

SENATE BILL REPORT

ESSB 6403

As Amended by House, March 3, 2010

Title: An act relating to accountability and support for vulnerable students and dropouts, including prevention, intervention, and reengagement.

Brief Description: Regarding accountability and support for vulnerable students and dropouts.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Early Learning & K-12 Education (originally sponsored by Senators Kauffman, McAuliffe, Hargrove, Hobbs, Regala, Oemig, McDermott and Shin; by request of Superintendent of Public Instruction).

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Early Learning & K-12 Education: 1/21/10, 1/25/10 [DPS, w/oRec].

Passed Senate: 2/11/10, 44-0.

Passed House: 3/03/10, 96-1.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6403 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators McAuliffe, Chair; Oemig, Vice Chair, K-12; King, Ranking Minority Member; Brandland, Gordon and Hobbs.

Minority Report: That it be referred without recommendation.

Signed by Senators Holmquist and Roach.

Staff: Kimberly Cushing (786-7421)

Background: In 2007 the Legislature directed the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) to create the Building Bridges grant program to begin the phase-in of a statewide comprehensive dropout prevention, intervention, and retrieval system. A state-level work group (work group) was directed to assist and enhance the work of the grantees.

The Quality Education Council (QEC) was created in 2009 to recommend and inform the ongoing legislative implementation of a program of basic education and necessary financing. The QEC is composed of eight legislative members, and one representative each from the Office of the Governor, OSPI, the State Board of Education (SBE), the Professional Educator Standards Board, and the Department of Early Learning (DEL).

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 Engrossed Substitute Bill: In order to significantly improve statewide high school graduation rates, the Legislature intends to facilitate the development of a collaborative infrastructure at the local, regional, and state level between systems that serve vulnerable youth.

Several new terms are defined in statute, including a K-12 dropout prevention, intervention, and reengagement system which means a system that provides the following functions: engaging in school improvement planning, specifically improving graduation rates; providing prevention activities; identifying vulnerable students based on a dropout early warning and intervention data system; coordinating a school/family/community partnership; and providing group and individual interventions, one-on-one adult relationships, retrieval or reentry activities, and alternative educational programming.

By September 15, 2010, OSPI, in collaboration with the work group, must develop and report recommendations to the QEC and the Legislature for the development of a comprehensive, K-12 dropout reduction initiative. The initiative is designed to integrate multiple tiers of dropout prevention, intervention and technical assistance and to support a K-12 dropout prevention, intervention, and reengagement system.

The Building Bridges work group must include representatives appointed by OSPI, the Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board (Workforce Board), DEL, the Employment Security Department, the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges, the Department of Health, the Community Mobilization Office, and specified divisions of the Department of Social and Health Services. The work group should also include representatives from other agencies and organizations, including representatives from the Achievement Gap Oversight and Accountability Committee and the Office of the Education Ombudsman. State agencies in the work group must work together to support school/family/community partnerships engaged in: building K-12 dropout prevention, intervention, and reengagement systems by coordinating program eligibility and funding; developing protocols and templates for sharing records and data; and providing joint professional development.

The work group must report to the QEC on an annual basis. By September 15, 2010, the work group must report on the following recommendations: state goals and annual targets for the percentage of students graduating from high school and youth who have dropped out who should be reengaged; funding formulas for career guidance and dropout prevention and intervention systems; and a plan to expand the current school improvement planning program to include state-funded technical assistance for districts that need to significantly improve high school graduation rates.

By December 1, 2010, the work group must make recommendations to the Legislature and the Governor about the infrastructure for coordinating services for vulnerable youth. These recommendations must address: adopting an official conceptual framework for all entities that can support coordinated planning and evaluation; creating a performance-based management system; developing a regional and county multi-partner youth consortia; developing specific integrated school-based services; launching a statewide media campaign; and developing a statewide database of available services for vulnerable youth.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 13, 2010.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony on Original Bill: PRO: A comprehensive framework and collaborative approach has been developed by the Building Bridges work group; it will allow us to hit the ground running when our economy improves. Over 50 state-funded programs target specific at-risk issues; each funding stream addresses a critical need, but the funds are typically distributed in silos with their own accountability and service delivery processes. Thus, it is challenging to coordinate services. Because of this fragmentation, we can't guarantee that the community is getting the best use of tax-payer dollars. It is important to require districts in need of improvement to provide dropout programs and to reduce regulatory barriers among agency efforts. Research shows that a fully implemented guidance and counseling system will help reduce dropout rates. Certified school counselors should be included in section 2(3)(e). Using the Response to Intervention model as a framework for intense intervention in high needs is exciting. In most cases it is not academic barriers that cause kids to dropout. Often economic barriers, such as needing to get a job, or not feeling safe at school leads to dropping out. Thus, the online environment is critical for reengaging some students who can't or won't reenter a traditional environment. The dropout issue is a high priority for Superintendent Dorn. It takes a grandstand of people that care about these kids to support them. There must be a financial commitment to make this work. However, it costs taxpayers \$10,500 for each student that drops out. The makeup of the future workforce is the kids we are talking about today. We are in big trouble if we don't significantly improve our workforce. The conversation about kids who drop out has been largely absent in education work groups. Building Bridges will be the technical working group for the QEC.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Kauffman, prime sponsor; Kimberly Klint, Mason Matters; Norm Walker, Washington School Counselor Association; Wes Pruitt, Workforce Board; Rebekah Richards, The American Academy; Tom Lopp, OSPI; Kim Howard, Washington State PTA.

House Amendment(s): Suggests but no longer requires that the Juvenile Rehabilitation Division and the Office of Juvenile Justice have representatives on the Building Bridges work group. Tasks the work group with recommending funding rather than funding formulas. Removes the specific start date for the phase-in of the implementation of recommended technical assistance. Continues to require state agencies on the work group to work together but limits the requirement to situations in which that is feasible. Requires the Washington State Institute of Public Policy to annually calculate savings resulting from changes in the extended graduation rates from the prior school year. Requires the Superintendent of Public Instruction to include this estimate in its annual dropout and graduation report beginning in 2010.