

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6509

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Education, January 23, 1998
Ways & Means, February 9, 1998

Title: An act relating to training in reading instruction.

Brief Description: Requiring training for reading instruction.

Sponsors: 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].

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Summary of Substitute Second Bill: The requirements to identify and use a collection of second grade reading tests are repealed.

The Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI) must establish a grant program to provide training during the summer of 1998 in specified phonics methods of reading instruction. Grants are provided to school districts to train certificated employees who teach first and second grade students. Private, nonsectarian contractors must provide the training. SPI must notify all school districts by April 15 that the grants are available. The grants must be awarded by SPI by June 1, 1998, in the order in which the grant requests are received. Teachers participating in the training receive a stipend. School districts receiving grants must document that the training obtained consisted of the specified phonics methods of reading instruction.

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.

Teacher preparation programs must include coursework in specified phonics methods of reading instruction for students who will be eligible to teach kindergarten through second grade and have entered the program after June 30, 1996.

Second Substitute Bill Compared to Substitute Bill: The appropriation of \$11.2 million is deleted.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: SPI must notify school districts that the grants are available. Districts must document that the training obtained consisted of the specified phonics methods of reading instruction.

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).