

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5619

As of February 11, 2009

Title: An act relating to kindergarten entry assessment.

Brief Description: Requiring development of recommendations for kindergarten entry assessments.

Sponsors: Senator Kauffman.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Early Learning & K-12 Education: 2/11/09.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION

Staff: Kimberly Cushing (786-7421)

Background: In the 2008 supplemental budget, the Legislature appropriated \$150,000 for the Department of Early Learning (DEL) to work with the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) to study and make recommendations regarding the implementation of a statewide kindergarten entry assessment and submit a report by December 15, 2008. DEL and OSPI were also directed to collaborate with Thrive by Five Washington, a private-public partnership.

The budget proviso required that DEL consult with early learning experts; identify a preferred kindergarten entry assessment; recommend a plan for the use of the assessment; recommend how to report the results of the assessment and recommend a methodology of conducting the assessment; analyze how the assessment could be used to improve instruction for students and improve the early learning and K-12 systems; identify the costs of the assessment; and recommend how to ensure that the assessment not be used to preclude children from entering kindergarten.

In 2008 OSPI produced a *Guide to Assessment in Early Childhood* that was designed for primary use by professionals responsible for developing comprehensive assessment plans and selecting and administering assessment instruments. Among other things, the guide provides suggestions for assessment instruments and a listing of assessment instruments and their primary characteristics.

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.

Summary of Bill: Within existing resources, DEL, in collaboration with OSPI, must recommend six kindergarten entry assessments for statewide implementation. The assessments must be chosen based on the recommendations established in the Kindergarten Entry Assessment report that was required in the 2008 supplemental budget.

For each recommended assessment, DEL must (a) provide a detailed description of the assessment; (b) identify the purpose of the assessment; and (c) identify the costs of the assessment, including the time required to administer the assessment.

DEL must submit a report with the recommendations to the Governor and Legislature by December 1, 2009.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 27, 2009.

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: DEL provided a report with guiding principles, but the Legislature wants to move forward with specific programs. There are still several stakeholder concerns and this bill could address them. We are pleased to see that the assessment will be chosen based on DEL's recommendations in their report and that OSPI and DEL will be working together. Thrive by Five should be included as well. Stakeholder input is critical, including school districts, early learning providers, parents, tribes, and groups reflecting cultural diversity. We like that the purposes of assessment and costs will be identified. It is critical to ensure training and professional development needs as well. Assessment is complex issue and more time is needed. When done right this would create better outcomes for children.

CON: There needs to be an observation assessment with a portfolio; otherwise, we run the risk of missing cultural differences. Screenings for vision and hearing are important, but a uniform statewide assessment may bring unintended consequences; for example, certain children will be penalized if they are using their own cultural language in preschool. Children have unique cultural backgrounds that they bring from their homes; schools should be ready to receive and celebrate all gifts children bring with them.

OTHER: We support the concept and have great concern about kindergarten readiness. However, the assessment needs to be reasonable and functional. The two studies that exist are a roadmap to what is next, not launching vehicles. Assessments can serve as a screen, as a diagnostic vehicle, and to inform instruction. This is a complex issue and there needs to be more time to flesh out meaningful pilots. DEL and OSPI should form a workgroup for the 2009-2010 biennium, followed by a pilot in 2010-2011, and full implementation in 2011-2012. The workgroup should report back in January 2010 and on the pilot in 2011. With six choices, it will be much harder to pull data on an aggregate basis. Ideally, assessment informs instruction; it does not prohibit kids from entering kindergarten.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Kauffman, prime sponsor; Agda Burchard, Washington Association for the Education of Young Children; Katy Warren, Washington State Association of Head Start and Early Learning Childhood Assistance Program.

CON: Jeanne Dengate, Program Coordinator Tulalip Child Care; Suzi Wright, the Tulalip Tribes.

OTHER: Alan Burke, Mary Seaton, OSPI.