

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2085

As Reported By House Committee On:

Education
Appropriations

Title: An act relating to programs addressing disruptive students in regular classrooms.

Brief Description: Creating programs addressing disruptive students in regular classrooms.

Sponsors: Representatives Quall, Talcott, Haigh, Carlson, Santos, Linville, Cox, Kessler, Morris, Murray, McDonald, O'Brien, Anderson, Thomas, Ogden, Poulsen, Rockefeller, Lovick, Kenney, Wolfe, Stensen, Schual-Berke, Tokuda, Ruderman, Keiser, Wood, Constantine and Lantz.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Education: 2/22/99, 2/25/99 [DPS];

Appropriations: 3/5/99, 3/6/99 [DP2S(w/o sub ED)].

Brief Summary of Second Substitute Bill

- The OSPI will conduct a series of professional development institutes to help teams from school districts learn how to deal effectively with disruptive students and create plans to deal with those students in the classroom and in alternative settings.
- A grant program is created to help schools provide effective alternative educational settings and programs for persistently and significantly disruptive students in kindergarten through eighth grade.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 14 members: Representatives Quall, Democratic Co-Chair; Talcott, Republican Co-Chair; Haigh, Democratic Vice Chair; Schindler, Republican Vice Chair; Carlson; Cox; Keiser; Rockefeller; Santos; D. Schmidt; Schual-Berke; Stensen; Sump and Wensman.

Staff: Susan Morrissey (786-7111).

Background:

Since 1996, the Legislature has provided funding to defray the initial costs school districts incur when they implement alternative schools and programs for at-risk and disruptive students. School districts receive one-year start-up grants through a competitive request for proposal process. The grants cover the initial costs of planning, staff recruitment and training, the purchase of equipment and supplies, and other significant one-time costs. State basic education monies provide support for program operations after the first year. To date, the Legislature has appropriated \$3,000,000 for these start-up grants.

Since 1996, five basic alternative school or program models have evolved. They are alternative schools as a separate organization and site, schools within a school, programs as a part of an existing school, court detention schools, and after-school or truancy board support programs. Of the 25 programs supported during the 1996-97 and 1997-98 school years, only two programs included elementary school students among the other students served. Eight served middle school students exclusively. Six served middle and high school students.

The Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI) presented a report on the grants to the Legislature in February 1999. The report included a component evaluating the effectiveness of the alternative programs. More than half of the programs reported improvements in student achievement, attendance, attitudes, and social skills. The applicants also reported a decrease in disciplinary actions and incidents. The SPI recommended that the Legislature continue funding the grants and increase the appropriations to allow more districts to participate. The SPI also recommended implementation of an electronic data base to facilitate reporting, evaluation and information sharing. Finally, the SPI recommended that the Legislature fund additional training to help teachers implement innovative strategies for working with at-risk and disruptive students.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

The Legislature finds that teachers, principals, and other school staff need training in effective strategies for handling disruptive students. The Legislature also finds that there are times that disruptive students can learn most effectively in alternative settings and programs.

Professional Development Institutes

If funding is available, the SPI will conduct a series of professional development institutes on research-based strategies for handling disruptive students. The institutes will focus on two major issues: dealing with disruption in regular classrooms, and the design and implementation of effective alternative learning programs and settings for students who exhibit frequent and prolonged disruptive behavior in regular classrooms. If funding is available, SPI will conduct at least one two-day institute in each of the nine educational service districts before March 1, 2000. School districts will have an opportunity to send teams of teachers, principals, and other staff to the institutes. Participants will develop district plans to handle disruptive students. Elementary and middle school participants are encouraged to formulate school building plans as well.

Grant Program

A grant program is created to help schools provide alternate settings and programs for disruptive students in kindergarten through eighth grade. The grants will support the implementation of plans to provide alternative settings and programs to meet the educational needs of students who are frequently and significantly disruptive in regular classroom settings. The funding may also be used for any professional development necessary to implement the plans. Any combination of schools, school districts, and consortia of schools or districts may apply for grant funds. Applicants must include a description of their plans for using the grant funds. The plans must include the use of research-based strategies that work effectively with disruptive students. Applicants must certify that at least a majority of instructional staff at the school support the proposed program. In schools that have adopted policies requiring that more than a majority of certificated staff support a new program or policy, the application must indicate the level of support required by the school's policies.

The program will be administered by SPI. Grants will be available for at least three years. When distributing funds for the program, the SPI will give a priority to applicants that meet one of two criteria. Priority will be given to schools that either have the highest proportion of students who exhibit frequent and significant disruptive behaviors, or that have the highest proportion of disciplinary incidents. Disciplinary incidents include suspensions, expulsions, and classroom removals. Priority will also be given to schools that lack trained personnel and programs designed to provide the educational needs of disruptive students. In addition, SPI may assign a priority to other schools on the basis of other information that indicates significant levels of disruptive behavior.

The SPI will consult representatives of principals' organizations to determine which applicants will receive grants. Grant funding will not be available until July 1, 2000.

An emergency clause is attached.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: The professional development institutes may occur until March 1, 2000, instead of ending before the beginning of the 1999-2000 school year. An application for grant funds must indicate that at least a majority instead of 80 percent of the instructional staff support the proposed program. In schools that require a higher level of support before commencement of a new program, the school's policy will prevail.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on February 18, 1999.

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

Testimony For: (Original Bill) Discipline issues are a major challenge for public schools. The issues are escalating as additional high-needs children enter the schools. When disruption occurs in a classroom, learning stops. This legislation is an important tool for teachers and principals. It provides additional training to help teachers work with disruptive students in the classroom. The legislation also provides additional resources to help schools provide intensive assistance and appropriate educational programs outside the classroom for persistently disruptive students. The program is flexible and allows schools to tailor their programs to meet local needs. An additional safeguard: a high percentage of the school's teachers must agree to participate in the program before the school is eligible to participate in the grant program.

Testimony Against: (Original Bill) The program should be replaced by or refocused to include successful programs offered in the private sector. These private sector programs are proven, research-based, and cost-effective. One such program, called the Ombudsman program would be a better model than the program proposed in this legislation.

Testified: (Support) (Original Bill) Rep. Quall, prime sponsor; Rainer Houser, Mike McDonald, Lisa Griebel, and Tim Sullivan, Association of Washington School Principals; Lloyd Gardner, citizen; Bob Butts, Superintendent of Public Instruction; Barbara Mertens, Washington Association of School Administrators; Dan Steele, Washington State School Directors' Association; Barbara Casey, Washington State Parent Teacher Association; and Sam Elwonger, independent.

(Opposed as written) Lois McMahan, citizen.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Majority Report: The second substitute bill be substituted therefor and the second substitute bill do pass and do not pass the substitute bill by Committee on Education. Signed by 31 members: Representatives Huff, Republican Co-Chair; H. Sommers, Democratic Co-Chair; Alexander, Republican Vice Chair; Doumit, Democratic Vice Chair; D. Schmidt, Republican Vice Chair; Barlean; Benson; Boldt; Carlson; Clements; Cody; Crouse; Gombosky; Grant; Kagi; Keiser; Kenney; Lambert; Linville; Lisk; Mastin; McIntire; McMorris; Mulliken; Parlette; Regala; Rockefeller; Ruderman; Sullivan; Tokuda and Wensman.

Staff: Jack Daray (786-7178).

Summary of Recommendation of Committee on Appropriations Compared to Recommendation of Committee on Education: If funding for the bill is not provided by June 30, 1999, in the omnibus appropriations act, the bill is null and void.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect immediately. However, the bill is null and void unless funded in the budget.

Testimony For: (Substitute bill) There is a need to deal with disruptive students to reduce distractions from learning. There is need for an earlier focus to dealing with alternative learning situations since there are very few program options for young students at the present time.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Representative Quall, prime sponsor; and Rainer Houser, Association of Washington School Principals.