

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6311

As of January 18, 2006

Title: An act relating to providing a salary bonus for teachers in high market demand subjects.

Brief Description: Providing a bonus for teachers in high market demand subjects.

Sponsors: Senators Carrell, Benton, Schoesler, Schmidt, Benson, Shin, Esser and Rasmussen.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Early Learning, K-12 & Higher Education: 1/16/06.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING, K-12 & HIGHER EDUCATION

Staff: Stephanie Yurcisin (786-7438)

Background: The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction released, in March 2005, a report on educator supply and demand in Washington. Among other findings, the report noted that special education, mathematics, and the sciences were shortage subject areas in the state of Washington.

The Professional Educator Standards Board (PESB) advises and provides recommendations to the State Board of Education, the Superintendent of Public Instruction, the Governor, and the Legislature on the full range of issues affecting certified teaching professionals. In addition, the PESB oversees the effectiveness of new basic skills and subject matter assessments required of all teachers prior to state certification.

The Washington State Institute for Public Policy (the Institute) was created by the Washington Legislature in 1983. The Institute is governed by a Board of Directors that represents the Legislature, the Governor, and public universities. The Institute's staff carries out practical, non-partisan research at legislative direction. Fiscal and administrative services are provided by the Evergreen State College.

Summary of Bill: Each school district will receive sufficient allocations to fund a salary bonus equal to ten percent of its base pay for eligible certificated instructional staff who teach math, science, or special education. Districts will receive this funding in addition to the statewide certificated instructional staff salary allocations. School districts will have to certify to the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction that they will provide the bonuses to the eligible certificated staff and that the funding will not supplant any other state or local funding for compensation for these staff.

To be eligible to receive the salary bonus, an individual must be deemed an "expert" in one of those three subject areas, according to criteria developed and established by the Professional Educator Standards Board. The teacher must also spend at least fifty percent of his or her work day in direct classroom instruction in math or science in the middle, junior, or high

school levels, or in special education at any grade level. A "work day" is defined as the time spent in direct classroom instruction and lab instruction or in mentor teaching responsibilities.

The annual bonus will be paid in a lump sum amount, prorated based on a full-time equivalent basis, and will not be included in the definition of "earnable compensation" for purposes of the teacher retirement plans.

The Washington Institute for Public Policy is directed to conduct an examination of the implementation and outcome of this bonus program. The examination must include a review of the impacts on recruitment and retention of math, science, and special education teachers; the change in experience and other quality indicators of teaching performance in these areas; the cost-effectiveness of the bonus programs; and potential changes that would result in more effective instruction and cost-effectiveness. The Washington Institute for Public Policy must provide a report of its findings to the Governor and the appropriate Legislative committees by January 1, 2014.

Appropriation: \$50,000.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 16, 2006.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

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

Testimony For: Recruiting a good pool of teachers is difficult, especially in the fields of math, science, and special education. Having teachers, particularly in the technical fields, who are not properly qualified to teach those subjects puts our students at a disadvantage compared to other states and countries. This bonus would recognize the hard work that students in these fields have to go through to become certified, and would help to offset the opportunity cost of foregoing much more lucrative careers in the private sector.

Testimony Against: This market-based pay component of differentiation in instructional pay is the opposite of WEA's supported pay structure. There is no evidence that this will advance results. Higher compensation should not be restricted to teachers in a certain group. Restoring cost of living adjustments would be the best strategy to adequately compensate teachers.

Testimony Other: Across the state, there will be more students demanding math classes, so we will need more math teachers than are currently teaching. Incentives for math teachers are good, but there are already many strategies that are already being employed (alternative routes, conditional scholarships, transfer pathways, universities offering programs at the community and technical colleges). The bill is good but more work needs to be done to create incentives for teachers to be certified in these areas.

Who Testified: PRO: Senator Mike Carrell, prime sponsor; Nick Reykdal, Central Washington University Students.

CON: Gary King, Washington Education Association.

OTHER: Loretta Seppanen, State Board for Community and Technical Colleges.