

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1573

As Reported by House Committee On:
Education

Title: An act relating to dropout prevention, intervention, and retrieval.

Brief Description: Authorizing a statewide program for comprehensive dropout prevention, intervention, and retrieval.

Sponsors: Representatives Quall, Priest, P. Sullivan, Pettigrew, Kenney, Kagi, Wallace, McCoy, Dickerson, Lovick, Santos, Hunt, Hasegawa, Simpson, Pedersen, Morrell, Conway, Lantz, O'Brien and Ormsby; by request of Superintendent of Public Instruction.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Education: 2/13/07, 2/27/07 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Directs the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) to create, administer, and monitor a grant program, known as the "Building Bridges Program," for local partnerships of schools, families, and communities, to address dropout prevention, intervention, and retrieval.
- Provides that one of the grants shall go to a classroom without walls demonstration project that focuses on at-risk youth in three distinct communities and populations.
- Directs Educational Service Districts and workforce development councils to provide training and assistance to grant recipients.
- Directs the OSPI to establish a state-level work group to make recommendations to the Legislature regarding the grant programs.
- Allows basic education dollars to be used to fund community based learning programs that meet certain requirements.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 9 members: Representatives Quall, Chair; Barlow, Vice Chair; Priest, Ranking Minority Member; Anderson, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Haigh, McDermott, Roach, Santos and P. Sullivan.

Staff: Andrew Colvin (786-7304).

Background:

School districts are required to report to the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) on an annual basis regarding student graduation rates, dropout rates, and related data. For the 2004-05 school year, just over 5 percent of students enrolled in grades 9-12, or just under 16,000 students, dropped out of school. Approximately 74 percent of students in grades 9-12 graduated on time.

In 2006 the Washington Learns committee, chaired by Governor Gregoire, issued final recommendations. As part of a number of comprehensive strategies, the committee recommended the establishment of a grant program for school district and community partnerships to prevent students from dropping out of school.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

The Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) is directed to create a program, known as the "Building Bridges Program," to award grants to local partnerships. These partnerships will involve schools, families, and communities and will identify students at risk of dropping out of school, or who have dropped out, and provide those students with assistance and support to facilitate the continuation of their education.

Every partnership must include at least one school district, and shall be led by one of several specified entities. In order to be eligible for a grant, applicants must:

- build or demonstrate a commitment to build a partnership that includes a variety of specified members;
- demonstrate how the grant will enhance any existing dropout prevention and intervention programs in the district;
- provide a 25 percent match from within the partnership, including in-kind contributions;
- track and report data as required by the grant; and
- describe how the program will be sustained beyond initial funding, and the roles of each of the partners.

From the funds appropriated for the grant program, a grant shall be awarded to a classroom without walls learning proposal involving First Place School, the Maxine Mimms Academy, the Yakima Occupational Industries Council, and other partners. This shall be a two-year

demonstration project focusing on three distinct communities and populations. The grant recipient shall submit a report to the Legislature by December 1, 2009.

In consultation with the Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board (WTECB), the OSPI will develop criteria for the grants and evaluate proposals for funding. In addition, the OSPI will undertake a variety of specified oversight and support functions with respect to the grant program and grant recipients.

To support the local partnerships, Educational Service Districts (ESDs) and workforce development councils shall provide them with training and assistance in specified areas, and be available for additional assistance at the request of a local partnership.

The OSPI will establish a state-level work group comprised of various specified state agencies that work with at-risk youth or youth who have dropped out of school. The purpose of the work group will be to make recommendations to the Legislature, develop and track performance measures for the partnerships around the state, and identify research-based and emerging best practices for prevention, intervention, and retrieval programs. Beginning December 1, 2007, the work group will report annually to the Legislature and the Governor with recommendations.

Basic education dollars may be used to fund community-based learning programs that meet certain requirements.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

Special education students, and students who failed the Washington Assessment of Student Learning and dropped out of school, are added as students to be identified by local partnerships. Categories of demographic data that must be collected and reported are expanded. Prosecutors and defenders are added to local partnerships. In carrying out its duties under the program, the OSPI is encouraged to consult with the state-level work group. At least 50 percent of the grant dollars must go to nonprofit corporations acting as lead agencies. Requirements for assistance provided by the ESDs and workforce development councils are revised. Legislators and special education agencies are added to the state-level work group. Duties are added for the state-level work group to examine performance based on local partnership models. Basic education dollars are allowed to be used for community-based learning programs that meet certain requirements.

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.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) In Snohomish County the Workforce Development Council has contracted for programs to assist at-risk youth. One such program is Project STAR (Supporting Teens at Risk). These programs have been successful, and can be easily transferrable to other school districts. A concern with this bill is that too much of the funding seems to go to OSPI rather than directly to the programs. Dropout prevention is critical in our schools. Twenty-five percent of kids dropping out of school is an epidemic, and saving those we can is worth the effort. For at-risk youth, the transition to high school is difficult. Dropout prevention programs focus less on independence and more on bonding, nurturing, and case management, and these are the services needed to get a student back on track. This bill could change lives; it's good for the economy; it builds on existing partnerships and it works. Local initiatives alone are not as effective as a statewide coordinated effort. The ESDs are well positioned to address dropout issues in a comprehensive way, and there are existing programs that are successful and replicable. This bill would provide greater opportunity to do that. It is important, however, to recognize and maintain existing programs that are successful. This bill was developed with a broad group of stakeholders, and incorporates best practices from existing programs. It is important that we have a knowledgeable workforce, and for that reason this bill is a priority for the WTECB. In addition to workforce issues, the impact on our health care system of students dropping out of school is significant. The Building Bridges Program will have a large return on the investment we put into it.

(In support with concerns) This bill does not address retrieval of students who have already dropped out. There are a number of programs, both within community colleges and community-based programs, that are effective for dropout retrieval. However, funding for these programs is threatened because of seat-time requirements in the rules, and this should be fixed. There are some specific issues within the bill that could be improved. For example, the requirement in Section 3 that calls for allowing flexibility may conflict with other language in the bill. The SPI should create an advisory committee to assist with the duties outlined in Section 3.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: (In support) Representative Quall, prime sponsor; Sandra Kelly, North West Prevention Cooperative; Brad Garner, Shohmish County Workforce Development Council; Terry Munther, Education School District 101; Mick Moore, Puget Sound Education School District; Martin Mueller, Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction; Becky Ballbach, Everett Public Schools; Wes Pruitt, Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board; Michael Christianson, Bethel School District; Kathleen Lopp, Washington Association for Career and Technical Education; Susan Longstreth, Bremerton School District; and Sandi Swarthout, Washington Health Foundation.

(In support with concerns) Pat Martinez, Learning Center North; and Renee Mona, Communities in Schools.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.