

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6121

As of February 11, 2014

Title: An act relating to calculation and allocation of appropriations for alternative learning experience courses.

Brief Description: Concerning the calculation and allocation of appropriations for alternative learning experience courses.

Sponsors: Senators Dammeier, Ranker and Eide.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Early Learning & K-12 Education: 1/27/14, 2/05/14 [DPS-WM].
Ways & Means: 2/10/14.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6121 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

Signed by Senators Litzow, Chair; Dammeier, Vice Chair; McAuliffe, Ranking Member; Rolfes, Assistant Ranking Member; Billig, Brown, Cleveland, Fain, Hill, Mullet and Rivers.

Staff: Eric Wolf (786-7405)

SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

Staff: Lorrell Noahr (786-7708)

Background: Alternative Learning Experience (ALE) Courses. ALE courses provide a method for students to be enrolled in a public education course without being required to meet the in-class seat-time requirements for regular instruction. There are three primary types of ALE courses identified in statute: a site-based course is one where a student has in-person instructional contact for at least 20 percent of the total weekly time for the course; a remote course is one where a student has in-person instructional contact for less than 20 percent of the total weekly time for the course, but is not an online course; and an online course is one where the course content is delivered electronically using the Internet or other computer-based methods.

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.

Educational progress of students enrolled in ALE courses is monitored through an individualized student learning plan (SLP). Rules adopted by the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) specify the content of a SLP, which must include direct personal contact with a teacher at least once per week, estimated hours per week of learning activities by the student, and monthly progress evaluations to assure that students are making satisfactory progress.

Certain practices are prohibited for ALE courses, such as providing compensation or stipends directly to parents, providing an incentive for district staff to enroll nonresident students, and purchasing curricular activities for ALE students unless substantially similar activities are available for regularly enrolled students.

In 2013 the Legislature required that funding for all ALE courses be determined by the statewide Basic Education Allocation rate for grades 9–12, allocated on a student full-time equivalent basis.

Summary of Bill (Recommended Substitute): The Legislature finds that students enrolled in ALE courses benefit from career and technical education (CTE) courses as much as students enrolled in traditional programs of education; defines ALE courses; notes that funding for CTE courses is allocated at an enhanced rate to reflect the higher costs of training and equipment associated with CTE courses and hands-on vocational education; and that it is the intent of the Legislature that the enhanced funding allocation for CTE courses only apply to those ALE courses in CTE that offer a sufficiently hands-on vocational education experience to students.

Three funding calculations are set for ALE courses:

- ALE courses besides those in CTE are funded at the statewide basic education rate.
- ALE CTE courses that OSPI determines require specialized equipment or training to offer, justifying an enhanced funding allocation rate, must receive the enhanced CTE/vocational allocation rate.
- ALE CTE courses that OSPI determines do not require specialized equipment or training to offer must be funded at the statewide basic education rate.

OSPI must adopt rules necessary to implement the bill.

EFFECT OF CHANGES MADE BY EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION COMMITTEE (Recommended Substitute): Three funding calculations are set for ALE courses:

- ALE courses besides those in CTE are funded at the statewide basic education rate.
- ALE CTE courses that OSPI determines require specialized equipment or training to offer, justifying an enhanced funding allocation rate, must receive the enhanced CTE/vocational allocation rate.
- ALE CTE courses that OSPI determines do not require specialized equipment or training to offer must be funded at the statewide basic education rate.

OSPI must adopt rules necessary to implement the bill.

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 on Original Bill (Early Learning & K-12 Education): PRO: SB 5946 (2013) did not intend to preclude CTE from ALE courses and reduce their funding; the purpose of the present bill is to restore funding at the CTE rate for CTE ALE courses. The enhanced funding rate for CTE covers the additional costs of supplemental materials, equipment, and program design. The bill replaces the additional CTE funding for ALE courses that the last ALE reform bill inadvertently reduced.

Persons Testifying (Early Learning & K-12 Education): PRO: Senator Dammeier, prime sponsor; Jeff Bush, Insight School of WA; Tim Knue, WA Assn. for CTE.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony on Substitute (Ways & Means): Both online and brick and mortar ALE courses are a great place for kids to earn CTE credits. These students are looking for alternatives to regular instruction. CTE offers student access to appropriate leadership clubs associated with their coursework. ALE classes such as green design, web design, personal finance, computer technology, coding, and media cost extra money to provide student instruction.

Persons Testifying (Ways & Means): OTHER: Carolyn Logue, K12, Inc.