

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6320

As of January 28, 2014

Title: An act relating to basic education minimum instructional hours.

Brief Description: Concerning basic education minimum instructional hours.

Sponsors: Senators Conway, Cleveland, McAuliffe, Chase and Keiser; by request of Superintendent of Public Instruction.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Early Learning & K-12 Education: 1/27/14.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION

Staff: Susan Mielke (786-7422)

Background: Revisions to the legislative definition of the Program of Basic Education adopted in 2009 require school districts to provide students with an increase in minimum instructional hours from a district-wide average of 1000 hours across all grades, to 1000 hours in each of grades one through six and 1080 hours in each of grades seven through 12. Initially this increase was to be implemented according to a schedule adopted by the Legislature. In 2011 the Legislature specified that the increase would not occur before the 2014-15 school year. The 2013-15 operating budget provides \$97 million to implement the increase in instructional hours for students enrolled in grades seven through 12, beginning with the 2014-15 school year.

School districts may schedule the last five school days of the 180-day school year for non-instructional purposes for students graduating from high school.

Summary of Bill: The increase from a district-wide average of 1000 hours across all grades to 1000 hours in each of grades one through six and 1080 hours in each of grades seven through 12 will not occur before the 2015-16 school year. Any hours scheduled by a school district for non-instructional purposes during the last five school days for students graduating from high school must count toward the minimum instructional hours requirement.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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.

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: School districts appreciate the state funding provided for increasing instructional hours, but it is not going to be used effectively. Increasing the instructional hours results in adding only a few minutes to each class period, which will not have any measurable impact on student achievement. Additionally, it will cause school districts to lose the time used for staff and teacher development. The funding would be better used for phasing in the 24-credit requirement for high school graduation. This will allow districts the ability to add teachers and offer more credits and classes to students. Another alternative would be to add instructional days to the school year; or the state could put some of the funding into materials, supplies, and operating costs for school districts, and some in professional development. It is important to include teacher collaboration in the count of the hours, because our teachers need to work together to identify the needs of students. Also, the five days allowed for high school seniors should count.

CON: There are implementation concerns. But 80 additional hours is a significant increase of instructional hours; it is the equivalent of 15 five-hour days of instruction. We encourage the Legislature to not step back from improving high school instruction. Professional development time should not be counting as instructional hours because it is not instructional time. We do support the opportunity to increase the capacity for students to earn 24 course credits however that may be structured.

OTHER: Implementing the 24-credit requirement for high school graduation is a better use of the funding. However, the \$97 million provided for implementing the additional instructional hours will not fully implement a 24-credit graduation requirement. The 2012 Joint Task Force on Education Funding reported that it would take \$941 million for schools to implement the requirement for 24 credits for high school graduation.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Conway, prime sponsor; Gary Cohn, Holly Martinez, Everett School District; Tom Seigel, Superintendent, Bethel School District; Faith Chapel, Bainbridge Island School District.

CON: Ben Rarick, State Board of Education; Tim Knue, WA Assn. for Career and Technical Education.

OTHER: Larry Francois, Northshore School District; Dan Steele, WA Assn. of School Administrators; Marcus Morgan, Superintendent, Reardan-Edwall School District.