

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6245

As of February 1, 2016

Title: An act relating to visual screening in schools.

Brief Description: Concerning visual screening in schools.

Sponsors: Senators Litzow, Hill, Fain, Rolfes, McAuliffe and Mullet.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Early Learning & K-12 Education: 1/28/16.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION

Staff: Ailey Kato (786-7434)

Background: Current law requires every board of school directors to provide for and require screening for the visual and auditory acuity of all children attending schools in their districts. Auditory and visual screening must be made in accordance with procedures and standards adopted by the State Board of Health (BOH). BOH must seek the recommendations of the Superintendent of Public Instruction regarding the administration of visual and auditory screening and the qualifications of persons competent to administer such screening.

Under BOH rules, schools must conduct auditory and visual screening of children in kindergarten and grades one, two, three, five, and seven as well as any child showing symptoms of possible loss in auditory or visual acuity referred to the district by parents, guardians, or school staff. If resources permit, schools must annually screen children at other grade levels.

The BOH rules require students to be screened for distance central vision acuity using a Snellen test chart. The rules do not require near vision screening.

A Health Impact Review of companion House Bill 1865 was requested and is available at the Washington State Board of Health's website: <http://sboh.wa.gov/OurWork/HealthImpactReviews>.

Summary of Bill: Every board of school directors must provide for and require visual screening that includes both distance and near vision screening.

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.

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: Some students are not succeeding in school because of their vision. Students are screened for distance but not for near vision, which affects students' ability to read. It is easy to add near vision screening. This type of screening can change students' lives. Older types of vision screening do not work as well because of the digital world we live in. If vision issues are not addressed at a young age, children's vision can be permanently damaged. Special education resources may not be wasted if near vision screening occurs. Healthy eyes allow students to access their education.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Katie Johnson, retired teacher; Edward Jones, optometrist; Sam Ames, citizen; Jene Jones, League of Education Voters.

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