

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1084

As Reported By House Committee On:
Education

Title: An act relating to authorizing parents to inspect classroom materials.

Brief Description: Authorizing parents to inspect classroom materials.

Sponsors: Representatives Mulliken, Johnson, Koster, Backlund, Sump, Talcott, Crouse, Thompson, Mielke, Bush, Boldt, Benson, Sherstad, Carrell, Smith and Van Luven.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Education: 1/21/97, 2/4/97 [DPS].

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 11 members: Representatives Johnson, Chairman; Hickel, Vice Chairman; Cole, Ranking Minority Member; Keiser, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Linville; Quall; Smith; Sterk; Sump; Talcott and Veloria.

Staff: Pat Shelledy (786-7149).

Background: Parent's right to inspect materials: School districts must have policies to ensure that a parent has access to the child's classroom and school-sponsored activities to allow the parent to observe class procedure, teaching material, and class conduct. The parent must not disturb the class.

Summary of Substitute Bill: Parent's right to inspect materials: Upon a parent's request, a public school must make all educational materials that are associated with the education of the parent's child available during school hours for the parent's inspection. A parent may make the request in writing or by appearing at the school. The school must make the materials available for inspection within five working days if the materials are located within the school and within 14 working days if the materials are located within the district. A parent's right of inspection applies to teaching materials of any guest speaker.

School district employees may not encourage a student to withhold from the student's parents, classroom materials or information about classroom activities, tests, discussions, or programs.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: The provisions governing the requirement that the school obtain prior consent of the parent before a child may participate in certain classes is deleted. The remaining language is placed in a different chapter in the Revised Code of Washington that governs parents' access to materials, classrooms, and activities.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available. Requested on Substitute on February 5, 1997.

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

Testimony For: Parents have had difficulty obtaining access to school materials used to teach their children. Some employees have encouraged students not to share school materials with their parents and not to inform the parents of classroom discussions and activities. Certain subjects on human sexuality should not be taught in schools. The general rule should be that the student does not have to take certain classes unless the parents consent in advance, rather than place the onus on the parents to remove their child from the class. Children who are removed from those classes may be stigmatized.

Testimony Against: Parents have the right under existing law to review materials and attend their children's classrooms. The administrative costs associated with implementing sending notices and documenting receipt and consent to classes is real and burdensome. Perhaps a better appeal process is necessary for parents who believe that the school has improperly denied access to a parent. The number of parents that do not let their children attend these classes is very low. Regarding the classes on HIV/AIDS, such an important health issue should not be undermined by requiring a parent to affirmatively consent to their child's attendance at the class.

Testified: Representative Mulliken, prime sponsor; Marta Kirkwood, Citizens United for Responsible Education, (pro); Steve Johnson, Northwest AIDS Foundation, (con); Rita Drohman, citizen, (pro); Sandra Swanson, citizen, (pro); Pricilla Martins, Washington Evangelicals for Responsible Government, (pro); Melinda Lincicome, Washington Family Council, (pro); Virginia DeForest, American Association of University Women (concerns); Lois McMahan, citizen (pro); and Julie Whitson, citizen, (pro).