

SENATE BILL REPORT

HB 1345

As of March 27, 2015

Title: An act relating to adopting a definition and standards of professional learning.

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

Sponsors: Representatives Lytton, Magendanz and Bergquist.

Brief History: Passed House: 3/05/15, 91-7.

Committee Activity: Early Learning & K-12 Education: 3/19/15.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION

Staff: Matthew Lemon (786-7405)

Background: The Washington State Institute for Public Policy (WSIPP) conducted meta-analyses of research on various approaches to professional development for teachers. WSIPP found that professional development that is not targeted, defined as providing more time and funding for activities such as workshops, conferences, summer institutes, and time set aside during the school year for staff development without directing how those resources are used, does not increase student achievement, on average, and does not have a positive benefit-cost ratio.

However, WSIPP found that other approaches to teacher professional development can increase student achievement, on average, and have positive benefit-cost ratios. These approaches include the following:

- Targeted Professional Development. Targeted professional development focuses on improving teaching in a particular content area such as reading, math, and science, and/or in a particular grade level. Most targeted programs in WSIPP's analysis included a summer institute in addition to training provided during the regular school year.
- Professional Development on the Use of Data to Guide Instruction. Professional development on the use of data to guide instruction involves training teachers on how to use student academic assessment data to improve instruction. This type of professional development is usually paired with computer software that tracks and reports student assessment data to teachers.
- Teacher Coaching. Teacher coaching is a form of job-embedded professional development. These programs typically assign a full-time, trained teacher to an

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individual school to serve as a coach. Generally, coaches work directly with classroom teachers one on one or in small groups to help them improve their instructional strategies. Coaches observe teaching, provide individual feedback, engage in co-teaching sessions, model effective instructional practices, and provide workshops.

WSIPP rated each of the three approaches above as "evidence-based" in a recent inventory of evidence and research-based practices, activities, and programs for use in Washington's Learning Assistance Program. In the same inventory, WSIPP rated professional learning communities, teacher induction and mentoring programs, and online professional development and coaching programs as either research-based or promising practices.

Summary of Bill: The Legislature's intent is to adopt a statewide definition of effective professional learning and that each public school district should establish targeted, sustained, relevant professional learning opportunities that meet the definition and are aligned to state and district goals.

The term professional learning is defined to mean 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. It must have as its primary focus the improvement of teachers' and school leaders' effectiveness in assisting all students to meet the state learning standards.

Professional learning must incorporate differentiated, coherent, sustained, and evidence-based strategies that improve educator effectiveness and student achievement, including job-embedded coaching or other forms of assistance to support educators' transfer of new knowledge and skills into their practice.

Other characteristics that professional learning should include relate to identifying learning needs, defining clear goals, continually assessing effectiveness, using formative and summative measures, and alignment with individual, team, school, district, and state goals.

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

Standards are specified for the content, process, and context of professional learning and definitions are provided for the following terms: differentiated, job-embedded, student outcomes, and sustained.

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: Teachers need professional learning opportunities that meet both their needs as educators and the needs of their students. Educators and the public support high-quality professional learning to help students and teachers address new standards and support learning in a variety of subjects. Effective professional learning cannot be accomplished through short one-time trainings. Professional learning must be sustained over time in a coherent and aligned fashion in order to promote change. Teachers must have the support to work collaboratively and it takes time, commitment, and clear goals to improve professional learning. This bill establishes that students and educators should be evaluated using multiple sources of data; ensures the use of formative and summative assessments to assess the effectiveness of professional learning; defines students outcomes to include both academic and non-academic measures; and ties professional learning to the state's goals, priorities, and academic learning standards. The bill supports the type of professional learning that will result in a positive return on investment.

The bill is grounded in research about the most effective ways that educators learn including results from WSIPP which show this approach will result in better outcomes for students. This is an important step in ensuring that educators are given the opportunity to access evidence and research-based professional learning strategies. The bill is widely supported by teachers, principals, central office staff, and other individuals who are familiar with the most effective practices for supporting teachers. Currently each district across the state has its own view on what professional learning looks like but there should be consistency. This bill sets the policy foundation to support a consistent, systemic, and structural approach to professional learning across the state and will promote equity in access to and the practice of professional learning. A common definition of effective professional learning can help districts assess programs and opportunities they plan to offer, and can help the State Board of Education to assess the quality of district requests for instructional-day waivers.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Rachel Johnson, Sumner School District, Teacher; Paige Folsom, Clover Park School District, Lakewood; Jessica Vavrus, Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction; Jene Jones, League of Education Voters; Lucinda Young, WA Education Assn.; Janis Avery, State Board of Education; Caroline King, WA STEM.

Persons Signed in to Testify But Not Testifying: No one.