

SENATE BILL REPORT

E2SSB 6509

As Passed Senate, February 17, 1998

Title: An act relating to training in reading instruction.

Brief Description: Requiring training for reading instruction.

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

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Education: 1/20/98, 1/23/98 [DPS-WM].

Ways & Means: 2/3/98, 2/9/98 [DP2S, DNP].

Passed Senate, 2/17/98, 25-24.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6509 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

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

Staff: Susan Mielke (786-7422)

SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

Majority Report: That Second Substitute Senate Bill No. 6509 be substituted therefor, and the second substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators West, Chair; Deccio, Vice Chair; Strannigan, Vice Chair; Hochstatter, Long, McDonald, Roach, Rossi, Schow, Swecker and Zarelli.

Minority Report: Do not pass.

Signed by Senators Bauer, Brown, Fraser, Kohl, Loveland, B. Sheldon, Snyder, Spanel and Thibaudeau.

Staff: Bill Freund (786-7422)

Background: Since 1995, the Legislature has proposed and passed legislation to improve student learning by focusing on reading skills. Some research has shown that providing teachers with sufficient information on the skills of their students and providing training for teachers in effective instructional methods can improve students' skills. 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Summary of Bill: The requirements to identify and use a collection of second grade reading tests are repealed and the Successful Readers Act is created.

The Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI) must establish grant programs to provide training to teachers in specified phonics methods of reading instruction and in the use of tutors and mentors for reading instruction. SPI must notify all school districts by April 15 that the grants are available. Grant funds must be available to schools no later than June 1, 1998. Teachers participating in the grant programs receive a stipend.

Elementary schools may apply for reading instruction grants to provide training and materials for teachers who teach kindergarten, first and second grade students. The reading instruction grant application requires a school-wide reading improvement plan which must meet specified requirements. Training is provided by private, nonsectarian contractors. Priority for the grants must be given to schools that have the greatest number of students not meeting the statewide standard on the fourth grade assessment in reading, or scoring lowest on the reading component of the statewide standardized test. Grants may be used to provide materials and training to classroom volunteers. Schools receiving grants must document that funds were expended in accordance with the grant requirements. Schools or school districts that received grants under the 1997 second grade test collection pilot and grant program are not eligible to receive a reading instruction grant.

Tutoring and mentoring grants are provided for teacher training in the use of tutors and mentors for reading instruction in kindergarten through fourth grade. The tutoring and mentoring programs must provide teacher training, at least two hours a week of individual student instruction by a volunteer, and a plan to assess student reading performance before and after participating in the program. The student assessment results must be reported to the SPI. SPI must report on the effectiveness of the programs by December 1999.

By July 31, 1998, each educational service district must establish a reading resource center. The centers may provide assistance to schools receiving reading instruction grants or tutoring and mentoring grants.

Before September 30, 1998, SPI will conduct leadership and accountability institutes to provide teachers, administrators, and school board members information and tools to improve beginning reading instruction programs and practices.

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 the community the number and percentage of second grade students reading at or above grade level. Each school district must annually report to the SPI the number and percentage of second grade students reading at or above grade level.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Testimony For: Statistical research shows the importance of being a successful reader in the early grades. The second grade test in this bill will help alert parents and teachers early on if students are having reading difficulties. Research also shows that the type of training provided in the bill will improve student reading skills.

Testimony Against: The bill is unnecessary because education reform is already driving some curriculum changes. The teacher training and teacher preparation coursework required is too restrictive because it only recognizes phonics methods of reading instruction. Why are only private contractors permitted to conduct the training? The bill should permit public contractors to participate too. The bill is too prescriptive.

Testified: Carol Gould (con); Larry Davis, SBE (pro/con); Robert Butts, OSPI (con); Judy Hartmann, WEA (pro/con); Doug Carnine (pro).

House Amendment(s): The reading instruction funding program is changed to provide teacher training and curriculum. The funding application requirement for a school plan is removed. The grant award priority based on lowest test scores is applied to both grants but only for the initial awards of the reading instruction funds. Awards made to applicants for the reading instruction funds after June 1, 1998, will not be based on the test score priority.

The tutor and mentor grants may be used to train teachers teaching grades K-6, instead of K-4, and may also be used to train tutors and mentor volunteers. The program must establish minimum contact hours for the volunteers.

The provisions creating reading resource centers at each Educational Service District, creating the Leadership and Accountability Institutes, requiring a nationally-normed second grade reading test, and repealing the 1997 second grade test collection pilot and grant program are deleted. A null and void clause is added.