

SENATE BILL REPORT

SHB 2418

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Education, February 27, 1998

Title: An act relating to reading improvement.

Brief Description: Requiring coursework in comprehensive beginning reading instruction as a prerequisite to teacher certification.

Sponsors: House Committee on Appropriations (originally sponsored by Representatives Johnson, Talcott, Sterk, Sump, Mulliken, Lambert, Carlson, Thompson, Smith, McCune, Benson, O'Brien and Mason).

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Education: 2/26/98, 2/27/98 [DPA, DNP].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass as amended.

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

Minority Report: Do not pass.

Signed by Senator McAuliffe.

Staff: Susan Mielke (786-7422)

Background: The State Board of Education (SBE) establishes and enforces the rules governing teacher certification.

Course work required for teacher certification: Candidates seeking teacher certification must complete a teacher preparation program at an institution of higher education. SBE requires such programs to include course work in the following areas: issues of child abuse; schools and society; human growth, development and learning; American school law; classroom management and discipline; instruction methodology; student testing, assessment, and evaluation; program assessment; and teacher evaluation and professional growth. Topics within each area are specified.

SBE has recently adopted performance-based approval standards for teacher preparation programs. The standards require programs to include course work or experiences in 23 specified areas. All teacher preparation programs must be approved under the performance-based standards by August 31, 2000.

Teacher certification assessment: There is no requirement that candidates seeking teacher certification must pass an assessment to obtain a teaching certificate. However, in SBE's 1997 Report to the Legislature on Teacher Assessment, SBE recommended that the basic skills, teaching skills, and subject knowledge of teacher certification candidates be assessed.

Summary of Amended Bill: The teacher certification requirements to teach in the elementary grades are expanded in statute to include additional course work and an assessment in beginning reading instruction.

Course work expanded for teacher certification: After August 31, 2000, a candidate seeking initial certification to teach in the elementary grades must successfully complete course work in beginning reading instruction. The course work must include the study of research addressing the skills needed by proficient readers, research on the acquisition of beginning reading skills, and specified reading skills. The specified skills are:

- Phonemic awareness and decoding;
- A strong literature, language, and comprehension component with a balance of oral and written language;
- Diagnostic techniques that assess a student's accuracy and fluency levels;
- Early intervention techniques; and
- Guided practice in a school setting.

Teacher certification assessment: By June 30, 1999, the SBE must provide a reading instruction competency assessment for all candidates seeking initial certification to teach in the elementary grades. The assessment must measure the candidate's ability to provide the following explicit and systematic instruction:

- Phonemic awareness for all kindergarten and first grade students, and the application of phonemic awareness principles to beginning reading strategies;
- Decoding skills and practice using such skills in decodable text materials;
- Spelling and spelling patterns, and the use of student created spelling to support beginning reading development; and
- Reading comprehension skills.

SBE and the Superintendent of Public Instruction may contract for the assessment development, purchase, administration, scoring, and reporting. However, the development and implementation must involve teachers, administrators, and institutions of higher education. Prior to implementing the assessments, SBE must submit the proposed assessments to the House and Senate education committees for review. Additionally, SBE must establish the minimum score a candidate must achieve to be eligible to receive an initial teaching certificate.

The bill contains a null and void clause unless specifically funded in the budget.

Amended Bill Compared to Substitute Bill: Two definitions of terms are deleted that are not used in the bill: diagnosis of a student's ability to decode— and vocabulary instruction.—

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on February 22, 1998.

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

Testimony For: Studies by the National Institute of Health show that at least 95 percent of students can read at grade level if they are taught letter-sound skills. Many teachers say they did not learn how to teach phonics in their teacher preparation programs. The state needs to ensure that teacher preparation programs prepare future teachers to provide instruction in proven reading instruction methodologies.

Testimony Against: Teachers should have a background in all the effective reading instruction methodologies, not just phonics. The timelines for the development of the assessment are too aggressive. It is unclear who will pay for the cost of the assessment. How does this test for teacher certification fit with the other legislation offered this session that also requires different assessments for teacher certification?

Testified: PRO: Representative Johnson, prime sponsor; Kathryn Deierling, Bill Ash, Susan Esvelt, Sandy Brandt, Snohomish SSD 201; CON: Bob Butts, OSPI; Dorene Mykol, SBE; Judy Hartman, WEA.