

SENATE BILL REPORT

SHB 2066

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Education, March 26, 2001

Title: An act relating to educator preparation and mentoring.

Brief Description: Enhancing educator preparation and mentoring.

Sponsors: By House Committee on Education (originally sponsored by Representatives Keiser, Talcott, Quall, Anderson, Haigh, Romero, Ericksen, D. Schmidt, Conway, Pearson, Schindler, Cox, Edmonds, Santos and Kenney).

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Education: 3/21/01, 3/26/01 [DP-WM].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

Signed by Senators McAuliffe, Chair; Eide, Vice Chair; Carlson, Finkbeiner, Kastama, Kohl-Welles, Rasmussen and Regala.

Staff: Kelly Simpson (786-7403)

Background: Current law establishes the Teacher Assistance Program (TAP) which is a state-funded program designed to offer mentoring and support services for beginning teachers, or experienced teachers who are having difficulties. Current TAP services include: (1) assistance by mentor teachers who must provide a source of continued and sustained support to both beginning teachers (and experienced teachers who need assistance); (2) workshops for the training of mentor and beginning teachers; and (3) the use of substitutes to give mentor, beginning, and experienced teachers opportunities to jointly evaluate teaching situations and to give mentor teachers time to observe and assist their assigned teachers in the classroom.

Summary of Bill: The Teacher Assistance Program is replaced with the Peer Mentor Program, the purpose of which is to nurture professional growth and excellence in beginning teachers through special training and assistance from experienced and trained peer mentors. To the extent funds are made available by the Legislature, the Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI) must distribute funds to school districts offering eligible peer mentor programs.

Eligible Peer Mentor Programs: An eligible peer mentor program is a program offering beginning teachers at least the following services: (1) an orientation process to help them prepare for the start of a school year; (2) the assignment of a peer mentor; (3) the provision by peer mentors of strategies, training, and guidance in specified educational areas; (4) measures to allow beginning teachers and peer mentors time to observe each other and to work effectively together; (5) assistance with incorporating the essential academic learning requirements into instructional plans; (6) assistance in the development of a professional

growth plan; (7) strong collaboration between the peer mentor, the beginning teacher, and the teacher's principal; and (8) stipends for peer mentors, and, at the school district's option, for beginning teachers. Eligible peer mentor programs may serve more experienced teachers if funding is available and if assistance to beginning teachers is not adversely impacted.

To the extent funded, the SPI must operate a mentor academy to help school districts provide training for peer mentors. The SPI must also simplify and minimize reporting requirements for the peer mentor program and by October 31 of each even-numbered year report to the Governor and the Legislature regarding an assessment of the program.

By December 1, 2001, school districts must incorporate into their state-funded assistance programs for beginning teachers criteria 1-6 mentioned above. Until December 1, 2001, school districts may receive state funds to assist beginning teachers without meeting the specified requirements.

Cooperating Teacher Stipends: If funding is made available by the Legislature, the SPI must provide stipends to school districts or educational service districts for cooperating teachers.—Cooperating teachers are teachers who supervise student teachers who are fulfilling their student teaching requirements.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on March 5, 2001.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed. However, sections 2 and 3 are null and void if not funded in the budget.

Testimony For: The current Teacher Assistance Program is not very effective. This bill would create the more comprehensive Peer Mentor Program and would establish the Peer Mentor Academy to train local mentors. Many components of the Peer Mentor Program outlined in the bill came from current successful pilot projects. These pilot projects have improved teacher retention and allow for district flexibility. Finally, three beginning teachers spoke to how important and effective experienced mentors are to their performance as new teachers.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Representative Keiser; Nichole Reitz, Jessica Peters, Highline School District; Jack Stanford, Renton School District; Rainer Houser, AWSP; Greg Williamson, OSPI; Dan Steele, WSSDA.