

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5415

As of February 2, 2016

Title: An act relating to professional educator learning days.

Brief Description: Concerning professional educator learning days.

Sponsors: Senators McAuliffe, Mullet, Chase, Rolfes, McCoy, Billig, Lias, Fraser, Cleveland, Keiser and Conway.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Early Learning & K-12 Education: 1/26/16.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION

Staff: Alia Kennedy (786-7405)

Background: A professional learning day is a scheduled work day during the school year for teachers and other staff to engage in activities for the purpose of improving student learning and implementing education reform. Professional learning days are generally state funded and administered at the discretion of each school district.

According to 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. However, professional development that is focused on improving teaching in a specific academic content area, such as mathematics, reading, or science, does show benefits.

Washington authorizes targeted professional learning days, or learning improvement days, for certificated instructional staff. The definition of a learning improvement day is limited to development in the areas of mathematics, science, and reading. However, school districts can use local levy funds to provide professional development in areas outside the statutory definition of a learning improvement day.

The definition of basic education does not currently include professional learning days or learning improvement days. School districts are provided a certain amount of basic education funding for the purposes of professional development, but are not required to expend those funds for that purpose.

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.

Summary of Bill: The bill as referred to committee not considered.

Summary of Bill (Proposed Substitute): "Professional learning day" is added to the definition of basic education.

Beginning in the 2016-17 school year, the Legislature will annually provide additional time and resources for content-specific professional learning days for each state-funded certificated instructional staff, paraeducator, and school building-based administrator. The focus of the professional learning day must address either the school district or individual building goals.

School districts are required to fund one professional learning day for each certificated instructional staff, paraeducator, and school building-based administrator. Compensation for a professional learning day is the same as the employee's regular salary.

A professional learning day is equivalent to one full school day; however, school districts may organize the professional learning day into separate time blocks so long as it equals one full school day. The professional learning day must take place outside of the minimum 180-day school calendar.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 21, 2016.

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: The Legislature needs to have a strategic response to the teacher shortage that includes teacher preparation, and creates a workplace that encourages teachers to stay in the profession and build their skills. To retain high quality teachers, it is essential that the Legislature provide them with financial and professional support. The reasons high attrition of new teachers is low compensation, lack of professional development opportunities, and stress. It is critical that professional learning be part of basic education. Professional learning time should not be at the loss of learning time of students. Late arrivals and half days interfere with the opportunity of students to learn. The bill provides professional learning days for principals, teachers, and paraeducators, and allows them to come together as a team or in separate groups as needed. The bill allows school districts to determine the focus of professional development. One day is not enough. Educators need continuous staff development throughout the year. Research suggestions that ongoing, high quality, content specific, standards based professional learning is essential for teachers to gain and maintain the knowledge necessary to increase student achievement. Most common reason for waiver requests are professional learning days, particularly with smaller schools. Clarity is needed as to the definition of individual school district or building goals. The bill treats classified paraeducators as a part of the education team. Dedicated time for staff to meet on how to implement emerging changes in education would be helpful.

OTHER: The state used to fund five days of professional development. Every proposal indicates that professional development is important. Schools should not have to give up instructional time to do professional development. The funding for professional development is not there. The state needs to first address the *McCleary* issue.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Lucinda Young, Washington Education Association; Jim Kowalkowski, Superintendent of Davenport School District and Director of the Rural Education Center; Jack Archer, State Board of Education; Doug Nelson, PSE/SEIU 1948; Jerry Bender, Association of Washington School Principals.

OTHER: Randy Dorn, Superintendent of Public Instruction.

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