

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5838

As of February 23, 2001

Title: An act relating to improving student achievement.

Brief Description: Providing grants to districts to foster education reform and improve student achievement.

Sponsors: Senators McAuliffe, Finkbeiner, Kastama, Winsley, Carlson, Parlette, Morton, Horn, Oke, West, Deccio, Hewitt and Rasmussen; by request of Governor Locke; Superintendent of Public Instruction.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Education: 2/26/01.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Staff: Susan Mielke (786-7422)

Background: Washington's public schools are regulated by the state Constitution, federal and state laws and rules, and the policies of the local school districts. The majority of the state laws governing education are contained in Title 28A of the Revised Code of Washington (RCW). Additionally, there are other laws that address education matters and impact the operation of public schools and school districts, including collective bargaining provisions, the Administrative Procedure Act, election laws, and taxation laws.

Summary of Bill: All of Title 28A is repealed, effective in 2004, except for Chapter 28A.655 RCW, which addresses academic achievement and accountability. Two demonstration programs, the flexibility grant program and the alternative compensation system grant program, are created to help with the process of rewriting the education laws, which will go into effect once the current laws are repealed.

Flexibility grant program: Selected schools and school districts that receive grants under this program are exempt from most state laws and rules to provide greater flexibility to increase student achievement. School districts and schools must still comply with health, safety, and civil rights laws, participate in the statewide CTBS and WASL testing, and report information necessary for calculating state funding. Each participating school district must enter a performance contract with the Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI). Additionally, the district must enter into a performance contract with the schools within their school district. Schools meeting or exceeding their goals for student achievement receive a financial reward.

Alternative compensation system grant program: Grants are provided to selected school districts that voluntarily join with their teachers to design a career ladder compensation system by July 1, 2003.

Planning grants: Any school district interested in participating in either the flexibility grant program or the alternative compensation system grant program may apply for a planning grant. Planning grant recipients are chosen by the Governor and SPI based on the level of the school district's commitment and need for financial assistance. Priority is given to school districts applying for both grant programs.

Technical assistance: SPI must contract with a team of experts to provide technical assistance to the grant recipients of both programs. The experts must help the Governor and SPI plan a statewide student achievement conference for the planning grant recipients. After attending the conference, the school district may apply for a flexibility grant or an alternative compensation system grant.

Awarding the grants: Grant application information is specified. The grant applications are reviewed by an independent expert review panel selected by the Governor and SPI. The Governor and SPI make awards based on the panel's recommendations.

Evaluation: The Governor and SPI select an evaluator to evaluate the grant programs.

Task Force: The Governor and SPI must convene a task force of six to eight people to coordinate the process of rewriting the education laws. Parents, teachers, classified staff, principals, superintendents, school boards, local bargaining units, and the business community must be represented on the task force. The task force must consider input from the school districts and schools receiving grants. The task force must make recommendations by January 1, 2004.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on February 20, 2001.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.