

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1989

As Reported by House Committee On:

Education

Title: An act relating to the learning assistance program.

Brief Description: Changing the learning assistance program.

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

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Education: 2/26/03, 3/5/03 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Refocuses the state's Learning Assistance Program to eliminate the achievement gap, promote more effective programs for struggling students, and provide technical assistance, including school improvement assistance, to districts that do not meet academic improvement goals..
- Requires the Superintendent of Public Instruction to distribute state funds using a poverty factor, and leaves the funding formula to the biennial budget act.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 10 members: Representatives Quall, Chair; McDermott, Vice Chair; Talcott, Ranking Minority Member; Tom, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Anderson, Cox, Haigh, Hunter, McMahan and Rockefeller.

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. School districts apply to 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 Substitute 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 twelfth grade who need additional assistance in reading, mathematics, writing, or in the readiness skills associated with those subjects. The students will be identified using state and district basic skills assessments.

School districts must apply annually to the OSPI for LAP funds. In order to receive the funds, the districts must develop and obtain OSPI approval of a LAP plan. By the start of the 2004-2005 school year, 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, plans to coordinate resources, and school improvement plans to support underachieving students. Finally, the plan will include a program evaluation component. Districts are encouraged to include these components in their 2003-2004 plans as well.

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

The OSPI will provide a varying level of technical assistance to school districts based on

their achievement results in reading and mathematics, over time. The OSPI will offer school improvement assistance to school districts that include schools that fail to meet state academic improvement goals for three consecutive years. The OSPI will offer, and school districts will accept school improvement assistance for schools that fail to meet academic improvement goals for five or more consecutive years. School improvement includes but is not limited to an educational audit and performance agreement. The audit will be presented to the community in a public meeting.

The OSPI will adopt rules for the program and monitor district implementation at least once every four years.

Every school district with an approved plan is eligible for funding through the LAP. The funds will be distributed based on a poverty factor and 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.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

Students in grades 10 through 12 are eligible for the program and the program implementation is phased over two school years. The distribution formula will include a poverty factor. School districts with schools that fail to achieve academic improvement goals for three consecutive years will be offered school improvement assistance. School districts with schools that fail to meet academic improvement goals for five consecutive years will accept school improvement assistance. School improvement assistance is defined. The intent section is revised, the differential approval process was removed, and clarifying language is added in a number of places.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on February 19, 2003.

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

Testimony For: Under current law, school districts that are successful in raising the achievement of struggling students lose their funding from LAP. School districts that are unsuccessful receive additional state funds. The LAP funding structure needs to be refocused in a way that allows districts to mount and sustain effective programs for struggling students. Using a poverty factor in the distribution formula should solve this problem and, since poverty is a good proxy for lack of achievement, the new formula should result in better programs for struggling students. This legislation refocuses the LAP toward elimination of the achievement gap, a state and national priority. It should

result in funding and planning integration for the LAP, Title I, Initiative 728, and other programs that improve student learning. It also provides field assistance to districts and will help refocus LAP programs based on research-based best practices.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Representative McDermott, prime sponsor; Dr. Terry Bergeson, Superintendent of Public Instruction; Judy Hartmann, Governor's Office; Rainer Houser, Association of Washington School Principals; and Christie Perkins, Washington State Special Education Coalition.