

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2808

As Reported by House Committee On:
Education

Title: An act relating to providing enhanced counseling and learning opportunities for certain high school students.

Brief Description: Providing additional opportunities to assist students who have not completed all graduation requirements.

Sponsors: Representatives Sullivan, Upthegrove, Quall, Lias, Priest, Green, Conway, Pedersen, Kenney, Hudgins, Santos, Kelley and Ormsby.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Education: 1/25/08, 2/1/08 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Directs the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) to develop information and create a training program regarding enhanced counseling that is targeted to students who complete other high school graduation requirements but have not passed the Washington Assessment of Student Learning.
- Provides grants for enhanced counseling, if funds are appropriated.
- Creates grants for High School Plus programs that include enhanced counseling and learning opportunities for targeted students to complete a diploma as well as make progress in a career pathway that leads to a family wage job, if funds are appropriated.

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, Lias, Roach, Santos and Sullivan.

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.

Staff: Barbara McLain (786-7383).

Background:

The graduating class of 2008 will be the first group of students who must meet the state standard on the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) in addition to meeting other graduation requirements to earn a diploma. The class of 2008 must meet the standard in the Reading and Writing content areas.

Although there are a number of programs and funding sources intended to provide assistance to struggling students, only three state programs or initiatives are targeted specifically to high school students based on their performance on the WASL:

- (1) The Promoting Academic Success (PAS) program provides funds for school districts to offer targeted remediation designed to help students pass the WASL on a retake of the assessment or through an alternative assessment. Currently, funds for the PAS program are expressly for providing services to 11th and 12th grade students.
- (2) Each school must prepare a Student Learning Plan (SLP) for each student who was not successful on the WASL during the previous school year. The SLP identifies the courses and interventions the school will make available to assist the student. The SLP is shared with parents, preferably at a conference, and updated annually as needed.
- (3) In 2007 legislation was enacted creating a pilot program and funding mechanism for two community and technical colleges to offer instruction and courses to students who had met all graduation requirements except meeting the standard on the WASL, with the aim of having the students earn a diploma. Bates and Renton Technical Colleges were selected for the pilot, but programs have not yet been implemented because students will not qualify until after June of 2008.

Under current law, students who have not yet received a high school diploma are eligible to continue attending public schools until they are 21 years old. School districts report the students as enrolled and they generate state and federal funding allocations. Each year more than 7 percent of 12th grade students continue on to a 13th year. The degree to which school districts provide special programs for 13-year seniors is not clear. Until the class of 2008, the only reasons for students to continue attending high school would be because they had not completed course credits required for graduation or were receiving transitional services in special education.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

Enhanced Counseling. The Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) must develop information and training for counselors and mentor teachers, including a training strand at the OSPI Summer Institutes, regarding guidance and counseling for students who have completed other high school graduation requirements but have not passed the WASL and will not be ready to graduate with their class. Guidance and counseling programs for these

students must include support for high school completion plus assistance with a career pathway that leads to additional education and a family wage job.

Programs must also provide information on the local availability of:

- high school completion and/or GED certification options offered by schools, skill centers, and community and technical colleges;
- skills training and tutoring options offered through community-based organizations;
- online learning opportunities targeted to basic skills;
- workforce education and training options and pathways, especially in occupations that will lead to family wage jobs and are in demand by employers; and
- financial aid, including the Opportunity Grant Program.

If funding is provided, the OSPI allocates funds to school districts and Educational Service Districts (ESDs) to offer enhanced guidance, counseling, and assistance for targeted students. The Legislature's intent is to allocate funding primarily on the basis of numbers of targeted students, with allocations to the ESDs where students are more dispersed. The OSPI must annually report on participation and outcomes from the enhanced counseling.

High School Plus Programs. If funding is provided, the OSPI allocates grants to high schools, skill centers, and ESDs to create High School Plus programs for targeted students. High School Plus programs:

- provide skill instruction needed to pass the WASL using flexible scheduling such as part-time, on-line, evening, and weekend courses;
- offer assistance with compiling a collection of evidence alternative assessment;
- provide enhanced counseling;
- connect students with additional learning opportunities in courses or programs that will lead to career pathways and/or postsecondary education and training to earn a family wage job. Learning opportunities can be offered directly by the school or skill center or in partnership with community-based organizations and community and technical colleges.

The grants are competitive, with funds allocated largely on the number of targeted students. The OSPI must announce the first round of grant recipients no later than June 15, 2008. Grant funds are for start-up costs, program development, and ongoing capacity to operate the program. School districts are also authorized to use funds allocated for students under age 21 who are enrolled for purposes of completing a diploma, any funds provided for enhanced counseling programs, and other available resources.

The OSPI must submit a report by September 15, 2009 on the program design and outcomes of High School Plus programs and recommend an ongoing funding mechanism for the program.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

Instead of the OSPI providing information to school districts about the local availability of various learning options and programs, the OSPI must provide information and training for counselors and mentor teachers regarding guidance and counseling programs for targeted

students. Those programs must provide information to students about the local availability of learning options.

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) There is a lot of discussion about the WASL as a graduation requirement. Some students are not going to cross the finish line with their class. But they need to recognize that a diploma is not really the finish line. These students not only need help with their reading and writing skills, they need a vision for the future and a way to get there. The simplicity and flexibility of the bill is quite appealing. There is some concern about online instruction, and references to the WASL are not entirely necessary. However, it is good to recognize that additional resources are needed for planning, instruction, and counseling. Students who are not on track to graduate due to credit deficiencies should also be included.

Ensuring that students are steered toward a family wage job is strongly supported. Guidance and instructional programs for these students, plus additional resources, should be part of the funding allocation for all school districts. This issue should be addressed in a systemic rather than a programmatic way. Other dropout prevention programs engage communities as partners with the schools and build a pyramid of interventions that start early. There is a need for more information and notification. The idea that students can stay enrolled until age 21 is not well communicated. However, information about available options should be locally developed; the OSPI is not necessarily the best provider of that information from a state level.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Sullivan, prime sponsor; Allison Matsumoto, Partnership for Learning; Wendy Rader-Konofalski, Washington Education Association; Suzi Wright, Tulalip Tribes; Wes Pruitt, Workforce Board; and Brian Jeffries, Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.