

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1462

As Reported By House Committee On:

Education
Appropriations

Title: An act relating to K-12 accountability and assistance.

Brief Description: Changing school accountability and assistance provisions.

Sponsors: Representatives Quall, Talcott, Haigh, Wensman, Stensen, Ogden, Santos, O'Brien, Rockefeller, Regala, Sullivan, Linville, Lantz, Lovick, Doumit, Reardon, Cooper, Scott, Dickerson, Kessler, Hatfield, Gombosky, Murray, Carlson, McIntire, Hurst, Edwards, Conway, Wood, Morris, Keiser, Fisher, Schual-Berke, Dunshee, D. Schmidt and Kenney.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Education: 2/11/99, 3/1/99 [DPS];

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

Brief Summary of Second Substitute Bill

- The Commission on Educational Accountability is created to adopt new improvement goals for the state's educational system, recommend policies on additional assistance for students and schools, identify schools that merit recognition for success or need state intervention due to persistent low-performance over an identified period of time, and implement other responsibilities assigned by the legislation.
- All schools and struggling schools will have access to new assistance measures designed to help students meet the state's academic standards. The measures include accountability implementation funds for all schools, a state level technical support team, and targeted assistance funds for struggling schools.
- Schools and school districts will adopt goals designed to improve student performance on the fourth and seventh grade mathematics assessment and the seventh grade reading assessment.
- The specifics of a study of the Learning Assistance Program will be provided in the biennial budget.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 13 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; Stensen; Sump and Wensman.

Staff: Susan Morrissey (786-7111).

Background:

Washington's Education Reform Act (HB 1209) created a system to identify the knowledge and skills that all students should know and be able to demonstrate at various points during the students' years in school. The Commission on Student Learning was established to define the required knowledge and skills and to create a series of assessments that would allow students to demonstrate their mastery of the identified material. During the ensuing years, the commission has established and implemented essential academic learning requirements (EALRs) for various basic

skills and subject matter. The EALRs and the assessments that test them are directed to public school students in the fourth, seventh, and 10th grades.

The Commission on Student Learning was also directed to recommend to the Legislature a statewide accountability system to monitor and evaluate the level of learning occurring in schools and school districts under the reformed education system. The system was required to assess each school against its own baseline, schools with similar characteristics, and schools state-wide. The system must include accountability reports for schools, school districts, and the state as a whole. The commission was directed to recommend an accountability system for reading in kindergarten through fourth grade by November 1, 1997. Accountability recommendations for other subject areas and grade levels was required by June 30, 1999.

The commission was also required to recommend three additional policies deemed essential to the state's education system. The policies included a school assistance program to help struggling students meet the state's academic standards, a system to intervene in schools and school systems in which significant numbers of students persistently fail to meet the state's standards, and an awards program to provide incentives for school staff.

On October 19, 1998, the commission adopted a series of recommendations on accountability, assistance, interventions, and rewards. The recommendations included goals for the state's education system and a reporting system to help monitor student progress toward the goals. The system included a component that provides financial and technical assistance for all schools and school districts, as well as targeted assistance for low-performing schools and students. The system described different roles for school districts and the state in assistance, recognition and intervention. The commission also recommended that it continue in existence beyond its June 30, 1999, expiration date and that its role be expanded to include oversight of the accountability system.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

Commission on Educational Accountability

The Commission on Educational Accountability is created. The commission will be composed of seven members, four appointed by the Legislature, two by the Governor, and one by the Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI). The members appointed by the Legislature and the superintendent will represent, but will not be the SPI or members of the Legislature. The commission will be appointed by July 1, 1999, and will convene its first meeting by July 30, 1999. The commission may hire necessary

staff, however, the SPI will provide the majority of the technical assistance and logistical support needed by the commission.

One of the commission's initial duties is to recommend certain accountability policies to the Governor and the education and fiscal committees of the House and Senate. The policies include strategies for intervention in schools in which low-performance persists for an identified period of time, additional assistance measures for students and schools, and rewards for successful schools and school districts. The recommendations are due by September 5, 2000.

The commission will adopt goals for the accountability system, including timelines for improving student performance for all subjects assessed in the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL). Prior to implementation, the goals will be reviewed by the education and fiscal committees of the House and Senate. The commission will also adopt categories of school performance and identify measures for each category. The commission will identify successful performance incentive systems, schools that require state intervention, and choice options for students attending failed schools. Once the commission identifies schools that need state intervention, the SPI must take corrective actions authorized by law. The commission will also recommend to SPI schools that merit recognition for their successful efforts. Finally, the commission will adopt performance standards to determine whether students have met the state standards on the WASL.

Reporting Results

The SPI must report annually on the percentage of students meeting state standards, the percentage of students performing at each level of the WASL, and student performance based on a learning improvement index. The SPI will also report student demographic information by school and monitor the number and percentage of students who are exempted from state assessments. The commission will annually review the reporting system for fairness, accuracy, timeliness, and equity of opportunity.

The annual performance reports currently required for all schools are revised to include a number of new measures. The reports will include information on how well students perform on state mandated tests and school plans to improve that performance. The performance indicators will include comparisons with comparable schools in the state, and a comparison of student performance over a two-year period. The reports will also include information about school safety, teacher credentials, and choice options available to students attending the school. To the extent feasible, the SPI will make the information accessible on or through SPI's internet web site.

Assistance to Schools

The SPI will allocate Accountability Implementation Funds to school districts, to the extent that the Legislature provides such funds. The funds are intended to assist schools to develop and update student learning improvement plans, implement instruction and assessment strategies, provide staff development, and fund other activities intended to improve student learning. In order to receive funds during the 1999-2001 biennium, school districts must certify the use of the money for the purposes described in the bill. For future years, the districts must certify that they have analyzed funding from all sources and that the funding will be used to improve student learning.

The SPI may employ school improvement specialists and coordinators to provide technical assistance to schools and school districts. The specialists will not be permanent employees. The coordinators and specialists will help schools to use student performance data and develop improvement plans based on the data. They will also help districts identify and use research-based instructional practices and curricula that is aligned with the state's academic standards. The specialists and coordinators will help schools develop family and community involvement programs and provide other types of assistance necessary to improve student learning.

The SPI will also provide funding for short-term intensive assistance designed to help schools develop and implement school improvement plans. The plans must be based on reliable research and effective practices. The commission will develop a set of recommended criteria for the funds. The funds are intended to stimulate comprehensive, school-wide change. The criteria required of applicants and their proposed improvement plans are described.

Accountability Goals, Including Goals in Reading and Mathematics

The mid-term goal of the state's accountability system is that 80 percent or more of the state's public school students meet the state standards on the WASL within a decade after each assessment is required statewide.

In addition to the current fourth grade reading improvement goal, each elementary school will adopt a goal to improve by 25 percent the percentage of students who did not meet the state's fourth grade mathematics standard. Each elementary school will adopt its goal by December 15, 2000, and attempt to meet it by the end of the 2002-03 school year.

Each middle and junior high school will adopt goals to improve by 25 percent the percentage of students who did not meet the state standards on the reading and mathematics sections of the seventh grade WASL. Reading goals will be adopted by December 15, 2000, and schools will attempt to meet the goals by the end of the 2002-03 school year. Mathematics goals will be adopted by December 15, 2001, and schools will attempt to meet the goals by the end of the 2003-04 school year.

School districts must adopt plans to meet the required goals. The aggregate of each school's goals must meet or exceed each district's goals.

By August 1, 2000, the SPI must complete an objective analysis of the fourth grade mathematics assessment. The required components of the analysis are described. The SPI will report the results of its analysis to the Governor and the House and Senate education committees by August 15, 2000.

Miscellaneous

A study of the Learning Assistance Program will be conducted. The study will examine the alignment of the program with the WASL and the EALRs. It will also identify programs and practices that offer the best prospects for helping struggling students. The law on Student Learning Improvement Grants is repealed. Certain uncodified expiration dates that could be interpreted to affect the law governing both the Commission on Student Learning and the state's education reform efforts are also repealed. An emergency clause is attached to the sections creating the commission and repealing uncodified expiration dates.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: The Oversight body is renamed and placed in its own chapter of law. The membership of the oversight group is revised. Its duties are revised. Accountability goals for math are revised to delay fourth grade math goals for one year, and to add goals for seventh grade reading and math in 2000 and 2001. In addition, SPI is required to analyze the fourth grade math test. The SPI's Helping Corps is slightly modified. Part one, the intent section is removed. Part three, the reporting assessment results sections are modified. A portion of part four, emergency targeted assistance to schools, is merged with the section providing technical assistance to schools. Part five, the redesign of the LAP program is removed and replaced with a study of the program. A portion of part six, Section 601, on enhancements to the Center for the Improvement of Student Learning is removed. Part seven - state responsibility for recognition and intervention is removed, and included, in part under the duties of the Commission for Educational Accountability.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 27, 1999.

Effective Date of Substitute Bill: Sections 101 and 502 declare an emergency and take effect immediately. The rest of the bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: (Original bill) The state's initial education reform efforts are working. However, it is time to create an oversight organization to continue to

monitor progress toward the state's education goals and to rally schools around the theme of continuous improvement. The proposed legislation contains a balanced accountability system that includes improvement goals, reporting on results, assistance for all students and schools and for struggling students and schools. It also includes recognition for successful schools and intervention for schools in which low-performance persists over a period of time. The important elements include an independent group to monitor progress and recommend consequences for successful and unsuccessful schools and school districts. The system includes clear expectations, simplicity, continuous improvement, and fair evaluations. Most of the responsibility of the system remains in the hands of local school boards. The recommendations embodied in the legislation were approved by the Accountability Task Force, a group that included representation from educators, community leaders, employers, administrators, and state government.

Testimony Against: (Original bill) Washington's teachers are underpaid and living on salaries that have not been increased to keep pace with inflation over the last seven years or so. This legislation provides those teachers with additional pressure without addressing the teachers' needs for a living wage. Washington's education reform efforts are built on misguided theories and flawed learning standards measured by the wrong kinds of tests. It is a mistake to build an accountability system on the foundation of these flawed theories, standards, and tests.

Testified: (Support) Rep. Quall, prime sponsor; Chuck Collins, Commission on Student Learning; Jill Jacoby, Bethel School District; Don Brunell, Association of Washington Business; Terry Bergeson, Superintendent of Public Instruction; Larry Davis, State Board of Education; Steve Mullin, Washington Roundtable; Lynn Nixon, American Electronics Association; Dan Steele, Washington State School Directors' Association; Joe Willhoft, Tacoma School District; Bill Rossman, Tacoma School District; and Dennis Birr, Linda Lovely-Wright and Chris Sharp, Association of Washington School Principals.

(Support with concerns) Tom Vander Ark, Federal Way School District.

(Opposed) Donna Dunning, Steve Brown and Mary Jo Lambert, Washington Education Association; and Marda Kirkwood, 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: Reports by the school board on the results for the fourth and seventh grade math and reading tests will be made once a year rather than twice. The specifics of a study of the Learning Assistance Program made will be provided in the biennial budget. Various sections of the bill are null and void if funding for these sections is not provided by June 30, 1999, in the omnibus appropriations act.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available. New fiscal note requested on the substitute March 4, 1999.

Effective Date: Sections 101 and 502 declare an emergency and take effect immediately. The rest of the bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed. However, sections 101-104, 301, and 302 are null and void unless funded in the budget.

Testimony For: (Substitute bill) This is the final piece in the development of the performance assessment system and it is needed to keep on schedule. There is a need to provide resources to assist schools and students in meeting new rigorous state academic standards. There is a need for additional resources that are not in this version of the bill that are intended to be "kid directed" such as a supplement to the Learning Assistance Program. The standards in the performance assessment system represent expectations that are clear and straightforward; continuous improvement is needed. Local school districts now need to take the responsibility and leadership in implementing the assessment system. There is a need for targeted assistance to struggling schools.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: (In support) Representative Quall, prime sponsor; Steve Mullin, Washington Roundtable; and Don Blunell, Association of Washington Businesses.

(In support with concerns) Jim Crawford, Office of Financial Management; and Bob Butts, Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction.