

SENATE BILL REPORT

2SHB 1424

As of March 18, 2013

Title: An act relating to enhancing the statewide K-12 dropout prevention, intervention, and reengagement system.

Brief Description: Enhancing the statewide K-12 dropout prevention, intervention, and reengagement system.

Sponsors: House Committee on Appropriations (originally sponsored by Representatives Haigh, Santos, Sullivan, Maxwell, Ryu, Freeman, Stonier, Seaquist, McCoy, Fey, Roberts, Morrell, Kagi, Bergquist and Jinkins).

Brief History: Passed House: 3/08/13, 88-10.

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

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION

Staff: Eric Wolf (786-7405)

Background: Building Bridges. Legislation enacted in 2007 established the Building Bridges program to award grants to local partnerships of schools, families, and community-based organizations to develop dropout prevention and intervention systems based on community needs and resources.

A state-level workgroup was established with representatives of multiple state and local agencies and organizations, to advise the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) on the Building Bridges program, and to coordinate services associated with dropout prevention. Subsequent legislation directed the workgroup to conduct several studies and make reports to the Legislature, which have been completed. OSPI has recently renamed the workgroup Graduation: A Team Effort (GATE).

Dropout Reengagement. Legislation enacted in 2010 directed OSPI to adopt rules and develop a model contract for school districts to use with community-based organizations, community or technical colleges, or educational service districts (ESDs) to provide dropout reengagement services for students aged 16 to 21 who dropped out of school or are credit deficient to the extent that completion of high school before age 21 is not an expected outcome.

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.

A dropout reengagement program must provide academic instruction, college and work readiness preparation, case management, and resource and referral services. OSPI rules require dropout reengagement programs to be approved before beginning operation. School districts are not required to enter a contract and may also operate their own programs. Enrolled students are funded through the regular state funding formulas.

Other Dropout Prevention Programs. The Pay for Actual Student Success (PASS) program was established in 2011 to provide awards to high schools based on improvement in their graduation rates. PASS also provides for funding to be allocated to three other dropout prevention programs in addition to the Building Bridges program: Jobs for America's Graduates, the Opportunity Internship Program, and community mentoring and leadership development offered through the College Success Foundation.

A graduation coach is defined as a staff person, working in consultation with counselors, who is assigned to identify and provide intervention services to students who dropped out or are at risk of dropping out of school or not graduating on time. In 2012, OSPI convened a workgroup to develop a policy and guidelines for graduation coaches.

ESDs. Core funding for the nine ESDs is provided based on specified basic core services that include administration, cooperative administrative and curriculum services for school districts, personnel services such as educator certification, learning resource services, professional development, and other special district needs. Other ESD activities are supported through special appropriations, contracts with school districts, and fees for service

Summary of Bill: Building Bridges. The purpose of the Building Bridges program is to award grants to local partnerships to design and implement a K-12 dropout prevention, intervention, and reengagement system (System). It is clarified that the Building Bridges program is a grant program, not a System by itself.

The statutory definition of a System is made consistent by removing duplicative language. Prevention activities within a System are expanded to include tiered intervention, social-emotional and behavioral skills development, and opportunities for students to develop relationships with caring adults. Wraparound services are defined as a team-based approach to delivering services using an array of community and regional resources to address academic, social, emotional, health, and economic issues. Designing and providing wraparound services for vulnerable students is included as one of the functions of a System.

The definition of a graduation coach is changed to be an individual – rather than a staff person – who conducts certain activities and works in consultation with counselors and other staff as provided in a model policy developed by OSPI in 2012.

If funds are appropriated, OSPI must develop a System assessment tool to support local partnerships in identifying community strengths and gaps in services, and evaluating the effectiveness of existing strategies to prevent and reengage dropouts. OSPI must also continue development of a dropout prevention early warning and intervention system within available funds.

The state-level workgroup overseeing the Building Bridges program is renamed GATE, and assigned to establish a common vision and agenda for helping all students reach graduation. GATE is further tasked with aligning the objectives and operation of various dropout prevention programs in support of a statewide System. OSPI must submit a biennial report to the Legislature that includes activities undertaken and measurable indicators of progress toward achieving a System.

References to studies that are complete are removed.

Dropout Reengagement. The prototypical school funding formula is changed to allocate funding for students enrolled in an OSPI-approved dropout reengagement program at a factor of 1.22 times the statewide average allocation for a high school student. ESDs that operate dropout reengagement programs under the model contract with school districts may award high school credit and issue transcripts to students.

Other Dropout Prevention Programs. Subject to funding, OSPI must establish a program to provide graduation coaches to high schools struggling to improve their graduation rates, and school success coaches to selected elementary and middle schools whose students attend those high schools. OSPI must rank all high schools based on a combination of factors, with a significant priority on graduation rates as a ranking factor. Each year OSPI allocates funds, starting with the lowest-ranking schools, to support one graduation coach per 500 students in grades nine through 12, and one school success coach per 500 students in grades K through eight in selected elementary and middle schools.

The funds must be used to assign individuals to conduct the activities of a graduation coach or school success coach in the schools that generated the funds. Schools may also create partnerships with community-based organizations to assign individuals from the community to be coaches. Schools are eligible to continue receiving funds for three years, or until they no longer qualify based on their ranking, whichever is longer.

A school success coach is defined as an individual, working in consultation with counselors and other school staff, who is assigned to identify and provide early intervention services targeted toward elementary and middle school students to facilitate their continued enrollment, engagement, and progress in school.

ESDs. The following responsibilities are added to basic core services to be provided by ESDs and included in ESD budgets:

- coordinate and convene school, family, and community partnerships to develop comprehensive Systems;
- assist local partnerships in using the System assessment tool developed by OSPI; and
- develop dropout reengagement programs to be offered under the model contract.

Subject to funding, a corps of intervention specialists is located at the ESDs to assist schools and school districts in developing various research-based models and approaches to providing early intervention and support for students.

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: When students drop out of the educational system, they end up interacting with the criminal justice system at an increased rate, so keeping struggling students in school has a long-term payoff. Communities can do tremendous things to help students succeed, particularly in the area of dropout prevention. Dropout prevention and reengagement programs are a smart use of public funds, providing nontraditional and struggling students an avenue to a successful and productive career. This bill is a critical component in dropout prevention in Washington State. In Sunnyside, graduation rates increased 30 percent in four years after bringing in graduation coaches to mentor struggling students. Puyallup also employs on-time graduation specialists. This bill will particularly allow rural counties to proceed on dropout prevention and reengagement programs. This bill encourages the development of programs that have already been proven to be successful, including in Washington's Mason County. The bill clarifies and strengthens the dropout prevention programs already in place. Dropout prevention is one of the top priorities of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, and a coordinated effort between the state, schools, and communities is necessary to reach the 20 percent of students who dropout of high school before graduation.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Kim Infinger, Lake WA Institute of Technology; Susan Richards, Communities in Schools of WA; Marie Sullivan, WA State School District Assn.; Kimberley Klint, Mason Matters; Lucinda Young, WA Education Assn.; Ramona Hattendorf, WA State Parent-Teacher Assn.; Justin Montermini, Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board; Andrea Cobb, OSPI.