

SENATE BILL REPORT

HB 1345

As of February 19, 2016

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; 1/27/16, 81-16.

Committee Activity: Early Learning & K-12 Education: 3/19/15, 3/31/15 [DPA, DNP]; 2/18/16.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass as amended.

Signed by Senators Litzow, Chair; Dammeier, Vice Chair; Fain, Hill, Mullet and Rivers.

Minority Report: Do not pass.

Signed by Senators McAuliffe, Ranking Member; Billig and Rolfes.

Staff: Alia Kennedy (786-7405)

Background: Professional Learning. The Washington State Institute for Public Policy (WSIPP) conducted meta-analysis 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, 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.

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.

- 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 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: 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: 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: Professional learning ensures that teachers are able to effectively instruct important content areas. The teacher is the single most important factor in predicting student success. Effective teachers require high-quality, job-embedded, continuous professional learning. Reframing professional learning is an important shift toward supporting a vital state resource. Washington needs to invest in innovative models of professional learning. Continuous professional learning is essential to meeting student achievement targets and the diverse needs of students. The definition of professional learning provided in this bill allows principals and administrators to advocate for the needs of their schools. The bill ensures that future state dollars are used to develop professional learning strategies that will improve education and close the opportunity gap. Research supports that a basic framework is the first step in providing meaningful professional learning. The standards of professional learning provided in this bill are research-based and create a much higher degree of confidence that funding professional learning actually leads to student achievement. The bill is a product of statewide collaboration among stakeholders. The bill provides greater access to high quality instruction in our state.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Gene Sementi, West Valley School District Superintendent; Sara Ketelsen, Director of Policy at Teachers United; Jessica Vavrus, Washington State School Directors' Association; Cary Evans, Stand for Children; Jene (Jenna) Jones, League of Education Voters; Marni Campbell, Highline Public Schools; Tony Byrd, Everett Public Schools/Associate Superintendent.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: No one.