
Education Committee

E2SSB 6673

Brief Description: Creating learning opportunities.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Ways & Means (originally sponsored by Senators McAuliffe, Brandland, Hobbs, McDermott, Rasmussen, Weinstein, Oemig, Tom, Kauffman, Hargrove, Fairley, Franklin and Shin; by request of Superintendent of Public Instruction).

Brief Summary of Engrossed Second Substitute Bill

- Creates an Extended Learning Opportunities Program for students not on track to graduate that includes required notification of students about their graduation status and use of existing resources to provide various types of instructional services.
- Requires Educational Service Districts to provide outreach to community-based organizations serving non-English speaking populations and other student groups to inform them about learning opportunities.
- Directs the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction to explore on-line curriculum in other languages and provide a report on dyslexia pilot reading programs.
- Requires school districts to provide all ninth grade students the option to take the PSAT at no cost, if funds are provided.
- Directs the Professional Educator Standards Board to develop recommendations to improve the standards for teacher preparation and the expected teacher competencies in how to teach English language learner students.
- Allows eighth grade students in the first year of the Washington College Bound Scholarship an additional year to sign up for the scholarship.

Hearing Date: 2/26/08

Staff: Barbara McLain (786-7383).

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.

Background:

Provisions for Students Not on Track To Graduate. Beginning with the class of 2008, students will graduate from high school if they:

1. earn the 19 minimum course requirements established by the state and any additional local school district requirements;
2. meet the state standard on the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) or an approved alternative assessment in Reading and Writing, and through the class of 2013, either meet the standard in mathematics or earn additional mathematics credits;
3. complete a culminating project; and
4. create a high school and beyond plan.

There are a number of programs and funding sources that can provide extended learning opportunities for struggling students, such as the state Learning Assistance Program (LAP), federal Title I, Promoting Academic Success (PAS), and Student Achievement Program (I-728) funds. There are also competitive grant programs for extended learning, such as state and federal Community Learning Center Programs and dropout prevention through the Building Bridges Program authorized in 2007.

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 13th year seniors is not clear.

School districts must prepare an individual student learning plan (SLP) for each fifth grade student and each eighth through 12th grade student who was not successful on any content area of the previous year's WASL. An SLP must include the courses, competencies, and other steps needed to be taken by the student to meet state academic standards. The student's parent or guardian must be notified about the SLP, and a student's progress must be reported to the parent at least annually.

Curriculum in Non-English Languages. There are more than 77,000 English language learner (ELL) students enrolled in the state Transitional Bilingual Program. Although these students speak 177 different languages, two-thirds speak Spanish, and nearly 90 percent speak one of 10 major languages. The Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), the Mexican Education Department, and the Yakima School District have entered a partnership to provide on-line curriculum in Spanish in core academic subjects. School districts that agree to provide a trained facilitator and the necessary computer support can access the curriculum at no charge.

College Readiness Assessments. Students typically take such tests as the SAT, ACT, ASSET, or COMPASS in their senior year for purposes of college entrance or college course placement. Some high schools in Washington are working with local colleges and universities to administer college placement tests to students in grades 10 or 11 as a way to provide early information about college readiness and for guidance and counseling purposes. The 2007-09 biennial budget provides \$675,000 to support college readiness assessment fees for 11th grade students in the 2008-09 school year.

The PSAT is a national standardized test in reading, writing, and mathematics that students typically take in 11th grade, although some students take it in 10th grade. In addition to score information, the PSAT provides students with access to on-line information about career and college exploration and their potential for success in Advance Placement courses.

Dyslexia Pilot Reading Program. The 2005-07 and 2007-09 biennial budgets have provided funding for dyslexia pilot reading programs. A total of 14 schools have received two-year grants to implement research-based curricula that focuses on reading skills known to be a challenge for dyslexic students. Pilot schools have a project coordinator who receives intensive training and oversees professional development for other teachers. Results from the first cohort of schools indicate increased student scores in reading fluency and phonological awareness, two of the target skill areas.

Teaching ELL Students. There are three primary ways to provide instruction for ELL students: bilingual education in two languages, pull-out tutoring (often by an instructional assistant), or Sheltered English where the regular classroom teacher uses various techniques to provide instruction in language and academic content for ELL students along with the rest of the class.

Legislation enacted in 2007 created a demonstration project for improving ELL instruction. Funding was provided for the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (NWREL) to study the competencies for developing academic English skills that all classroom teachers should acquire in initial teacher preparation programs and through professional development. An interim report is due November 1, 2008.

The Professional Educator Standards Board (PESB) is the state agency with responsibility for policy and oversight of Washington's system of educator preparation and certification.

Washington College Bound Scholarship. The 2007 Legislature created a program where low-income students are notified that they can receive a college scholarship if they sign a pledge in seventh or eighth grade to graduate from high school with a C average and not have any felony convictions. If students keep the pledge and are still low-income at graduation, they receive the scholarship. Students who were in eighth grade in 2007-08 only had one year to sign up for the new scholarship program.

Summary of Bill:

Provisions for Students Not on Track To Graduate. The Extended Learning Opportunities Program (ELO Program) is created for 11th and 12th grade students who are not on track to meet state or local high school graduation requirements, and for eighth grade students who are not on track to meet the state standard on the WASL. Under the ELO Program:

- Schools must provide early notice to students and their parents about their graduation status and information about remedial learning programs and courses available at the school, local skill center, or community and technical college. Beginning with the graduating class of 2008, students must be notified in the spring of eighth grade, in the spring of 11th grade, and if necessary in the spring of the 12th grade. The notice may be provided through school conferences, written notification, or in the SLP. If feasible, the notice must be translated into the primary language of the family.

- School districts must make available to 12th grade students who have failed to meet graduation requirements, the option for continuing enrollment in the school district. Basic Education program funding can be used to support instruction for these students as allowed under current law.
- Assistance for eligible eighth, 11th, and 12th grade students can occur at various times and locations and include various types of instructional services. One of the services may be reading specialists at the Educational Service Districts (ESDs) to provide professional development to educators and direct services to students.
- Resources from the LAP can be used to support ELO Programs.

The ESDs must develop and provide a program of outreach to community-based organizations serving non-English speaking populations and minority, low-income, and special education students. The purpose of the outreach is to inform students about ELO Programs and other educational opportunities addressed in the bill. The ESDs must consult and coordinate with the Governor's minority commissions and the Office of Indian Affairs in conducting the outreach and are also encouraged to partner with local business communities.

Curriculum in Non-English Languages. If funds are appropriated, the OSPI must explore on-line curriculum support currently available in languages other than English, and report to the Legislature by December 1, 2008, with recommendations for on-line support in other languages that would most appropriately assist ELL students.

College Readiness Assessments. If funds are appropriated, school districts must provide all ninth grade students the option to take the PSAT at no cost. The OSPI enters an agreement with the firm administering the PSAT to reimburse the firm for the testing fees.

Dyslexia Pilot Reading Program. By September 15, 2008, the pilot schools must report to the OSPI regarding lessons learned about effective intervention, best practices for professional development, and strategies to build capacity among teaching staff. By December 31, 2008, the OSPI must aggregate the school reports and provide a report and recommendations to the appropriate committees of the Legislature, including how the lessons and best practices can be shared and implemented statewide.

Teaching ELL Students. The PESB must convene a workgroup to develop recommendations to improve the knowledge and skills standards for teacher preparation and expected teacher competencies in how students acquire language, how to teach academic content to ELL students, and how to demonstrate cultural competence. Recommendations must also include what professional development components are most effective for current teachers.

The workgroup includes the Washington Association of Colleges for Teacher Education; the Migrant and Bilingual Education Office at the OSPI; school districts with significant numbers of ELL students of a single language and multiple languages; teachers; principals; and the Higher Education Coordinating Board. The workgroup must include members from diverse cultural backgrounds and a balanced geographic representation. The PESB must invite participation from the NWREL, and the workgroup will look to the ELL demonstration projects authorized in 2007 and the NWREL's research and evaluation.

An interim report is due December 1, 2008, with a final report due December 1, 2009.

Washington College Bound Scholarship. Students who are in the eighth grade during the first year of the College Bound Scholarship (2007-08) have two years to sign up for the scholarship.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on February 15, 2008.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.