
Education Committee

E2SSB 5244

Brief Description: Regarding school suspensions and expulsions.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Ways & Means (originally sponsored by Senators Litzow, Dammeier, Ranker, Hobbs, Harper, Hatfield, Delvin, Tom, Hewitt, Schoesler, Smith and Mullet).

Brief Summary of Engrossed Second Substitute Bill

- Prohibits student suspensions or expulsions of indefinite length.
- Requires that student suspensions or expulsions not exceed one year unless given specific authorization by the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI).
- Requires school districts to create an individually tailored reentry and reengagement plan for long-term suspended or expelled students.
- Requires student suspension and expulsion data be made publicly available on the OSPI's web site and be disaggregated and cross-tabulated.
- Requires the Washington State School Directors' Association to develop a model policy for implementing changes to district suspension and expulsion policies.

Hearing Date: 3/15/13

Staff: Luke Wickham (786-7146).

Background:

Each school district board of directors is required to adopt written policies regarding student conduct and discipline. The Superintendent of Public Instruction must adopt rules providing due process protections of students subject to disciplinary action.

Short-term suspensions may not exceed ten days. Long-term suspensions last longer than 10 days. Expulsions may last for an indefinite period of time.

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.

Individual student data on disciplinary actions is recorded in the statewide student information system (CEDARS), including disciplinary actions related to bullying, tobacco, alcohol, illicit drugs (other than marijuana), fighting without major injury, violence without major injury, violence with major injury, possession of a weapon, other behavior resulting in suspension or expulsion, serious bodily injury, and marijuana.

Summary of Bill:

Student expulsions or suspensions may not be for an indefinite period of time. Emergency expulsions must end or be converted to another corrective action within 10 days of removal from school. Notice and due process rights must be provided when an emergency expulsion is converted to another corrective action.

Student suspensions or expulsions longer than 10 days must have an end date one year or less from the time of corrective action. Districts must make reasonable efforts to assist students in returning to an educational setting before the end of a corrective action. School districts may petition the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) for authorization to exceed the one year suspension or expulsion limitation.

Student suspension and expulsion data collected by the CEDARS must be made publicly available and easily accessible on the OSPI's web site and must be disaggregated and cross-tabulated with specified categories.

The K-12 data governance group must examine the data collected under the behavior infraction subgroup reported by the CEDARS and create at least four additional behavior infraction codes including the four most reported behaviors listed in the catchall "other" category, by December 1, 2013.

Schools should make efforts to allow students who have been suspended or expelled to return to an educational setting as soon as possible and convene a school reentry meeting with the student and student's parents within twenty days of the long-term suspension or expulsion. School districts must create a reentry and reengagement plan tailored to the student's individual circumstances, including consideration of the incident that led to the long-term suspension or expulsion. Reentry meetings are not intended to replace a petition for readmission.

The Washington State School Directors' Association must develop a model policy for school districts to implement changes to suspension and expulsion policies and make the policy available on their website by May 1, 2014.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on March 11, 2013.

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