

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5603

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Education, February 4, 2004

Title: An act relating to teaching skills to strengthen family communication and relationship skills.

Brief Description: Providing for a family preservation education program.

Sponsors: Senators Swecker, Jacobsen, Sheahan, Shin, Oke, Kastama, Hargrove, Stevens, Winsley and Rasmussen.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Education: 2/12/03, 2/4/04 [DPS].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5603 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Johnson, Chair; Finkbeiner, Vice Chair; Carlson, Eide, McAuliffe, Pflug, Rasmussen and Schmidt.

Staff: Heather Lewis-Lechner (786-7448)

Background: Currently, there are no statutes requiring a family preservation course to be taught in Washington high schools. The State Board of Education rules requires that high schools provide an opportunity to take at least one course in Home & Family Life. Program frameworks have been developed by the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) to fulfill this requirement. The Home & Family Life courses generally are intended to prepare students for family life, work life, and careers. The courses are broad based and touch on issues such as interpersonal relationships or parenting.

Summary of Substitute Bill: OSPI may develop a model family preservation education program curricula and make the model available to school districts on OSPI's website. The curricula, if developed, must, at a minimum, include instruction on: conflict management skills, communication skills, financial responsibility and parenting responsibility.

Each school district board of directors are encouraged to develop and adopt a family preservation education program curricula and encouraged to offer a one-credit course in high school. The program curricula may be submitted to and approved by OSPI if the model OSPI curricula is not used.

Student participation in the family preservation education program is not mandatory.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: All provisions are made permissive and districts are encouraged to develop the curriculum and offer a one-credit course in high school.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on February 4, 2003.

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

Testimony For: This bill is a long-term solution to a large problem. Dysfunctional marriages often result in dysfunctional kids. Statistics are clear that kids from divorce have significant increased involvement in crime and higher school drop-out rates. One way to help address this is to start at the beginning and inform people of the impact they can have on their children. This is an opportunity to be proactive and influence the outcomes of children's lives. This is a way to go to the root of the problem and prevent future problems by teaching kids about the positives of a good healthy relationship. It will help to make this a mandatory course for students to take so that this curriculum does not get squeezed out of schools.

Testimony Against: While we are not opposed to strong family skills, we are opposed to requiring every school to develop a new single curriculum because these issues are already being covered in our schools. If these issues are not being adequately covered in certain schools, then we can address that on a school by school basis, not with a mandate.

Testified: PRO: Senator Hargrove, sponsor; Larry Kvamme, citizen; Jeff Kemp, Families Northwest; Katelyn Rice, FCCLA; Roxanne L. Trees, Seattle School District WA Assoc. of Family and Consumer Science; Marianna LaGreer, Nancy Hawkins, Maureen Fanian, Family and Consumer Science Educators (with concerns); Greg Williamson, OSPI ; CON: Gary King, WEA.