

FINAL BILL REPORT

SHB 2679

PARTIAL VETO

C 297 L 08

Synopsis as Enacted

Brief Description: Creating programs to improve educational outcomes for students in foster care.

Sponsors: By House Committee on Appropriations (originally sponsored by Representatives Roberts, Pettigrew, Hunt, Hasegawa, Sullivan, Chase, Morrell, McIntire, Santos, Barlow, Simpson, Kenney, Goodman, Wood, Darneille, Lantz and McDonald).

House Committee on Education

House Committee on Appropriations

Senate Committee on Early Learning & K-12 Education

Senate Committee on Ways & Means

Background:

The Puget Sound Educational Service District (PSESD) is one of nine educational service districts in Washington. The PSESD includes 35 school districts in King and Pierce counties plus Bainbridge Island. The students in the PSESD constitute about 38 percent of K-12 public school students in the state.

The educational stability and continuity of school placement for children in foster care has been the subject of legislation in Washington for the past several years. In 2002 the Legislature directed the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS), in cooperation with the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), to convene a working group and prepare a plan to address educational stability and continuity for school-age children entering short-term foster care, and assure that the best interest of the child is a primary consideration in the school placement of a child in short-term foster care.

In response to the recommendations made by the working group, the 2003 Legislature enacted a state policy that, whenever practical and in the best interest of the child, children placed into foster care must remain enrolled in the schools they were attending at the time they entered foster care. Administrative regions of the DSHS were directed to develop protocols with school districts specifying strategies for communication, coordination, and collaboration regarding the status and progress of foster children placed in the region.

To accomplish these tasks the DSHS was directed to establish an oversight committee to develop strategies for maintaining foster children in the schools they were attending at the time they entered foster care and to work with the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) to develop protocols to ensure that educational stability is addressed during the shelter care hearing.

The 2005 Legislature expanded the membership of the oversight committee to include the Higher Education Coordinating Board (HECB), foster youth, former foster youth, and foster parents. The scope of responsibilities of the oversight committee was also expanded to include promotion of opportunities for foster youth to participate in post-secondary education or training.

In 2007 the HECB was directed to create a six-year pilot program to provide outreach, information, and scholarships to foster children to enable them to pursue post-secondary education.

Summary:

Foster Care Program Supervisor. The PSESD is directed to designate a foster care program supervisor. Some of the duties of the supervisor include:

- facilitating the use of educational resources to improve educational outcomes;
- developing and distributing model school policies to improve support and services;
- training directed at educating school and DSHS personnel regarding the need for foster children to have strong relationships with adults at the school as well as access to the various programs;
- coordinating with the homeless education supervisor within the OSPI;
- providing technical assistance to schools with respect to DSHS policies;
- coordinating with the education leads in the DSHS Region 4 (King County) and Region 5 (Pierce and Kitsap Counties) to facilitate completion of interagency agreements for top priority school districts; and
- establishing a model information and data sharing agreement with the DSHS and facilitating completion of these agreements.

Annual Report by the OSPI. The OSPI is required to provide an annual report to the Legislature regarding the educational experiences and progress of the children in out-of-home care. This information must be disaggregated to the extent allowable by privacy laws in order to show which school districts are experiencing the greatest challenges and successes.

Grant Program. The PSESD is to create a grant program for local school districts to improve stability and educational outcomes for students in foster care. The grants are to be awarded to the districts with the highest incidence of Child Protective Services (CPS) removals and foster care placements. The grant money must supplement, not supplant, current funding. Grant money may be used for activities such as tutoring, transportation, and additional counseling support as well as for fees normally covered by parents for such items as extracurricular activities, school pictures, and yearbooks.

The PSESD must submit an annual report to the Legislature regarding grant program outcomes.

School District-Based Foster Care Recruitment Pilot Programs. Subject to the availability of funds, the DSHS must fund two school district-based pilot programs. These pilot programs are to coordinate with existing foster care recruitment contracts. Funds may be used to expand existing contracts or to fund the DSHS Children's Administration staff. The DSHS is to

report annually to the Legislature on the increase or decrease of foster homes within the pilot areas.

Release of Educational Records to the DSHS. School districts are required to respond within two school days to requests from the DSHS for records of children in foster care.

Votes on Final Passage:

House	97	0	
Senate	49	0	(Senate amended)
House	94	0	(House concurred)

Effective: June 12, 2008

Partial Veto Summary: The governor vetoed the sections directing the PSESD to designate a foster care program supervisor and to create a grant program. The governor also vetoed the section creating a school-district based foster care recruitment pilot program and the section providing that the bill is null and void if not funded in the budget.