

SENATE BILL REPORT

ESSB 5803

As Passed Senate, March 3, 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: Senate Committee on Early Learning & K-12 Education (originally sponsored by Senators Dammeier, McAuliffe and Keiser).

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Early Learning & K-12 Education: 2/16/15, 2/19/15 [DPS].
Passed Senate: 3/03/15, 39-9.

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 Engrossed Substitute Bill: 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,

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prior to the return of the results of the statewide student assessment in English language arts, elementary schools must require meetings between teachers and parents of students in third grade who are reading below grade level or who, based on formative or diagnostic assessments and other indicators, are likely to score in the below-basic level on the 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 regularly scheduled parent teacher conferences may use those meetings to comply with the meeting 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 no earlier meeting took place 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; and
- 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.

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.

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.