

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5551

As of February 5, 2009

Title: An act relating to recess periods for elementary school students.

Brief Description: Regarding recess periods for elementary school students.

Sponsors: Senators Franklin, Keiser, Kastama, Marr, Murray, McDermott, Shin, McAuliffe, Fairley, Kline, Pridemore, Oemig, Regala, Kauffman and Kohl-Welles.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Early Learning & K-12 Education: 2/05/09.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION

Staff: Susan Mielke (786-7422)

Background: Current law establishes the total number of instructional hours that school districts must provide students. The instructional hours must cover the essential academic learning requirements and other subjects and activities that a school district deems appropriate. Instructional hours may include recess. However, school districts are not specifically required to provide a daily recess period.

The duties of the Superintendent of Public Instruction include promoting the adoption of school-based curricula and policies that provide quality, daily physical education for all students, and to encourage policies that provide all students with opportunities for physical activity outside of formal classes.

Current law does require that every public school student in voluntary all-day kindergarten or in first through eighth grades receive instruction in physical education and high school students must earn at least two physical education credits, unless excused. Additionally, there are goals for school districts to provide at least 150 minutes of quality physical education in grades first through eighth every week by 2010.

Summary of Bill: By December 1, 2009, the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, with the statewide parent-teacher organization, must conduct and report the results of a survey of elementary schools regarding the availability and perceptions of the importance of recess. The survey must include specific questions provided but the survey is not limited to the provided questions.

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.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: Recess is unstructured play time. For elementary school children unstructured play time is an important part of learning and socialization. At recess children learn how to get along and how to mediate differences among and between each other. Recess also allows children to get rid of excess energy. Physical activity can help combat obesity in our children. Research has linked physical activity with improved health, classroom behavior, and academic performance. The availability of recess across the school districts is inconsistent. The Tacoma school board has developed a policy that students in elementary schools should have a daily recess but not all districts have done so. The survey conducted under this bill will provide real information and not just anecdotal evidence for making future policy decisions in this area.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Franklin, prime sponsor; Kimberly Golding, Tacoma Public School Board; Jane Moore, Washington Coalition for Promoting Physical Activity & Childhood Obesity Prevention Coalition; Kim Howard, Washington State Parent-Teacher Association; Christie Perkins, Washington State Special Education Coalition; Ian King, parent; Craig McLaughlin, Washington State Board of Health.