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**Education Committee**

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**HB 1989**

**Brief Description:** Changing the learning assistance program.

**Sponsors:** Representatives McDermott, Talcott, Quall, Hunter, Kenney and Rockefeller; by request of Governor Locke.

**Brief Summary of Bill**

- Refocuses the state's Learning Assistance Program for struggling students to eliminate the achievement gap, provide more flexibility for districts that meet the state's reading and mathematics goals and provide technical planning assistance to districts that do not meet those goals.
- Removes the funding allocation method in current law and leaves the formula to the biennial budget act.

**Hearing Date:** 2/26/03

**Staff:** Susan Morrissey (786-7111).

**Background:**

Washington's Learning Assistance Program (LAP) has been in operation for 22 years. The program is designed to help students in kindergarten through ninth grade who need additional time and assistance to achieve basic skills in reading, mathematics, language arts and readiness skills. Schools districts apply to the office of the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) for program funds, submitting a program plan to the agency. The OSPI must approve the districts' program plans before any funds are released. The plans may include a variety of activities and services targeted to struggling students. However, they must include the following activities: consulting teachers, instructional support staff, in-service training for classroom teachers and parents, tutoring assistance, counseling services, and special instructional programs.

Since the second Doran decision in 1983, funding for the LAP has been considered part of basic education. The Legislature has appropriated \$130,631,000 for the program for the 2001-2003 biennium. The budget provided a funding rate of \$407.39 per full-time student for the 2001-2003 school year and \$404.78 per full-time student in the 2002-2003 school

year. The money is allocated to school districts using a formula that includes both student achievement on norm-references tests and a poverty factor. The formula is included in the state's biennial budget. Once the districts have received the funding, they may distribute it as necessary to assist eligible low-performing students anywhere in their districts. In many districts, the LAP funds are blended with funding from the federal Title I program. During the biennium, Washington received \$266,587,000 for the Title I program.

**Summary of Bill:**

The LAP is refocused to help school districts understand the nature of their achievement gaps and to guide districts in their efforts to provide effective and efficient program practices. The program will help participating and underachieving students in kindergarten through ninth grade who need additional assistance in reading, mathematics, writing, or the readiness skills associated with those subjects. The students will be identified using state and district basic skills assessments.

School districts must apply to OSPI for LAP funds. In order to receive the funds, the districts must develop and obtain OSPI approval of a LAP plan. The plan will include district and school-level data on reading, writing, and mathematics, the processes to be used to identify underachieving students, and the components of accelerated learning plans for participating students. It will also describe how the school will use assessments and intentional instructional strategies, staff development plans and plans to coordinate resources and school improvement and strategic plans to support underachieving students. Finally, the plan will include a program evaluation component.

The LAP program may be used to support extended learning, professional development, consulting teachers, tutoring, and parent outreach and support.

School districts must submit an annual LAP plan to OSPI. Districts that are meeting their reading and mathematic goals will have their plans automatically approved. Districts that are not meeting their goals will have their plans reviewed by OSPI and will receive technical planning assistance from the office unless the district is in state or federal school improvement. OSPI will adopt rules for the program and monitor district implementation least once every four years.

Every school district with an approved plan is eligible for LAP funding. The funds will be distributed based on the instructions in the biennial appropriations act. The distribution formula is for district allocation purposes only.

The existing laws governing the program are repealed.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Requested on 2/19/03.

**Effective Date:** The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.