

HOUSE BILL ANALYSIS

E2SSB 6509

Title: *An act relating to training in reading instruction.*

Brief Description: *Requiring training for reading instruction.*

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

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Meeting Date: *February 19, 1998.*

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

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.
- 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.

Second Grade Reading Test

In 1997, the Legislature required the Superintendent of Public Instruction to identify a collection of tests to measure second grade reading accuracy and fluency. Pilot projects were authorized to use the tests and grants were provided to enhance reading instruction.

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

Reading Grants

The Superintendent of Public Instruction(SPI) will establish two grant programs. One grant program will fund professional development and curriculum or related materials to certificated instructional staff teaching students in kindergarten through second grade. The other grant program will provide funding to elementary schools that wish to train teachers in ways to use tutors and mentors to help students read. Grants will be available through both programs by June 1, 1998. School districts may apply for grants through both programs. Participating teachers will receive a stipend from the grant.

Reading Instruction Grants

SPI will prioritize grant requests. 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 California 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 reading standard on the fourth grade assessment or in which the average performance on the reading component of the CTBS was in the bottom one-third for the previous three years. Third priority will be given to schools in which either fewer than half of the students met the reading standard on the fourth grade assessment or in which the average performance on the reading component of the CTBS was in the bottom half for the previous three years.

The application process for the grants is limited to verification of the following:

- The applicant has developed a comprehensive school-wide improvement plan that includes, but is not limited to, a beginning reading-language arts program for use in kindergarten through second grade. The primary elements of the beginning reading-language arts program are described and terms are defined.

- The intended professional development efforts will support the school's beginning reading-language arts program. The types of beginning reading-language arts skills that will receive primary emphasis are described.
- The funds for professional development in beginning reading-language arts instruction will be spent for appropriate purposes. These purposes do not include staff development, intervention, or remediation programs.
- Representatives of K-2 teachers and reading specialists from the school will be attending a leadership and accountability institute held by OSPI.

Elementary schools who receive grants through this process may use public or private nonsectarian contractors. The schools must certify and provide documentation to OSPI to show that the grants were spent appropriately. Schools and school districts that received funding from the Primary Grade Reading Grant program may not apply for reading instruction grants.

Tutoring and Mentoring Grants

Elementary schools may apply for grants to train teachers in ways to use tutors and mentors to help kindergarten through fourth grade students improve their reading skills. The training programs must be research based and of proven effectiveness. In addition the programs must contain certain elements.

- Program planning, assessment, diagnosis, and volunteer training;
- A tutoring and mentoring program that provides a minimum of two hours of individual instruction a week from a volunteer;
- Teacher training in recruiting and retaining tutors and mentors for reading; and
- 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 December 1999, SPI will report on the effectiveness of the grants to the Legislature.

Educational Service Districts

By July 31, 1998, each educational service district will establish a reading resource center. Upon request, the center may help schools receiving grants under this act to improve the reading-language arts skills of the school's students. Some of the ways that the center may assist the schools are described.

Leadership and Accountability Institutes

By September 30, 1998, OSPI will conduct institutes designed to provide teams of teachers, administrators, and school board members with information and tools to improve beginning reading instruction. Some of the areas to be covered in the institutes are described. School districts sending teams to the institutes must make a commitment to provide team members with enough time to implement the strategies learned while attending the institute.

Second Grade Reading Test

Beginning in the 1998-99 school year, school districts must administer a statewide, standardized, nationally norm-referenced test to measure the reading skills of second grade students. The purpose of the test is to provide information to parents and school employees on the reading skills of each student at the beginning of second grade. Test results must report a student's reading level in terms of grade level and monthly increments.

At the winter parent-teacher conference, schools must inform parents of their child's performance on the test and identify actions which the school and the parent can take to improve the child's reading skills. Each school must annually report to its community the number and percentage of second grade students reading at or above grade level, and the distribution and range of all reading scores on the test. In addition, each school district must annually report to the SPI the number and percentage of second grade students reading at or above grade level.

Current statutory requirements to identify and use a collection of second grade reading tests are repealed.

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, instruction in reading comprehension skills, and vocabulary instruction.

Effective and Expiration Dates

The grant programs expire on July 30, 2005. The leadership and accountability institutes expire on December 31, 1998. The grant programs expire on July 30, 2005. The leadership and accountability institutes expire on December 31, 1998.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available on ¹ Substitute.

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