

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## ESHB 2042

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As Reported By Senate Committee On:  
Education, April 3, 1997

**Title:** An act relating to reading in the primary grades.

**Brief Description:** Providing pilot and grant programs for reading in the primary grades.

**Sponsors:** House Committee on Education (originally sponsored by Representatives Johnson, Talcott and Hickel).

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Education: 3/25/97, 4/3/97 [DPA].

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

**Majority Report:** Do pass as amended.

Signed by Senators Hochstatter, Chair; Finkbeiner, Vice Chair; Johnson, Rasmussen and Zarelli.

**Staff:** Susan Mielke (786-7422)

**Background:** In 1995, the Legislature directed the Commission on Student Learning (CSL) to develop a third grade reading assessment. Implementation of the assessment is voluntary in the 1996-97 school year, and mandatory for all public third grade students in the 1998-99 school year. The information provided by the assessment must be used to evaluate instructional practices and to initiate appropriate educational support for students who have not mastered the essential academic reading requirements for reading, but must not to be used for school or school district accountability.

**Summary of Amended Bill:** The provisions for the development and implementation of the third grade reading assessment are deleted. A process to identify a collection of second grade reading tests is created and a primary grade reading grant program is established.

Second Grade Reading Test: The Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI) must identify a collection of tests to measure second grade reading skills. Each test must assess a student's recognition of letter sounds, phonemic awareness, word recognition, reading connected text, and reading accuracy and fluency. Each test must have been approved by a panel of nationally recognized reading and assessment professionals whose work has been published in peer-reviewed education research journals.

SPI must create a pilot project to identify which of the second grade reading tests will be included in a final collection of tests. Schools and school districts may voluntarily participate in the pilot projects in the 1997-98 school year. The final collection of tests must be available by June 30, 1998. Beginning in the 1998-99 school year, school districts must use one of the tests to assess students' second grade reading skills. The SPI must develop

a per-pupil cost for each test. To the extent funds are appropriated, the SPI must pay for testing material, scoring services, and test administration training.

The SPI must determine the level of student test performance that constitutes "substantially below grade level." If a student's performance while taking the test is considered substantially below grade level, the test may be discontinued. Students who score substantially below grade level when tested in the fall must be tested at least one more time during the second grade. Schools must notify parents of the test results and identify actions for the school and the parents to take to improve the student's score.

**Primary Grade Reading Grant Program:** SPI is directed to establish a primary grade reading grant program to improve the use of research-proven beginning reading teaching methods by teachers. To the extent funds are appropriated, SPI must make the initial two year grants available by September 1, 1997, to schools and school districts participating in the pilot project. To qualify for a grant, the grant proposal must provide evidence of a significant number of students who are not performing at grade level and document that the instructional model to be used is validated by quantitative research. Grant applicants must agree to work with an independent contractor contracted by SPI to determine the effectiveness of the instructional model and the staff development to be implemented by the school or the school district. Five percent of the funds awarded for grants must be set aside for the contractor's evaluation.

SPI may use 1 percent of the funds appropriated for administration of the grant program. SPI must adopt timelines and rules to administer the grant program.

Beginning December 1, 1999, SPI must report biennially to the Legislature and the Governor regarding the grant program. The report must include information on how the grant money was used, which instructional models were used, how the models were implemented, and the independent contractor's findings.

Five years after the beginning of the grant program, SPI must distribute information to the school districts regarding the effectiveness of the instructional models and implementation strategies used.

**Amended Bill Compared to Substitute Bill:** The striking amendment permits, instead of requires, a teacher to stop the test if a student's performance while taking the test is substantially below grade level.

**Appropriation:** None. If specific funding for section 4 of this act is not provided in the budget sections 4 and 7 of this act are null and void.

**Fiscal Note:** Available. New fiscal note requested on March 19, 1997.

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

**Testimony For:** This bill is the third legislative chapter in reading. The first two chapters passed the Senate and House unanimously in the past two legislative sessions. The second

grade test is one in a series of tests that all fit together to ensure that students will be able to read. It is a diagnostic tool for teachers, parents, and students. The scores will not be publicly reported, but would be shared with the student's parents. The test will identify those children who need extra support and instruction before they fall too far behind their classmates. The grant program is designed to identify research-based assessments, instructional methods, and instructional materials that are effective and to aid in replicating success.

**Testimony Against:** The state needs to look carefully at the tests it requires teachers to administer. What a teacher must test is what the teacher will teach. This may make the instruction too narrow. Teaching reading must be a balanced process. If one component is over-emphasized, then another component is neglected. Additionally, there is a wide diversity of student experience with reading which impacts a student's skills over which teachers have no control. Teacher training programs and improved teacher preparation programs are necessary to achieve the goal to have more students reading well at an earlier time.

**Testified:** Representative P. Johnson, prime sponsor (pro); Representative Gig Talcott; Carol Gould, Classroom Teachers (con); Judy Hartmann, WEA (pro with concerns); Joe Willhoft, Tacoma S.; Marty Stein, UW; Nancy J. Johnson, WWU.