

SENATE BILL REPORT

SSB 6574

As Passed Senate, February 13, 1998

Title: An act relating to the learning materials loan program.

Brief Description: Authorizing learning materials to be loaned to private school students.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Education (originally sponsored by Senators Johnson, Stevens, Wood, Winsley, Deccio, Schow, Oke, McCaslin, Rossi, Hochstatter, Swecker, Sellar, Morton, McDonald and Roach).

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Education: 2/3/98, 2/5/98, 2/6/98 [DPS].
Passed Senate, 2/13/98, 32-16.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6574 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

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

Staff: William Bridges (786-7424)

Background: School districts may set policies for the selection, granting, and loaning of instructional materials to public school students. School districts may also enter into joint purchasing agreements with private schools.

Summary of Bill: The Legislature finds that: (1) the state's constitutional duty of educating "all children" includes the students of private schools; and (2) a significant number of private school students frequently move between private and public schools, resulting in the parents of these children paying for private and public school materials.

The laws governing private schools are expanded so that students attending state-approved private schools may receive learning materials loaned by the local school district. To receive such loans, private schools must submit an annual request to the local school district. The local school district may then enter into a loan agreement with the private school subject to certain guidelines:

- Local school districts must make a good faith effort to accommodate loan requests.
- Loans are not limited because of a student's economic status.
- Learning materials cannot promote nor deter sectarian or religious activities of the private school, nor may a private school request materials designed for religious instruction.

- Learning materials– means textbooks and workbooks.
- Private schools may not request loaned textbooks beyond the local school district's official adoption list.
- Learning materials are always the property of the local school district.

OSPI is directed to adopt guidelines for the loan program, but these guidelines may not affect the autonomy of private schools. To assist the state in implementing the loan program, OSPI may identify currently existing, nonsectarian, statewide private school organizations to act as liaisons for state-approved private schools interested in receiving learning materials.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 23, 1998.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect on September 1, 1998.

Testimony For: Seventeen states permit textbook loans to private schools. This bill only requires the loaning of learning materials, not money. Because 80 percent of private school textbooks are already used in public schools, parents of private school students pay twice for textbooks. Home schoolers can borrow textbooks. Many private schools have low-income parents who cannot afford to pay for textbooks. "All children" have a right to a basic education, and textbooks are necessary to provide that education.

Testimony Against: Public money should be used for public schools. The bill compels public schools to loan books they may not have, and the appropriation is inadequate to purchase new books. Because of the 601 lid, money used to buy books means less money for other projects. The bill states that only textbooks listed on a school district's official adoption list are eligible for the loan program, but because the definition of "learning materials" is very broad, materials not listed on the adoption list may be eligible. Because the bill states that all loaned materials are state property, an auditing system will have to be developed.

Testified: Jean Ameluxen, OSPI (con); Virginia DeForest, Amer. Assoc. of Univ. Women (con); Stephen Dinger, Wash. Federation of Indep. Schools (pro); Jessie Dye, Wash. State Catholic Conf. (pro); Margaret Holm, citizen (pro); Gulsevin Kayihan, Spring Valley Montessori School (pro); Dan Sherman, St. John School, Seattle (pro).