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SENATE BILL 5897

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State of Washington

59th Legislature

2005 Regular Session

By Senators McAuliffe, Kastama, Schmidt, Kohl-Welles, Berkey and Rasmussen

Read first time 02/11/2005. Referred to Committee on Early Learning, K-12 & Higher Education.

1 AN ACT Relating to vision exams for school-aged children; adding a  
2 new section to chapter 28A.210 RCW; and creating a new section.

3 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

4 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** The legislature finds that:

5 (1) Vision is the primary sense used in the learning process, and  
6 accounts for eighty percent of our early learning.

7 (2) One in twenty preschoolers and one in four school-age children  
8 have vision problems.

9 (3) Economically disadvantaged children have a proportionally  
10 greater likelihood of having vision problems that can affect their  
11 ability to learn.

12 (4) Often, vision problems in young children can be misinterpreted  
13 as learning disabilities. Inability to concentrate, difficulty  
14 reading, and other manifestations of poor vision can be taken for  
15 attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, dyslexia, and other learning  
16 disabilities.

17 (5) Vision is a complex process and a fundamental factor in the  
18 learning process. Visual function can be described by three  
19 interrelated areas: (a) Visual pathway integrity including eye health,

1 visual acuity, and refractive status; (b) visual efficiency including  
2 accommodation, binocular vision, and eye movements; and (c) visual  
3 information processing including identification and discrimination,  
4 spatial awareness, and integration with other senses. Current  
5 screening for visual acuity at distance only addresses a subset of  
6 abilities in the first of these areas and is inadequate to accomplish  
7 the requirements of RCW 28A.210.020.

8 It is the intent of the legislature to ensure that no child  
9 receives remedial instruction because of an undiagnosed vision problem.

10 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** A new section is added to chapter 28A.210  
11 RCW to read as follows:

12 The superintendent shall require that any school-age child who has  
13 been diagnosed with a learning disability, or is going to be placed in  
14 an alternative learning environment because of a perceived reluctance  
15 or inability to learn at a normal pace, have a complete vision exam.  
16 At a minimum, the complete vision exam must include:

17 (1) Acuity and refraction testing to rule out a sight problem such  
18 as amblyopia;

19 (2) Accommodative function testing to rule out accommodative  
20 dysfunction including accommodative insufficiency and infacility;

21 (3) Motility testing to rule out strabismus, including significant  
22 phoria;

23 (4) Vergence testing to rule out dysfunction and instability of eye  
24 alignment;

25 (5) Eye movement accuracy testing to rule out a tracking problem;  
26 and

27 (6) Ocular health exam including internal and external exam.

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