

SENATE BILL REPORT

HB 1369

As of March 20, 2013

Title: An act relating to using school days for meeting with parents and families as part of the Washington inventory of developing skills.

Brief Description: Using school days for meeting with parents and families as part of the Washington inventory of developing skills.

Sponsors: Representatives Lytton, Walsh, Kagi, Maxwell and Tharinger; by request of Superintendent of Public Instruction.

Brief History: Passed House: 2/27/13, 90-7.

Committee Activity: Early Learning & K-12 Education: 3/18/13.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION

Staff: Susan Mielke (786-7422)

Background: Full-Day Kindergarten. All school districts must provide half-day kindergarten for students. State funding to support full-day kindergarten is being phased in, beginning in schools with the highest percentage of low-income students. Currently, about 22 percent of the state's kindergarteners attend a state-funded, full-day kindergarten program, which includes 91 school districts and 222 schools serving approximately 18,000 students.

Washington Kindergarten Inventory of Developing Skills (WaKIDS). WaKIDS is a process that includes the following: the Whole-Child Observational Assessment, that provides a teacher information about the social, emotional, physical, cognitive, and linguistic development of the children in the teacher's classroom; and the Family Connection component, which is a meeting between the teacher and a student's family. The assessment has been administered in state-funded full-day kindergarten programs since the 2012-13 school year. The kindergarten administration of WaKIDS is funded with state funds, a federal grant, and private funding. The Department of Early Learning (DEL) was awarded a federal Race to the Top grant for early learning that specifies that all incoming kindergarten students will be reviewed under the same assessment process, using WaKIDS, statewide by 2014-15. The 2011-13 biennial budget provided \$900,000 to support the implementation of the inventory, staffing at the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) for

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oversight of the program, and training of school district staff. In 2012 the Legislature provided an additional \$1 million for the implementation of WaKIDS.

Basic Education Waivers. One of the statutory Basic Education requirements is that school districts must offer 180 school days of instruction per year to receive full state funding. The State Board of Education (SBE) is charged with assuring compliance with Basic Education provisions but is also authorized to grant waivers under certain circumstances. A school day is defined as, each day of the school year on which pupils enrolled in the common schools of a school district are engaged in academic and career and technical instruction planned by and under the direction of the school. SBE's interpretation is that a full day of parent-teacher conferences is not considered a school day because the statute implies that all pupils must be engaged in instruction for at least some portion of the day. A number of school districts using WaKIDS want to schedule the Family Connection component over the course of a full day. Sixteen school districts applied for and received waivers from the SBE in 2012 for between one and five school days for this purpose.

Current law permits school districts to schedule the last five school days of the year for non-instructional purposes for students who are graduating from high school.

Summary of Bill: Within the 180-day school year required under Basic Education, schools that are administering WaKIDS are authorized to use up to five school days at the beginning of the year to meet with parents and families as required in the Family Connection component of the inventory.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: WaKIDS includes an important component called family connection, which provides one-on-one contact for teachers with the family of each student. Our school district piloted WaKIDS and during the pilot we had time to go to the home of each of the kindergarten students to meet the family and see their home environment. Last year we had to get a waiver to implement WaKIDS and we only got two days to meet with the families. We were not able to go to students' homes. We lost out on a lot of information. Providing time to meet with the parents, find out what the students needs are, and understand the environment the children are coming from is critical. It also gives parents and families time to advocate for their child. Providing school days for different uses other than instruction is not unprecedented. The Legislature created a workgroup to make recommendations on how best to implement WaKIDS and this is one of the recommendations. This allows up to five days; not every school will need to do this. It is not an additional cost and is a good investment. Current law permits school districts to schedule the last five school days of the school year for non-instructional purposes for students who are graduating from high school.

OTHER: Shortening the number of days for instruction should not be done lightly. Research clearly shows that the number of instructional days is connected to student achievement. There is an explosive increase in school districts having early release or late start resulting in partial school days. This is eroding service levels to our students. We request that the bill be narrowed from providing the entire school five days off with pay; the bill should be narrowed to only kindergarten. The Senate version of the bill had only three days.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Representative Lytton, prime sponsor; Paul Marquardt, Olympic View Elementary School, Federal Way School District; Richard Dunn, Highline School District; Marcia Fromhold, OSPI; Ramon Hattendorf, WA State Parent Teacher Assn.

OTHER: Jamie Lund, Freedom Foundation.