

SENATE BILL REPORT

ESHB 2586

As of February 22, 2012

Title: An act relating to phasing-in statewide implementation of the Washington kindergarten inventory of developing skills.

Brief Description: Phasing-in statewide implementation of the Washington kindergarten inventory of developing skills.

Sponsors: House Committee on Ways & Means (originally sponsored by Representatives Kagi, Maxwell, Ladenburg, Dammeier, Kenney and Tharinger; by request of Department of Early Learning and Superintendent of Public Instruction).

Brief History: Passed House: 2/11/12, 84-11.

Committee Activity: Early Learning & K-12 Education: 2/20/12.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION

Staff: Lidia Mori (786-7755)

Background: The Washington Kindergarten Inventory of Developing Skills (WaKIDS) is a kindergarten assessment process developed in collaboration with a diverse group of stakeholders that included elementary teachers and principals, special education specialists, early care and education providers, parents, and representatives from Washington's Tribal communities. WaKIDS encourages families to be partners in their child's education, gives kindergarten teachers information about the development of children in their classrooms so instruction can be tailored to individual needs, and aligns practices of early learning professionals and kindergarten teachers to support smooth transitions for children. Another of WaKIDS's important objectives is to identify a common method for learning about the developmental status of children entering kindergarten across the state.

WaKIDS was piloted during the 2010-2011 school year; two reports were produced from the data obtained. The first report focused on the whole child assessment and data across the three piloted assessment tools was reported for all students. Across the three instruments, the report indicates that nearly 30 percent of children entered kindergarten with language and literacy; cognitive, social, emotional and physical health; and development skills that were below kindergarten entry expectations. The second report provides information about the teachers' experiences with the assessment tool, the parents' opinions about the assessment tools and transition process, and the early learning collaboration. The information collected

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in the second report led to Teaching Strategies GOLD being the recommended assessment tool.

The 2011 Legislature passed Senate Bill 5427, which made the use of WaKIDS optional, and to the extent funds are available, for state-funded full-day kindergarten classrooms in the 2011-2012 school year and mandatory, to the extent funds are available, starting in the 2012-2013 school year, with the exception of students who have been excused from participation by their parents or guardians. State-supported all-day kindergarten is in the process of being phased in across the state, beginning with schools with the highest poverty levels. During the 2011-2012 school year, WaKIDS will include 68 school districts, 165 schools, 479 teachers, and 11,000 kindergarteners.

Until full-implementation of state-funded all-day kindergarten, the Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI), in consultation with the Director of the Department of Early Learning (DEL), may grant annually renewable waivers in order to allow the administration of kindergarten assessments other than WaKIDS. Before implementing WaKIDS, SPI and the Director of DEL were required to ensure that a fair and bias review of the assessment process has been conducted, including an opportunity for input from the Achievement Gap Oversight and Accountability Committee and an additional diverse group of stakeholders. A report on this review process was issued in July of 2011.

Summary of Bill: To the extent funds are available, the implementation schedule for WaKIDS is as follows:

- Beginning in the 2012-13 school year, WaKIDS must be administered to all students in state-funded all-day kindergarten.
- Beginning in the 2012-13 school year, according to a phase-in schedule developed by SPI, school districts must administer WAKids to all kindergarten students. This requirement applies to all public school kindergarten programs. SPI must consult with DEL in developing the phase-in schedule. Parents and guardians may still excuse their students from participating in WaKIDS.
- In the 2014-15 school year and thereafter, WaKIDS must be administered to all students enrolled in kindergarten programs in the public schools, except those excused by their parents or guardians.

Until full statewide implementation of WaKIDS, SPI, in consultation with the Director of DEL, may grant annually renewable waivers in order to allow the administration of kindergarten assessments other than WaKIDS.

Time spent by certificated staff meeting with students and families as part of WAKids may be considered instructional hours for purposes of complying with instructional hour requirements. Up to three days may be considered school days for purposes of complying with requirements specifying the number of school days. To the extent funds are available, and on a schedule determined by SPI and DEL, additional support in the form of implementation grants must be offered.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed. However, the bill is null and void unless funded in the budget.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: We need a way to assure early learning programs are producing children that are ready for kindergarten. WaKIDS is a foundation for the Race to the Top grant. The connection that is made between teachers and parents is very important and can make a world of difference in a child's educational life, so allowing up to three days to be considered as school days under basic education requirements seems reasonable. Many school districts have their own assessment, and they are requiring it in addition to the WaKIDS, so this may explain some of the rub we are experiencing. The Race to the Top grant will provide \$2.2 million, and the Gates Foundation is providing \$340,000; there are significant resources available to support this implementation. This bill helps the WaKIDS implementation, which is in line with our Race to the Top grant. We have been listening to feedback from teachers, and they are generally in agreement that WaKIDS is helpful in welcoming families. The assessment component is time-intensive, and this bill should help with that. There have been changes made to the web-based data entry piece so that it is less time intensive. We are looking at how to embed WaKIDS naturally into teachers' existing instruction, and we are taking a close look at what teachers can skip. We are supportive of the up-to-three-days provision in the bill. Superintendent Dorn is concerned about part-time kindergarten teachers and the burden that WaKIDS would impose.

CON: One of my concerns is that the concept of the kindergarten inventory is creating a profile of a child. Social emotional assessment concerns me because every child is different. When I look at the benchmarks, I see a cookie cutter approach. One-on-one teaching is being impacted and reduced by this. This inventory creates a burden on the teachers, and at-home visit evaluations can be tainted. I like the opt-out provision and feel that it should be widely publicized. Children should have teachers that teach, rather than assess. Preschool WASL's aren't going to work. WaKIDS was requested by DEL and OSPI, and they work together to oversee it, along with Thrive by Five. These organizations are not a diverse representation of the industry. They are a small group funded by state dollars. I believe the workgroup suggested by Representative Kagi would be made up of people already in the industry and would maintain the conflict of interest I am seeing.

OTHER: Teachers have told us they don't get the best value and use out of the assessments. Some felt overwhelmed by WaKIDS and not able to get it all done. I am suggesting that if it is possible to create a more realistic roll out, we should limit it to a certain percentage of school districts. WaKIDS is especially difficult with the half-day kindergarten. We should scaffold the implementation so the best pieces of the assessment go forward first, take a look at what the kindergarten teachers find the most valuable, and streamline the data. Could more of the Race to the Top money go towards WaKIDS? Principals have expressed the same concerns that teachers have regarding implementation of WaKIDS. The taskforce is a good idea to address the issues that have come up. The three-day provision is worth considering. The taskforce should include an elementary school principal or two.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Representative Kagi, prime sponsor; Amy Blondin, DEL; Bob Butts, OSPI; Surina Nash, parent; Ramona Hattendorf, WA State PTA; Frank Ordway, League of Education Voters.

CON: Sharon Hanek, parent; Shannon Bean, provider.

OTHER: Jerry Bender, Assn. of WA School Principals; Wendy Rader-Konofalski, WA Education Assn.