

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 5803

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As Reported by Senate Committee On:  
Early Learning & K-12 Education, February 19, 2015

**Title:** An act relating to the notification of parents when their children are below basic on the third grade statewide English language arts assessment.

**Brief Description:** Concerning the notification of parents when their children are below basic on the third grade statewide English language arts assessment.

**Sponsors:** Senators Dammeier, McAuliffe and Keiser.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Early Learning & K-12 Education: 2/16/15, 2/19/15 [DPS].

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION

**Majority Report:** That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5803 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Litzow, Chair; Dammeier, Vice Chair; McAuliffe, Ranking Member; Billig, Fain, Hill, Mullet, Rivers and Rolfes.

**Staff:** Susan Mielke (786-7422)

**Background:** In 2013 the Legislature created a process for school districts to follow when a student in third grade scores below basic on the statewide English language arts (ELA) assessment. Below basic means at level one in a four-level scoring system. The process requires a meeting with the student's parent or guardian, teacher, and the school's principal before the end of the school year to discuss appropriate grade placement and recommended strategies to improve the student's reading skills. For students to be placed in the fourth grade the strategies discussed must include a summer program or other options identified by the parents, teacher, and principal to prepare the student for fourth grade. School districts must obtain the parent's or guardian's consent regarding the grade placement and improvement strategy that must be implemented by the school district.

**Summary of Bill (Recommended Substitute):** The process addressing third-grade students reading below grade level is changed. The meeting required with the student's parent or guardian, teacher, and the school's principal before the end of the year is eliminated. Instead, each spring, prior to the administration of the statewide student assessment in English

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language arts, elementary schools must require meetings between teachers and parents of students in third grade who are reading below grade-level or who scored in the basic or below-basic level on the prior year's statewide assessment. At the meeting, the teacher must inform the parents of the reading improvement strategies that are available for the student before fourth grade and the district's grade placement policy for the following year. Schools that have spring parent teacher conferences may use those meetings to comply with the requirement. For students to be placed in fourth grade the strategies provided by the school district must include a summer program or other options to meet the needs of the student.

If a third grade student scores below basic on the third grade statewide student assessment in English language arts, and the student's parents or guardians did not participate in a spring meeting then the principal must notify the student's parents or guardians of the following:

- the below basic score;
- an explanation of the requirements of this section;
- the intensive improvement strategy options that are available;
- the school district's grade placement policy;
- contact information for a school district employee who can respond to questions and provide additional information;
- a reasonable deadline for obtaining the parent's consent regarding the student's intensive improvement strategies that will be implemented; and
- the student's grade placement.

For students who do not have a score on the third grade statewide assessment but the district is able to anticipate from using district or classroom-based assessments that the student's performance is equivalent to below basic in English language arts then the spring meetings and the notification by the principal must occur.

The principal must also provide a reasonable deadline for obtaining the parent's consent regarding the student's improvement strategies to be implemented and the student's grade placement. If the school district does not receive a response from a parent by the deadline or a reasonable time thereafter, the principal must decide the student's grade placement for the following year and the improvement strategies that will be implemented. If the principal and parent cannot agree on the appropriate grade placement and improvement strategies then the parent's request will be honored.

**EFFECT OF CHANGES MADE BY EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION COMMITTEE (Recommended Substitute):** Clarifies the language addressing the spring meeting and adds that the spring parent-teacher conferences could meet the requirement of having a spring meeting. Provides that if a student whose parent did not attend the spring meeting scored in the below-basic level on the statewide assessment then the principal must notify the parents of the below-basic score and provide additional itemized information. Adds for students who do not have a score on the third grade statewide assessment that if a district is able to anticipate from using district or classroom-based assessments that the student's performance is equivalent to below basic in English language arts then the spring meetings and the notification by the principal must occur.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Not requested.

**Committee/Commission/Task Force Created:** No.

**Effective Date:** The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect immediately.

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony on Original Bill:** PRO: This is a common-sense adjustment on the legislation that passed in 2013 to give students a strong start in reading literacy. The current assessment timeline does not provide sufficient time for a meeting before the end of the school year. The spring parent-teacher conferences are a better time for meeting with the parents and will get interventions to students earlier than the current law. Thank you for not requiring retention since retention is not an effective intervention. Teachers are constantly gauging where students are in relation to where they should be to be so the teachers should be able to identify students who are performing below grade level. An earlier meeting also enables districts to better plan for summer programs. While we do not believe in using test scores for grade promotion, this bill fixes the problem of requiring a meeting with parents outside of the meetings bargained by the school districts; therefore it relieves school districts from an unfunded burden. Please fast track this bill so it can provide guidance to districts for this year's spring conferences.

**Persons Testifying:** PRO: Senator Dammeier, prime sponsor; Wendy Rader-Konofalski, WA Education Assn.; Charlie Brown, Tacoma School District; Chrys Sweeting, Glenn Malone, Traci Frank, Puyallup School District; Jessica Vavrus, Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, Assistant Superintendent for Teaching and Learning; Shauna Heath, Seattle Public Schools; Jerry Bender, Assn. of WA School Principals.