

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2512

As Reported By House Committee On:
Education

Title: An act relating to improving mathematics proficiency.

Brief Description: Establishing an excellence in mathematics grant program.

Sponsors: Representatives Keiser, Johnson, Cole, Veloria, Linville, Poulsen, Constantine, Chopp, Cooper, Gardner, Kenney, Wolfe, Wood, Conway and Anderson.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Education: 2/3/98, 2/4/98 [DPS].

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 10 members: Representatives Johnson, Chairman; Hickel, Vice Chairman; Cole, Ranking Minority Member; Keiser, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Linville; Smith; Sterk; Sump; Talcott and Veloria.

Staff: Susan Morrissey (786-7111).

Background: A number of reports have suggested that the mathematics instruction provided to elementary and middle school students in Washington and throughout the rest of the country needs to be improved. The Third International Mathematics and Science study shows that, although fourth grade students scored above average in mathematics, eighth grade students scored well below average. The study also found that the mathematics curriculum in middle and junior high schools may be a weak link in public education throughout this country.

In addition to the findings of these studies, reports from the Commission on Student Learning indicate that Washington's fourth grade students scored poorly on the mathematics component of the 1997 fourth grade assessment. Students who took the assessment, on average, had their lowest scores on that component of the test, with fewer than 23 percent of the students meeting the fourth grade proficiency standard.

Summary of Substitute Bill: The Excellence in Mathematics Grant program is established to improve the mathematics performance of elementary, middle, and junior high school students. The purpose of the grant program is to improve students' proficiency in mathematics by enhancing teachers' skills in using teaching methods that have proven results gathered through empirical research. The program will be administered by the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI). It will be targeted to students and teachers in the fifth through seventh grades in schools in which students performed below standard on the fourth or seventh grade mathematics assessments. OSPI will appoint a committee to develop an application and review process for grant awards and to oversee the design and implementation of the evaluation of the program. The types of expertise that must be represented on the committee are described. The committee may receive mileage and per diem.

If funding is appropriated, the OSPI will make grants available to schools and school districts by September 1, 1998, and September 1 of each ensuing year. Grants will be awarded for a three-year period. In order to qualify for a grant, each applicant must meet certain conditions. An applicant must document that the instructional model the applicant intends to use has proven results gathered through empirical research. An applicant must agree to assist in evaluation of the effectiveness of the instructional models selected. The applicant must provide evidence of a significant number of students who are not achieving mathematics proficiency at grade level, as measured by the fourth or seventh grade assessments, or both. If results from the fourth grade assessment are not available, the applicant may use results from the fourth grade California Test of Basic Skills. Finally, the applicant must show that the funds will be used for instruction in the fifth, sixth, or seventh grades.

OSPI will contract with an independent contractor who will distribute a literature review of best practices in mathematics instruction and staff development for elementary and middle school teachers. If funding is specifically provided for this purpose, the program will be evaluated by an independent contractor. The contractor will conduct a multi-year evaluation of the effectiveness of the instructional models, using achievement on the fourth and seventh grade assessments for the evaluation. The contractor's other responsibilities are also described. The OSPI will share with participants relevant information and reports provided by the independent contractor.

By December 1, 2000, and every two years thereafter, the OSPI will report on the program to the Legislature and the Governor. The reports will include information on the following aspects of the program: implementation strategies, instructional methods, and results.

The OSPI may use up to 5 percent of any appropriated funds for program administration. Funding appropriated for the program is not part of the state's basic education program. Any funds appropriated for this program must be used to supplement and not supplant federal or state instructional monies.

A null and void clause is attached.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: The following components are clarified: the program's purpose, the components of the grant proposals, the makeup of the advisory group, and the responsibilities of the independent contractor.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 29, 1998.

Effective Date of Substitute Bill: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed. However, the bill is null and void unless funded in the budget.

Testimony For: On the fourth grade mathematics assessment, more than 75 percent of the students failed to reach the standard. Research indicates that the percentage of students who achieve average or above average scores on mathematics achievement tests declines after the fourth grade. When American students are compared with students in other industrialized nations, they score about average at the fourth grade level and close to the bottom by the eighth grade. Schools need to take a best practices approach to mathematics instruction; find approaches that are successful and replicate them. Implementation of this legislation will enhance the teaching skills of teachers and will help students in schools which have significant numbers of students who did not score well on state mathematics assessments. It will also promote research based instructional models.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Representative Keiser, prime sponsor; Kris Koch, teacher; Linda Lou Austin, teacher; Matt Reiman, teacher; B. J. Wise, principal; Kevin Hughes, Pacific Science Center; Robert Butts, Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction; Charlotte Hartman, Vancouver School District; Lynn Nixon, American Electronics Association; and Joe Pope, Association of Washington School Principals (all pro).