

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 3013

As Reported by House Committee On:
Education

Title: An act relating to kindergarten readiness.

Brief Description: Requiring an inventory of kindergarten readiness assessments.

Sponsors: Representatives Flannigan, Talcott, Quall, Pettigrew, Ormsby, Nixon, Green, Moeller, Kagi, Chase, Lantz, Anderson, Morrell, Simpson, Haigh, Kilmer, Santos, Hasegawa and Kenney.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Education: 2/1/06 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Directs the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction to inventory the kindergarten readiness assessments used by Washington school districts, other states, or recommended by research, and to recommend to the Legislature a single assessment for statewide use and a method for statewide data collection that will allow for analysis and measurement of kindergarten readiness trends.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 13 members: Representatives Quall, Chair; P. Sullivan, Vice Chair; Talcott, Ranking Minority Member; Anderson, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Curtis, Haigh, Hunter, McDermott, Priest, Santos, Shabro, Tom and Wallace.

Staff: Sarah Ream (786-7303).

Background:

Studies indicate that children enter kindergarten with a range of cognitive and social skills that may make a difference in their achievement during the kindergarten year. Research also indicates that children who succeed in kindergarten tend to maintain that advantage as they progress through school.

Factors associated with children's readiness for kindergarten include: socioeconomic status; the child's health; family background characteristics, including the mother's education, single-parent status, and mental health; the home and community environment, including risk

factors and literacy-related factors; and the child's participation in some type of preschool program.

Readiness tests are generally classified into one of two categories: those that measure developmental milestones (such as the Gesell School Readiness Test) and those that measure academic knowledge (such as the Metropolitan Readiness Tests). Other tests combine the two approaches.

The Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI) has developed a voluntary set of benchmarks to assist in assessing children's development, including readiness for kindergarten. These standards reflect expectations for children's performance and behavior. The benchmarks include simple play and learning activities that adults can use to enhance children's development and support school readiness.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

The Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), working with the Governor's early learning efforts, is directed to conduct an inventory of kindergarten readiness assessments used by Washington school districts, or by other states, or recommended by research. The OSPI will recommend a single assessment for statewide use. The assessment must include reading and mathematics and may also take into consideration the benchmarks currently being developed by the OSPI and the Governor's office. The OSPI will also recommend a method for statewide data collection that will allow for analysis and measurement of kindergarten readiness trends. The OSPI will submit its findings and recommendations to the Legislature by December 1, 2006.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

The OSPI is directed to work with the Governor's early learning efforts to conduct the inventory of kindergarten assessments used in Washington and to develop recommendations to the Legislature. The assessment recommended by the OSPI will include, at a minimum, assessment of mathematics and reading, and may take into consideration benchmarks the OSPI and the Governor's office are currently developing.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Testimony For: (Original bill) From birth to age five magic can happen for a child if the parents and community are involved. However, children who start behind tend to fall even further behind. This bill would provide a chance to assess all children when they enter kindergarten and allows measurement of their achievement. The assessments are not about

eligibility to start kindergarten, but give teachers valuable information with which to tailor their lessons. The most important school assessment is the kindergarten assessment, because it gives information to policy makers, parents, and educators.

There is currently little standardization across the state regarding how kindergartners' readiness for school is assessed. This bill will allow for a base line measurement of children's readiness for kindergarten across the state. The use of statewide kindergarten readiness assessments is increasing nationwide. Currently, about 15 states use a statewide assessment. It is important that the assessment be developmentally and culturally appropriate, and assess a child's social, emotional, physical, and cognitive development.

(With concerns) The study of the assessments should be done in conjunction with Washington Learns, the Early Learning Council, and the Early Learning Department (if it is developed by the Legislature). There should also be some flexibility regarding when the OSPI must submit the inventory and recommendations to the Legislature.

Testimony Against: (Original bill) Not all children learn at the same rate and they may be labeled due to the kindergarten assessment. This label will follow the child throughout their school years. Also, there are concerns about who is determining what is assessed and what the assessment intervals will be. Washington is not ready to put in place an assessment that will affect all children.

Persons Testifying: (In support) Representative Flannigan; Brad Dell, The Reading Foundation; Kristin Wiggins; Mary Chapman, Tacoma Public Schools; Bonnie Beukema, League of Education Voters; Marcia Riggers, Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction; Lonnie Johnss-Brown, Washington Association for the Education of Young Children; Lynn Fielding, Kennewick School District Reading Foundation; Don Sloma, Washington Health Foundation; and Kristin Wiggins.

(Opposed) Sally Brownfield, Washington State Indian Education Association.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.