
Appropriations Committee

HB 1345

Brief Description: Adopting a definition and standards of professional learning.

Sponsors: Representatives Lytton, Magendanz and Bergquist.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Defines "professional learning" as a comprehensive, sustained, job-embedded, and collaborative approach to improving teachers' and principals' effectiveness in raising student achievement.
- Provides additional descriptions of effective professional learning, and specifies content, context, and process standards.

Hearing Date: 1/18/16

Staff: Jessica Harrell (786-7349).

Background:

According to a meta-analysis of research conducted by the Washington State Institute for Public Policy, general professional development for teachers such as workshops, seminars and conferences does not have a positive benefit-to-cost ratio in terms of improving student achievement, although professional development that is focused on improving teaching in a specific academic content area such as mathematics, reading, or science does show benefits.

Some states, including Michigan, Kentucky, Idaho, and New Jersey, have adopted statewide definitions and standards for high-quality professional development or professional learning, and then encourage or require professional learning activities by schools and school districts to meet them. The definitions and standards in these states have been informed by the work of a national organization called Learning Forward (formerly the National Staff Development Council).

Summary of Bill:

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.

Findings and Intent.

Findings are made that:

- Effective professional learning enables educators to acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, practices, and dispositions needed to help students learn and achieve at higher levels.
- A clear definition of professional learning provides a foundational vision that sets the course for how state, regional, and local education leaders support professional learning in order to advance student learning. It also serves as a piece of critical infrastructure and an accountability measure.

Intent is expressed to adopt a statewide definition of effective professional learning. Each public school and school district should establish targeted, sustained, relevant professional learning opportunities that meet the definition and are aligned to state and district goals.

Definition.

The term "professional learning" means a comprehensive, sustained, job-embedded, and collaborative approach to improving teachers' and principals' effectiveness in raising student achievement. It also fosters collective responsibility for improved student performance and must comprise learning that is aligned with student learning needs, educator development needs, and school district or state improvement goals.

Professional learning is an ongoing process that incorporates differentiated, coherent, sustained, and evidence-based strategies that improve educator effectiveness and student achievement. Professional learning should include the work of established collaborative teams of educators who commit to work on an ongoing basis to accomplish common goals and who are engaged in a continuous cycle of professional improvement focused on:

- identifying learning needs using multiple sources of data;
- defining a clear set of learning goals;
- continuously assessing, through reflection, observation, and sustained support, the effectiveness of the professional learning in achieving learning goals, improving teaching, and assisting all students in meeting state academic learning standards;
- using formative and summative measures; and
- realizing the three primary purposes for professional learning: (1) individual improvement aligned with individual goals; (2) school and team improvement aligned with school and team improvement; and (3) program implementation aligned with state, district, and school improvement goals and initiatives.

Facilitation of professional learning should be by well-prepared school and district leaders, including curriculum specialists, central office administrators, principals, coaches, mentors, master teachers, and other teacher leaders. Professional learning may be supported by external expert assistance.

Standards are specified for content, process, and context of professional learning. Definitions are included for the terms: differentiated; job-embedded; student outcomes; and sustained.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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