

# HOUSE BILL REPORT

## HB 2654

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**As Reported by House Committee On:**  
Education

**Title:** An act relating to providing for elementary math specialists.

**Brief Description:** Providing for elementary math specialists.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Wallace, Seaquist, Probst, Quall, Ormsby, Simpson, Kelley and Anderson.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:**

Education: 1/20/10, 2/2/10 [DPS].

**Brief Summary of Substitute Bill**

- Directs the Professional Educator Standards Board to adopt a specialty endorsement for Elementary Mathematics Specialists, based on standards that include enhanced mathematics content knowledge for elementary grades and skills in specified instructional strategies.

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### HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

**Majority Report:** The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 13 members: Representatives Quall, Chair; Maxwell, Vice Chair; Priest, Ranking Minority Member; Hope, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Dammeier, Fagan, Hunt, Johnson, Liias, Orwall, Probst, Santos and Sullivan.

**Staff:** Barbara McLain (786-7383).

**Background:**

Teaching Endorsements.

The Professional Educator Standards Board (PESB) is the state agency that establishes requirements for teacher certification.

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A teacher must have an endorsement to his or her teaching certificate to teach a particular subject. At the secondary level, endorsements are based on specific academic subjects (e.g., mathematics, science, English, etc.). A teacher with an elementary education endorsement can teach any academic subject to students in grades kindergarten through eighth.

The PESB has also created a procedure for adding specialty endorsements that are not required for the teacher to teach that subject. To date, there are three specialty endorsements: (1) Deaf Education; (2) Gifted Education; and (3) Environmental and Sustainability Education.

A number of states, including Michigan, Ohio, Virginia, and Arizona, have created some form of endorsement in teaching elementary mathematics. In some cases the state requires this endorsement for teaching certain grade levels; in other cases the endorsement is an optional supplement.

#### Prototypical School Funding Formula.

Legislation enacted in 2009 establishes a new state funding formula for basic education to take effect September 1, 2011. The formula will allocate funds based on assumed levels of staff and other resources for so-called "prototypical" schools that serve an assumed number of students at the elementary, middle, and high school level. The structure of the formula, which appears in statute, provides allocations for classroom teachers at an assumed class size, plus other building-level staff such as principals, teacher-librarians, counselors, office support, etc. One of these staffing categories is "professional development coaches." The staffing categories are "for allocation purposes only;" actual staffing decisions are made by school districts.

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#### **Summary of Substitute Bill:**

##### Elementary Mathematics Specialist.

The PESB is directed to develop standards for and adopt a specialty endorsement for Elementary Mathematics Specialist (Specialist) by July 1, 2011. A Specialist is an elementary teacher with the PESB-approved specialty elementary mathematics endorsement. Specialists can provide direct instruction to elementary students using an itinerant teacher model where the Specialist moves from classroom to classroom, or serve as a coach by demonstrating best practices to regularly assigned classroom teachers using a research-based coaching model. School districts are encouraged to place a priority on schools with large numbers of students struggling in mathematics when assigning Specialists.

The standards for the specialty endorsement must include demonstration of enhanced mathematics content knowledge and skills necessary to coach elementary teachers, as well as knowledge and skills in instructional strategies that engage students in learning mathematics and are targeted for students struggling with mathematics. To the maximum extent possible, additional knowledge and skills for the endorsement must be performance-based and require a minimum amount of additional coursework. To the extent possible, any coursework required should be widely accessible across the state.

### Prototypical School Funding Formula.

Beginning September 1, 2011, the description of professional development coaches as a staffing category in the prototype school funding formula includes Specialists.

### **Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:**

A separate allocation of one Specialist per elementary school in the prototypical school funding formula is removed. Instead, Specialists are included as a type of professional development coach in the formula. The PESB must develop the standards for the new specialty endorsement by July 1, 2011. The description of the role of a Specialist is revised to include not only direct instruction to students, but also serving as a coach by demonstrating best practices to the regularly assigned teacher, using a research based coaching model. The standards for the specialty endorsement reflect the coaching role.

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**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

**Effective Date of Substitute Bill:** The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed, except for section 2, relating to including Specialists in the description of professional development coaches within the prototypical school funding formula, which takes effect September 1, 2011.

### **Staff Summary of Public Testimony:**

(In support) We are searching for the most effective way to improve math education. The concept here is that instead of bringing all of our elementary teachers up in math, we would provide Specialists who would go from classroom to classroom and provide expert instruction. This is a way to see our math scores improve in an expedited fashion. It is important to include a staffing allocation in the funding model, but still allow school districts to decide how best to use that resource.

The need to increase the knowledge and skills of elementary teachers in math is well documented and strongly supported. National organizations endorse the notion of using Specialists at the elementary level. However, it is too daunting a task to ask one individual in a building to assume all math instruction. A more reasonable model would be for these Specialists to work with other teachers. This requires leadership skills as well as math skills, which should be reflected in the endorsement standards. If the cost is prohibitive, we would suggest focusing first on the highest need schools.

(In support with concerns) We talk about increased math and science requirements, but this offers a real solution to those challenges. We need to get our younger students engaged in math. Strengthening math instruction has been a top priority for parents and educators as a whole. This is one piece of the solution, but there are other pieces that need to be covered, including curriculum and improved instruction at the middle and high school levels.

Math expertise should be provided for all elementary teachers. The role of a Specialist should be as a coach. The idea that coursework should be widely accessible should not be interpreted to mean online learning. Also, the more these teachers know, the more they can convey to their students. Requiring "minimum" coursework might defeat that objective.

(Opposed) None.

**Persons Testifying:** (In support) Representative Wallace, prime sponsor; Greta Bornemann, Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction; and Lucinda Young, Washington Education Association.

(In support with concerns) Jennifer Wallace, Professional Educator Standards Board; Julie Suchanek, The Evergreen State College; and Kim Howard, Washington State Parent Teacher Association.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying:** None.