

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5427

As of February 24, 2011

Title: An act relating to the assessment of students in state-funded full- day kindergarten classrooms.

Brief Description: Regarding an assessment of students in state-funded full-day kindergarten classrooms.

Sponsors: Senator McAuliffe; by request of Superintendent of Public Instruction.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Early Learning & K-12 Education: 2/09/11, 2/16/11 [DPS-WM].
Ways & Means: 2/22/11.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5427 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

Signed by Senators McAuliffe, Chair; Harper, Vice Chair; Litzow, Ranking Minority Member; Eide, Fain, Hobbs, King, Nelson, Rockefeller and Tom.

Staff: Kimberly Cushing (786-7421)

SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

Staff: Elise Greef (786-7708)

Background: In 2009 the Legislature provided \$100,000 over the biennium, contingent on an equal match from private sources, for the Department of Early Learning (DEL) to work with the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) and others to identify and test a kindergarten assessment process and tools in geographically diverse school districts. During the fall of 2010, OSPI piloted the Washington Kindergarten Inventory of Developing Skills (WaKIDS). The pilot reached 2600 incoming kindergarteners who were in 115 classrooms around the state. The purpose of WaKIDS is to gather information about the child in order to better inform teacher instruction. DEL submitted a report to the Legislature on January 15, 2011. A final report will be available in the summer of 2011.

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.

In 2009 the Legislature redefined the minimum instructional program of Basic Education to include 180 days of half-day kindergarten, to be phased in to 180 days of all-day kindergarten, beginning with schools with the highest poverty levels. Schools receiving funding for all-day kindergarten have to agree to program requirements, including providing at least 1000 hours of instruction, providing a rich curriculum, and having connections with community early learning programs and parents. In 2010 the Legislature directed that, effective September 1, 2011, funding to implement all-day kindergarten must be phased in until full statewide implementation is achieved in the 2017-18 school year.

Summary of Bill (Recommended Substitute): Beginning with the 2012-13 school year, schools receiving all-day kindergarten support must agree to identify the skills, knowledge, and characteristics of kindergarten students at the beginning of the school year in order to determine kindergarten readiness and inform individual instruction. Kindergarten teachers must use a kindergarten assessment process specified by the Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI), in consultation with DEL, and report the results to the SPI. School districts must provide an opportunity for parents and guardians to excuse their children from participating in the kindergarten assessment process.

The SPI must make the assessment process available on a voluntary basis at the beginning of the 2011-12 school year.

The director of DEL, prior to the implementation of the kindergarten assessment process in 2012-13, must seek input from the University of Washington on a kindergarten assessment process that addresses issues such as cultural responsiveness, accommodations and usefulness for children with disabilities, parent involvement and satisfaction, potential for improving instruction, and cost benefits.

EFFECT OF CHANGES MADE BY EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION COMMITTEE (Recommended Substitute): The SPI is directed to consult with the Department of Early Learning (DEL) when specifying a kindergarten assessment process. School districts must provide an opportunity for parents and guardians to excuse their children from participating in the kindergarten assessment process.

The director of DEL, prior to the implementation of the kindergarten assessment process in 2012-13, must seek input from the University of Washington on a kindergarten assessment process that addresses issues such as cultural responsiveness, accommodations and usefulness for children with disabilities, parent involvement and satisfaction, potential for improving instruction, and cost benefits.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect on September 1, 2011.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony on Original Bill (Early Learning & K-12 Education): PRO: WaKIDS is a process, not a test. Leaders representing the state's cultural and geographic diversity participated in its development. We need to continue to tweak WaKIDS to determine the best measures and involve more early learning providers. OSPI supports the legislation because WaKIDS is a great product, strengthens the relationship between schools and early learning providers, creates better connections between teachers and families, provides an opportunity early in the school year for teachers to really get to know their students, and as a result will improve instruction and help kids. WaKIDS will give us a way to measure whether the early learning system is making a difference and how K-12 is doing once students get in the system. We expect to get \$500,000 from federal and private sources. Cost per assessment is about \$37 per student. WAKIDS is cost-effective and has received positive pilot reviews and makes the entire system more student focused.

As a teacher, I was inspired to incorporate new communication tools with the families and had a better idea of how to meet the needs of each student. Collaborating with local preschool providers allowed me to learn about preschool standards and share ideas with preschool providers. WaKIDS makes a smooth transition for students coming into kindergarten, which can be a really scary time. I learned a lot more about the children and what to change to meet their needs. It allows the teacher to focus on teaching. If the student knows the school and teacher, the student knows what to expect and is more confident. If we miss the opportunity to learn in those first years, the consequences are 80 years out. We have a window to place children in a supportive environment to help them learn.

My expectation as child care provider is to create children who are successful in school and in life. WaKIDS allows providers to know what their babies need to know to do well in school and to prepare families.

WaKIDS will give statewide early learning data and show us where we need to put more resources. The dropout crisis is extremely serious. Kids who are not successful end up dropping out, and we support them in jail. We need to start early. Without a strong early start you can not be expected to meet higher standards. Education is not one of the areas where we should be taking money away because the leverage is dramatic. The WaKIDS model addresses the whole child and should be expanded to other grades. WaKIDS will catch reading problems early on, when intervention is quicker. The womb and zip code you come from should have no impact on what you want to be. We have done a good job with early learning, and WaKIDS is the next step. Treating the whole child is very relevant. WaKIDS is proactive in tough times and engages parents.

CON: Being a part of the WaKIDS process has been very exciting, bringing together people who are passionate about what they do. We are opposed to moving forward fast, but not opposed to the WaKIDS process. Are the tools totally the best tools? Many tribal communities still have concerns. None of the tools have been adequately reviewed for their reliability and validity. We need to continue the pilot. The tool isn't the answer, it is the time that we allow teachers to work with parents that is the key. Take the time to do it right.

Persons Testifying (Early Learning & K-12 Education): PRO: Bette Hyde, DEL; Bob Butts, OSPI; Erin Hagen, Hortensia West, Nancie Surber, teachers; Rick Allen, United Way Pierce County; Pat Montgomery, Auburn PTA; Janet Levinger, parent, citizen; April Ritter,

Surina Warren Nash, Deb Blakestee, Sebreua Burr, Beth Sigall, Ted Evans, Sharon Taubel, parents; Sue Winn, Family Child Care Association; Jim Kainber, Stand for Children; Ramona Hattendorf, Lynn Gilliland, PTA; Kenn Washington, Tabor 100; Ryan Pricco, Washington Child Care Resource and Referral.

CON: Jaclyn Haight, Port Gamble S'Klallam Tribe.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony (Ways & Means): PRO: This assessment process is fiscally sound. We expect about one-third of the 2011-13 costs to be covered by federal and private funds. Further, this program maximizes kindergarten investments by giving teachers and parents information they need to inform instruction immediately and to be able to target limited education resources where they are most effective. This will connect early learning with the elementary school system in a cost-effective manner by leveraging outside sources. The assessment tool that has been developed will make a difference for children and will provide a common yardstick that can be used statewide and over time to measure school readiness. It will improve the connection between pre-school providers, kindergarten teachers, and parents. It will allow teachers to better tailor their instruction to individual students and, from an accountability perspective, it will give us a way to see how pre-school programs do and will gauge improvement. The information this project will provide will allow strategic private investments and alignment with other funding partners. When parents understand children's needs and engage around those particular needs, studies show a fiscal savings of about \$1,000 per pupil, per year. This assessment allows early intervention for learning disorders, such as dyslexia, where earlier attention prevents higher-cost intervention later.

Persons Testifying (Ways & Means): PRO: Hannah Lidman, League of Education Voters; Bob Butts, OSPI; Erica Hallock, United Ways of Washington; Ramona Hattendorf, Washington State PTA.