

SB 5497-S.E - DIGEST

(AS OF SENATE 2ND READING 3/1/2007)

Provides that, subject to the availability of funds appropriated for this purpose, the office of the superintendent of public instruction shall create a grant program to local partnerships of schools, families, and communities to begin the phase in of a statewide comprehensive dropout prevention, intervention, and retrieval system. This program shall be known as the building bridges program. For purposes of this act, a "building bridges program" means a local partnership of schools, families, and communities that provides all of the following programs or activities: (1) A system that identifies individual students at risk of dropping out from middle through high school based on local predictive data, including state assessment data starting in the fourth grade, and provides timely interventions for such students and for dropouts, including a plan for educational success as already required by the student learning plan as defined under RCW 28A.655.061. Students identified shall include foster care youth and youth involved in the juvenile justice system;

(2) Coaches or mentors for students as necessary;

(3) Staff responsible for coordination of community partners that provide a seamless continuum of academic and nonacademic support in schools and communities;

(4) Retrieval or reentry activities; and

(5) Alternative educational programming, including, but not limited to, career and technical education preparatory programs and online learning opportunities.

Provides that, in awarding the grants under this act, the office of the superintendent of public instruction shall prioritize schools or districts with dropout rates and truancy rates above the statewide average and shall attempt to award building bridges program grants to different geographic regions of the state. Eligible recipients shall be one of the following entities acting as a lead agency for the local partnership: A school district, a tribal school, an area workforce development council, an educational service district, an accredited institution of higher education, a vocational skills center, a federally recognized tribe, a community organization, or a nonprofit 501(c)(3) corporation. If the recipient is not a school district, at least one school district must be identified within the partnership.

Directs the office of the superintendent of public instruction to establish a state-level work group that includes K-12 and state agencies that work with youth who have dropped out or are at risk of dropping out of school.

Provides that, to assist and enhance the work of the building bridges programs established in this act, the state-

level work group shall: (1) Identify and make recommendations to the legislature for the reduction of fiscal, legal, and regulatory barriers that prevent coordination of program resources across agencies at the state and local level;

(2) Develop and track performance measures and benchmarks for each partner agency or organization across the state; and

(3) Identify research-based and emerging best practices regarding prevention, intervention, and retrieval programs.

Requires the work group to report to the legislature and the governor on an annual basis beginning December 1, 2007, with recommendations for implementing emerging best practices, needed additional resources, and eliminating barriers.