
Education Committee

HB 2765

Brief Description: Concerning qualifications for educational interpreters.

Sponsors: Representatives Dahlquist, Lytton, Liias, Dammeier and Santos.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires all educational interpreters in public schools to meet a standard set by the Professional Educator Standards Board on a national written and performance evaluation by the 2015-16 school year.
- Requires all educational interpreters by the 2018-19 school year also to achieve National Interpreter Certification from the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf.

Hearing Date: 2/16/12

Staff: Barbara McLain (786-7383).

Background:

In November 2011 there were just over 1,300 students aged 3 through 21 receiving special education in public schools as a result of being hearing impaired, deaf, or deaf-blind. Some of these students need sign language interpretation in order to access their education. Although there are state laws requiring qualified interpreters for legal proceedings, there are no minimum qualifications or standards for interpreters in Washington public schools.

The Educational Interpreter Performance Assessment (EIPA) is the primary national certification for educational interpreters and consists of both a written and performance examination. Other states that have established qualifications for educational interpreters tend to require a score of 3.5 - 5.0 on the EIPA. Another prominent national certification, although not specifically for educational interpreters, is the National Interpreter Certification (NIC) from the National Association of the Deaf Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf. Beginning in July 2012 individuals seeking an NIC must have a bachelor's degree in addition to passing the written and performance examination.

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.

There is currently one educational interpreter training program in the state, offered at Spokane Falls Community College. The Seattle Central Community College previously offered an interpreter training program, but due to budget constraints the program is closed to new entrants and will end in the summer of 2013.

In 2006 the Legislature directed the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) to develop standards for educational interpreters, if funds were appropriated. Standards could not be implemented without further legislative approval. Although no funds were provided for this work, the OSPI convened an advisory group and recommended that funding be provided to offer training and technical assistance to educational interpreters in schools to help them gain national certification, and that the Legislature explore creation of educational interpreter training programs in higher education.

Summary of Bill:

An educational interpreter is defined as a school district employee, whether certificated or classified, who provides sign language translation and further explanation for deaf, deaf-blind, or hearing impaired students. An educational interpreter assessment is defined as a written and performance assessment offered by a national organization of professional sign language interpreters that assesses performance in more than one sign language or system.

The Professional Educator Standards Board (PESB) must identify and publicize available educational interpreter assessments and establish a performance standard for each one. By 2015-16, all educational interpreters employed by school districts must meet the PESB performance standard on one of the identified assessments.

By 2018-19, all educational interpreters employed by school districts must meet the PESB performance standard on one of the identified assessments and also achieve an NIC from the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.