less educationally advantaged backgrounds come to school having heard an average of 600 words per hour. The children from less advantaged backgrounds often need extra help to learn to read successfully. This bill provides \$15 million to help those children learn to read. It is based on brain research funded by the United States Institute of Health.

(Appropriations) Too many students are not reading at proficient levels according to state and national tests. A strong foundation in reading leads to success in other academic areas. While it may be that approaches to teaching reading may include emphasis on phonics, the phonics being taught is not being done well. There are still specific instances of teachers teaching reading who have not been trained in phonics.

Testimony Against: (Education) The components of the funding program for professional development are too prescriptive. Educational goals belong in statute. Educational practice belongs in the classroom. This bill describes educational practice and undermines local control. The Legislature should describe the outcomes it expects and leave with local districts the responsibility to decide how to meet the goals. The flag went up when the reading scores on the fourth grade assessment were posted. Schools are in the process of determining the best way to improve those scores. The legislation does not include a reading corps pilot program, or a reading center at SPI. It also repeals a successful second grade grant program. (Original bill.)

(Appropriations) Despite changes from the bill as introduced, the Superintendent of Public Instruction feels the emphasis on phonics is still too narrow and prescriptive. The superintendent's staff feels current re-drafting with the sponsor will result in a modified bill that will be acceptable to all parties.

Testified: (Education) Senator Hochstatter, prime sponsor; Sue Karahalios, teacher (opposed); Jane Gutting, Superintendent of Public Instruction (opposed); Rainer Houser, Association of Washington School Principals (opposed); and Steve Brown, Washington Education Association (opposed).

(Appropriations) Representative Peggy Johnson (pro); and Robert Butts, Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (con).