

FINAL BILL REPORT

E2SHB 1546

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Synopsis as Enacted

Brief Description: Authorizing creation of innovation schools and innovation zones focusing on arts, science, technology, engineering, and mathematics in school districts.

Sponsors: House Committee on Ways & Means (originally sponsored by Representatives Hargrove, Hunt, Dammeier, Pettigrew, Liias, Smith, Anderson, Fagan, Kretz, Dahlquist, Angel, Zeiger, Jinkins and Finn).

House Committee on Education
House Committee on Ways & Means
Senate Committee on Early Learning & K-12 Education

Background:

In 1987 the Schools for the 21st Century was established in legislation as a pilot program intended to foster change in the public school system. The State Board of Education (SBE), in consultation with a Governor-appointed task force, selected 33 pilot schools which then received funding for 10 supplemental days of staff time and additional funding for training, curriculum development, and other resources. Pilot schools could also seek waivers of state laws regarding length of the school year, student-to-teacher ratios, instructional hour requirements, restrictions on funding for categorical programs, and other administrative rules. The Schools for the 21st Century law expired in 1995.

In 1995 legislation was enacted that authorized any school district to apply for waivers of specified state laws, similar to waivers that had existed for the Schools for the 21st Century. A school district may apply to the SBE or the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) for a waiver in order to "implement a plan for restructuring its educational program." Another law allows the SBE to grant waivers of the Basic Education program requirements, as necessary to implement a local plan designed to enhance the educational program for each student. Eighty-three school districts have a waiver of the 180-day school year under these laws. The SBE also grants waivers from credit-based graduation requirements; two districts have received these waivers.

Laws that require school districts to separately account for funds to support categorical programs such as the Learning Assistance Program, Transitional Bilingual Instructional Program, or Highly Capable Program are not addressed in this waiver process.

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:

The OSPI must establish a process for school districts to apply to have schools designated as Innovation Schools. Groups of schools in one district or all schools in multiple districts may apply for designation as an Innovation Zone. A priority is placed on schools focused on the arts, science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (A-STEM) that actively partner with the community, business, and higher education and that use project-based or hands-on learning. Applications for designation must be developed by educators, parents, and communities in participating schools. School districts must ensure that each school has substantial opportunity to participate in developing an application. The OSPI develops common criteria for reviewing applications and for reviewing the need for waivers of state laws and rules.

Initial applications with proposed innovation plans must be submitted to Educational Service Districts (ESDs) by January 6, 2012. Each ESD reviews applications using the common criteria and recommends no more than three plans, including at least one Innovation Zone. At least two of the three recommended plans must be A-STEM program models and not more than one may be another program model. An ESD with more than 350,000 students recommends up to 10 plans for designation, with at least half being A-STEM models and no more than half being other models. Innovation plans must be able to be implemented without supplemental state funds. The OSPI designates the recommended plans for six years, beginning in the 2012-13 school year.

An innovation plan must contain a number of elements, including:

- why designation would enhance student achievement and close the achievement gap;
- research-based activities and innovations to be carried out;
- justification for waiver of state statutes and rules that are authorized;
- justification of any request for additional waivers beyond those authorized;
- a budget for the plan and anticipated sources of funding;
- evaluation and accountability processes that rely on multiple measures of student achievement;
- district support for waiver of local rules and modification of collective bargaining agreements if necessary to implement the plan;
- letters of support from the district, school staff, and community; and
- approval of the plan by a majority of the staff assigned to the school or schools.

Laws that authorize the SBE or the OSPI to grant waivers from laws and rules pertaining to Basic Education requirements, student-to-teacher ratios, and length of the school year are amended to include Innovation Schools or Innovation Zones. In addition, Innovation Schools and Innovation Zones may apply for waivers of laws pertaining to comingling of state funds for categorical programs and flexibility in calculating course credits for high school courses. The SBE and the OSPI must conduct an expedited review of waiver requests, and may deny a request if the waiver would decrease student achievement, jeopardize a district's receipt of state or federal funds, or violate state or federal laws or rules.

Annual progress reports are required from each Innovation School and Innovation Zone, and the OSPI must report biennially to the Education Committees of the Legislature. The report must include recommendations for additional waivers of laws and rules as identified in

innovation plans. The OSPI may revoke designation as an Innovation School or Innovation Zone based on a determination that progress is not increasing over time on the multiple measures of evaluation and accountability included in the innovation plan.

The provisions of the act expire June 30, 2019.

Votes on Final Passage:

House	94	2	
Senate	46	1	(Senate amended)
House			(House refused to concur)
Senate	46	1	(Senate amended)
House	96	0	(House concurred)

Effective: July 22, 2011