

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6195

As of February 12, 2016

Title: An act relating to basic education obligations.

Brief Description: Concerning basic education obligations.

Sponsors: Senators Rivers, Rolfes, Litzow and Billig.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Early Learning & K-12 Education: 1/18/16.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Creates the Education Funding Task Force to continue the work of the Governor's informal work group on implementing the program of basic education.
- Appropriates \$500,000 for the Washington State Institute for Public Policy to contract for independent professional consulting services.
- Directs the Legislature to take legislative action by the end of the 2017 session to eliminate school district dependency on local levies for implementation of the state's program of basic education.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION

Staff: Susan Mielke (786-7422)

Background: Basic Education. The Washington State Constitution (Constitution) provides: “It is the paramount duty of the state to make ample provision for the education of all children residing within its borders. . .” The Washington Supreme Court (Court) has interpreted this to mean that the Legislature must define an instructional program of basic education for public schools and amply fund it from a regular and dependable source.

In 2009, the Legislature adopted a revised basic education funding allocation model for public schools based on prototypical schools. The use of prototypical schools is intended to illustrate the level of resources needed to operate a school of a particular size using commonly understood terms such as class size, hours of instruction, and specified staff positions. In 2010, the Legislature set targets and a timeline for phasing in specified funding

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enhancements to the basic education program by 2018, including enhancements to student transportation; materials, supplies, and operating costs (MSOC); statewide, full-day kindergarten; and a reduction in kindergarten through grade three (K-3) class size.

The 2015-17 omnibus appropriations act included sufficient funding to fully implement the enhancements to student transportation, MSOC, and statewide full-day kindergarten. The 2015-17 appropriations also continued the phase-in of K-3 class size reductions. The four-year balanced budget outlook includes the remaining step to implement the enhancement to reduce the K-3 class size to 17 students.

In 2012 the Court issued its opinion in the *McCleary v State* lawsuit. The Court found that the State had failed to meet its paramount constitutional duty to amply fund the costs of its basic education program using the pre-2009 funding model. The Court provided that state funding should reflect the actual costs of providing the legislatively defined instructional program of basic education. The Court identified state salary allocations as one area of shortfall. The Court noted that some of the difference between actual salaries and state allocations represented permissible incentive pay that went toward non-basic education related tasks. However, districts pay for some salaries that are likely a basic education responsibility using local levy funds. The Court reaffirmed that reliance on local school district levies for funding basic education is unconstitutional because local levies are not a regular and dependable funding source since levies are temporary, subject to approval by the voters, and highly variable. Local levies can be used by school districts for enrichment purposes.

The Court retained jurisdiction to help ensure progress by the State in meeting its constitutional obligation. In subsequent orders, the Court has directed the State to provide the Court with a plan for full funding of all aspects of basic education. In 2014, the Court declared that the state's failure to submit a plan constituted contempt of court, and in 2015 the Court imposed a fine of \$100,000 per day until the Legislature adopts a complete plan for complying with its constitutional duty by the 2018 school year.

Educator Compensation. The Legislature allocates money to each school district for state-funded school employee salaries. The actual salaries paid to certificated instructional staff and classified staff are subject to the collective bargaining process, within certain limits set by the Legislature.

Certificated Instructional Staff (CIS). State funding for teachers and other certificated instructional staff salaries is provided through the state salary allocation model, which uses education and years of experience to vary the salary levels. The salary allocation is increased for each additional year of experience, up to 16 years, and for additional education, up to a Ph.D. School districts must pay at least the minimum salary on the state salary allocation model and cannot exceed the average salary calculated on the state salary allocation model.

Certificated Administrative Staff (CAS) and Classified Staff (CLS). There is no state salary allocation model for certificated administrative staff or classified staff such as bus drivers, food service workers, custodial staff, and class room aides. Each school district receives an allocation for these staff based on historical salary allocations, adjusted for cost-of-living increases.

Local School District Levies. School districts are authorized to raise funds locally for their districts through excess levies. Since 1977 the Legislature has limited the amount school districts may request from their voters and collect through maintenance and operation (M&O) levies. The maximum amount that may be raised is based on the state and federal funding received by the district in the prior year. The amount that may be raised is typically referred to as the district's levy authority.

The levy lid is the limit on school districts' levy authority. Under current law, 205 of the 295 school districts have a levy lid of 28 percent of the district's state and federal funding, which was temporarily increased in the 2010 legislative session from 24 percent. This means that school districts may request voter approval and collect \$0.28 for each \$1 of state and federal revenue the district receives. The other 90 school districts have a levy lid ranging from 28.01 percent to 37.90 percent.

Additionally, in the 2010 legislative session, the Legislature increased a school district's levy base to include certain non-basic education revenues formerly allocated by the State in addition to the revenues the district actually receives from state and federal sources. Effective with the levies for calendar year 2018, the levy lid will revert to 24 percent and the increases will be removed from the levy base.

Local Effort Assistance. The Local Effort Assistance program (LEA), or levy equalization, was created in 1987 to mitigate the effect that above-average property tax rates might have on the ability of a school district to raise local revenues through voter-approved levies. The LEA is expressly not part of basic education. The amount is calculated based on equalizing tax rates to a statewide average for a certain equalization rate. The current LEA equalization rate is 14 percent. In calendar year 2018, the LEA equalization rate will decrease to 12 percent.

Four-year balanced budget outlook. In 2012, the Legislature enacted a law requiring the state operating budget to be balanced for the two-year biennium in which it is offered and the projected state operating budget to be balanced for the following two-year period based on current estimates for state revenues and the projected cost of maintaining the current level of state programs and services. Together, these two requirements are often referred to as the "Four-Year Balanced Budget Outlook."

Washington State University (WSU) Report. The Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI) has a web-based system where the Information and Condition of School (IOCS) facilities are documented and stored. The 2015 Legislature provided \$200 million for competitive class size reduction construction grants to assist districts with building or remodeling K-3 classrooms. School districts interested in applying for a grant must first certify a count and usage of all K-3 classrooms in the ICOS system. The WSU extension energy office must verify the count of necessary added classrooms for a district to receive a grant.

Professional Educator Standards Board (PESB) Report. The PESB Brief Addressing Recurring Teacher Shortages includes data, analyses, and recommendations for the Legislature that include:

- funding and requiring public higher education institutions to develop priority production area recruitment and enrollment plans, including recruiting strategies;
- increasing the funding for alternative routes for teacher certification and educator retooling programs;
- centralizing and funding marketing and recruitment;
- establishing competitive beginning teacher pay and aligning salary increases with teacher certification;
- funding statewide beginning teacher induction and mentoring; and
- providing forecasting tools for school district hiring needs.

Summary of Bill: Findings and Intent. It is noted that the Legislature has demonstrated its commitment to funding its program of basic education including student transportation, MSOC, full-day kindergarten, and K-3 class size reductions. Legislative intent to complete the scheduled phase-in of the K-3 class size reduction in accordance with the four-year balanced budget outlook; to provide state funding for competitive salaries and benefits that are sufficient to hire and retain competent certificated instructional staff, administrators, and classified staff; and to minimize any disruptive impact to school districts and taxpayers is provided. Legislative findings that the lack of transparency regarding school districts' use of local levy funds limits the Legislature's ability to make informed decisions about educator compensation are made. The Legislature declares that data and analysis on the source of compensation funding, duties, uses or categories for which compensation is paid above the state's allocation is necessary to inform the Legislature's decisions.

Education Funding Task Force Established. The Education Funding Task Force (EFTF) is created to continue the work of the Governor's informal work group on implementing the program of basic education. The task force consists of eight legislators, two members from each of the two largest caucuses of the House of Representatives and the Senate; and the governor or his designee as a non-voting member to serve as a facilitator. Recommendations of the EFTF require an affirmative vote of five of its members and must be submitted to the Legislature by January 9, 2017. Staff support is provided by the Office of Program Research, Senate Committee Services, and the Office of Financial Management. EFTF meetings are open to the public and must include the solicitation of input from the public.

The EFTF must review compensation and labor market data and analysis provided by a contracted consultant, previous studies provided to the Legislature, the WSU report on the inventories and conditions of Washington's schools, and the PESB's report on teacher shortages. The EFTF must make recommendations regarding the following:

- compensation that is sufficient to hire and retain the staff funded under the statutory prototypical model and an associated salary allocation model;
- whether future salary adjustments should be incorporated into the salary allocation model and if so, the method for providing adjustment;
- whether a local labor market adjustment formula should be incorporated and, if so, the method for adjustment, including considerations for rural and remote districts and districts with economic distressing factors that affect recruitment and retention;
- how to achieve sufficient classroom facilities to fully accommodate K-3 class size reduction, while maintaining the existing shared responsibility of local districts and the state to fund school construction;
- improving or expanding existing educator recruitment and retention programs;

- local M&O levies and local effort assistance;
- local school district collective bargaining;
- clarification of the distinction between services provided as part of the state's statutory program of basic education and services that may be provided as local enrichment;
- the provision and funding method for school employee health benefits; and
- sources of state revenue to support the state's statutory program of basic education.

Independent Professional Consulting Service. The Washington State Institute for Public Policy, in consultation with the EFTF, must contract for independent professional consulting services to collect and analyze K-12 public school staff compensation and labor market data. SPI must collect the data from school districts with sufficient time for the consultant to accomplish the work required. The consultant must provide an interim report by September 1, 2016, and a final report by November 15, 2016.

Legislative Action. The Legislature must take legislative action by the end of the 2017 session to eliminate school district dependency on local levies for implementation of the state's program of basic education.

Appropriation: An appropriation in the amount of \$500,000 for the 2015-17 biennium is made to the Evergreen State College to fund the Washington State Institute for Public Policy to contract with independent professional consulting services.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: Yes.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: These are thorny issues that need to be addressed with a sense of urgency by a bi-partisan group using a thorough and thoughtful process on a reasonable timeline and this bill seems to do that. The funding streams need be tied to student outcomes. Every day that goes by the use of local levies by school districts are creating greater disparate salaries across the state. You need expertise from the K-12 funding field to help with finding a solution that works.

CON: This is a plan for a plan, which is not adequate action. You are ignoring the needs of over one million students in public schools. This bill creates the appearance of action but it does not provide full funding of basic education. The problem is not a lack of data; it is a lack of leadership. There is no sign that the Legislature feels any urgency to end the dependency of local levies to fund basic education. You can meaningfully impact the students in schools by acting this session and not waiting until later to do so.

OTHER: We appreciate that there will be open public meetings but are disappointed and concerned because the state must invest new revenue that is dedicated to fully fund basic education and no funding is provided in this bill. You must do more this session for our over one million students. While we do support finding a final solution to fully fund basic education, this bill continues to delay real action on these hard decisions and merely adds

another task force. You need to repeal tax breaks and pass additional taxes to provide a real solution. When students do their homework they have to face the consequences; the same should apply to legislators and when you do not act it is still the students that must face the consequences of your inactions. The Supreme Court understands what is needed to fund basic education and that is funding and not research. If research is done then it needs to be focused on finding new revenue that can be supported in a bi-partisan, collaborative approach. The timeframe is very tight for the Legislature to act and still give sufficient time to school districts to be able to implement the solution. In addition to addressing compensation, special education, LAP, and ELL funding should be increased to provide sufficient assistance to these students who need more help. Please think about the student outcomes you want from the K-12 education system as you determine how you will pay for it. There needs to be a careful transition as the State provides more state dollars remove district reliance on local levies to fund basic education.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Jene (Jenna) Jones, League of Education Voters; Alan Burke, WSSDA; Amy Anderson, AWB.

CON: Melissa Westbrook, Seattle Schools Community Forum blog; Dan Grimm, Superintendent of Public Instruction; Ben Rarick, SBE.

OTHER: Eden Mack, Washington State PTA; Dan Steele, WA Assn of School Administrators; Summer Stinson, Washington's Paramount Duty; Asher Ravona, Third Grader (9 years old); Michael Muto, Father of public school students; Shawn Lewis, Spokane Public Schools; Julie Salvi, Washington Education Association; Neil Strege, WA Roundtable; Mitch Denning, Alliance of Educational Associations.

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