

HOUSE BILL ANALYSIS

HB 2419

Title: *An act relating to reading improvement.*

Brief Description: *Establishing reading improvement programs.*

Sponsors: *Representatives Johnson, Talcott, Sterk, Sump, Mulliken, Lambert, Thompson, Smith, McCune, Benson, Cooke, O'Brien and Backlund.*

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Meeting Date: *January 20, 1998.*

Bill Analysis Prepared by: *Suz Morrissey (786-7111).*

Background: *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.

- } 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.*

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. 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.–

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.*
- } Use interesting stories to develop language comprehension.*

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:

Reading Improvement Plan

Beginning on June 30, 1998, all schools that meet one of two conditions must develop a school-wide reading improvement plan. The primary element of the plan will be the implementation of a beginning reading-language arts program for use in

kindergarten through second grade. The elements of the program are described. To the extent possible, school districts will redirect funding from the learning assistance program, Title I, and other available resources to implement the program. Participating schools will notify parents and guardians about the reading improvement program and the reasons that the school has implemented the program. If a school is required to implement the program for more than one year, it will also report to parents and guardians the school's progress in improving student performance.

Schools in which less than one-quarter of the students tested on the fourth grade reading assessment met the state-wide standard will develop an improvement plan. Schools in which the average performance on the reading section of the second grade assessment remained in the bottom quartile for the previous three years must also develop an improvement plan. Beginning in 1999, the plan must be developed by September 30 of each year.

Beginning in the 1999-2000 school year, certain schools with required reading improvement plans will be permitted to retain funds from the learning assistance program. Schools in which 40 percent of the students met the state-wide standard on the fourth grade assessment will be allowed to retain funds that they would otherwise lose due to increased student performance.

By November 1 of each year beginning in 1998, the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) will report to the Legislature the names of each school required to develop a reading improvement plan. The elements of the report are described.

State Board of Education's Responsibilities

The State Board of Education (SBE) will develop, maintain, annually update, and provide to schools and Educational Service Districts (ESDs), a list of people and entities that can provide professional development in beginning reading instruction. Those included on the list must provide training in the following skills:

- } phonemic awareness strategies;
- } explicit systematic decoding instruction and methods to assess students' decoding skills;
- } explicit spelling and vocabulary instruction;
- } explicit instruction in reading comprehension strategies; and
- } research findings on the skills needed by beginning readers and the methods for acquiring those skills.

Before the SBE includes any person or entity on the list, the person or entity must submit an application to the board. The application will include the curriculum of the training program. The board must approve or disapprove of the application within 45 working days of receipt. The board may audit and study the effectiveness of programs or professional development provided through the list. Persons or entities

that promote strategies that focus on context or syntax as beginning reading strategies will not be included on the list.

Beginning on July 31, 1998, the SBE must also approve the curriculum for beginning reading professional development provided through ESDs.

Professional Development

The Legislature intends to provide to all certificated instructional staff who provide direct instructional services in kindergarten through second grade an opportunity to receive professional development in reading strategies that have proven reliable and replicable results. To the extent that funds are available, districts will provide eligible staff with professional development opportunities in certain beginning reading skills. The skills are described.

Schools that are required to develop a reading improvement plan must provide the prescribed professional development opportunities to eligible instructional staff. Those schools have a priority for any funds allocated for the professional development.

Beginning on July 31, 1998, ESDs are required to align all professional development opportunities in beginning reading instruction with the reading skills required of people and entities included on the SBE's list of professional development providers.

Any funds appropriated for professional development in beginning reading and funds provided through ESDs for that purpose must be expended for people and entities on the SBE's list. The funds cannot be used for staff development, intervention, or remediation programs.

Center for the Improvement of Reading Instruction

The Center for the Improvement of Reading Instruction is established in the OSPI. The center will provide to teachers and other professionals information about the body of knowledge and techniques that help children become successful readers.

By June 30, 1998, the center will develop a list of commercially published beginning reading or language arts programs that have been validated by research. By August 30, 1998, the center will develop a list of beginning reading programs that include the reading skills required of people and entities on the SBE's list of professional development providers. Programs, strategies, and professional development in beginning reading offered or promoted by the center or OSPI must emphasize use of phonemic awareness, instruction in decoding, and the use of decodable text as the primary components of beginning reading instruction. The programs may not promote the use of context or syntax as word identification strategies for beginning readers.

Beginning Reading Resource Centers

By July 31, 1998, each ESD will establish a beginning reading resource center within the district. The duties of the resource centers are described. The resource centers will help schools and school districts match local needs to reading programs, provide professional development opportunities in certain reading strategies, and facilitate discussions among teachers about the best practices in beginning reading instruction. The resource centers will assist schools required to develop a reading improvement plan with assistance in the selection and implementation of the schools' reading programs. By July 31 of each year beginning in 1999, each ESD will survey all schools in the district that have a required reading improvement plan. The survey will include information on the improvement program each school is implementing and identify any peer educators in the schools who are willing to help other schools implement similar programs. By September 1 of each year beginning in 1999, each ESD will provide a copy of the survey results to each school in the district and to the OSPI.

Reading Leadership and Accountability Institutes

Before September 30, 1998, OSPI will establish institutes to improve student achievement in beginning reading skills. The institutes will provide professional development and supporting materials to the attendees on a number of the skills needed by beginning readers and in the movement of students from beginning reading skills to independent reading of rich literature. The types of beginning reading skills to be covered by the institutes are described. Teachers, administrators, and school board members will be invited to participate in the institutes.

The requirement to offer the institutes expires on December 31, 1998.

Learning Assistance Programs

Before certain kindergarten through second grade students are placed in a learning assistance program, the students must receive six months of instruction in phonemic awareness, decoding skills, sound-symbol relationships, and word attack skills. This requirement is adopted for students who would be placed in the program because of their level of phonemic awareness or their inability to read at grade level.

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.

Expiration Dates

OSPI's requirement to offer Reading Leadership and Accountability Institutes expires on December 31, 1998. With that exception, and with the exception of the schools' responsibility to provide to certain kindergarten through second grade students with six months of instruction before placing them in a learning assistance program, the remaining requirements of this bill expire on July 30, 2005.

Appropriation: *None.*

Fiscal Note: *Requested on January 15, 1998.*

Effective Date: *The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect immediately.*