
Education Committee

HB 3032

Brief Description: Providing for a spectrum of education services for the deaf and hard of hearing.

Sponsors: Representatives McDermott, Dickerson, Santos, Kenney, Simpson, D., Wood and Kagi.

Brief Summary of Bill

- By September 1, 2006, every school district must be prepared to offer a spectrum of services, including both oral and sign language-based programs, for students with hearing impairments.
- The Superintendent of Public Instruction will provide information to school districts on advances in research, technology and education for hearing impaired students and will provide professional development for teachers on the educational needs of hearing impaired students.
- A professional with expertise in hearing impairments must be included on any team helping to prepare an individualized education plan for a hearing impaired student.

Hearing Date: 2/2/04

Staff: Susan Morrissey (786-7111).

Background:

During 2003, the House Children and Family Services Committee assembled a Work Group on Deaf Education in Washington (Work Group). The group's purpose was to consider the respective roles of, and the relationships among, the Washington School for the Deaf (WSD), local school districts, educational service districts, community services, and community resources in the delivery of effective education to hearing impaired children throughout the state. In addition, the Work Group considered different appropriate service delivery models for hearing impaired children.

The Work Group included representation from parents and teachers of hearing impaired children, the Governor, the Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI), educators, the Board of Trustees of the Washington School for the Deaf, the Washington Sensory Disabilities Services, and the Infant Toddler Early Intervention Program. In addition, four members of the Senate; a member of the

House Education Committee, and the members of the House Children and Family Services Committee served on the Work Group.

The Work Group held three meetings over the course of the interim to discuss a range of issues, including current service delivery in the state from newborn hearing screening and early intervention services through the P-12 system, technological advances relating to hearing impairment, and the most recent research on outcomes and costs relating to hearing impairment.

At the final meeting of the Work Group, the members developed consensus statements, which reflect the basic principles agreed upon by all of the members of the Work Group, and goals and policy recommendations, which are based upon those consensus statements.

Summary of Bill:

The legislature finds that the quality of education for and expectations of children who are deaf or hard of hearing should be equivalent to those for all children. The legislature also finds that no single educational approach can meet the needs of all students who are hearing impaired and that these students should be educated in the least restrictive environment. In addition, services for hearing impaired students should be guided by research, span the spectrum of available options, and respect the choices of families. Finally, the legislature finds that unbiased and comprehensive information about the spectrum of communication and educational options should be made available to families when a child is enrolled in prekindergarten through twelfth grade and when education plan transition services are available to a hearing impaired individual at age 14.

By September 1, 2006, each school district must be prepared to offer a spectrum of services for students who are deaf or hard of hearing. The services must include both sign language and oral language based programming and must correspond to the educational approach selected for the child by the child's parents or guardian. The district may contract with an outside entity for the services.

School districts must include a professional with expertise in hearing impairment on any team that is preparing an individualized instruction plan for a student with hearing impairments.

The Superintendent of Public Instruction will provide school districts with information on advances in research, technology, and education for children with hearing impairments. The SPI will also provide professional development for educational professionals throughout the state on the educational needs of students with hearing impairments.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 26, 2004.

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