

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2038

As Reported by House Committee On:
Education

Title: An act relating to collecting data on student transfers and withdrawals from public schools and school districts.

Brief Description: Collecting data on student transfers and withdrawals from public schools and school districts.

Sponsors: Representatives McClintock, Couture, Waters, Rude, Jacobsen, Cheney and Griffey.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Education: 1/11/24, 1/30/24 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Requires the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) to create a voluntary online survey for parents or guardians to complete upon transferring or withdrawing a student from a public school or school district.
- Requires the survey to be operational by September 1, 2024, and specifies notification and website posting requirements.
- Directs the OSPI to prepare annual summaries of the survey data for designated recipients and to post and maintain a statewide aggregate data summary on its website.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 15 members: Representatives Santos, Chair; Shavers, Vice Chair; Rude, Ranking Minority Member; McEntire, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Bergquist,

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Couture, Eslick, Harris, McClintock, Nance, Ortiz-Self, Pollet, Steele, Stonier and Timmons.

Staff: Ethan Moreno (786-7386).

Background:

The Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction.

In addition to its constitutional charge of supervising all matters pertaining to public schools, the Superintendent of Public Instruction and its office has numerous and broad responsibilities prescribed in statute, including:

- making rules and regulations necessary for the administration of public education requirements;
- preparing courses of study and other materials and books for the discharge of education duties;
- fulfilling financial responsibilities, including distributing legislatively allocated funds to districts for the operation of the public school system, and awarding numerous state and federally funded grants; and
- satisfying numerous reporting and other duties assigned by the Legislature.

The Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) tracks student enrollment and related trends. While there are different ways of calculating enrollment, and enrollment totals vary throughout the school year, data from the OSPI indicates that 1.099 million students were enrolled in public schools at the beginning of the 2023–24 year. In comparison, 1.147 million students were enrolled in public schools at the beginning of the 2019–20 school year, the state's highest enrollment total.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

The Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), in consultation with the Washington School Information Processing Cooperative, is directed to establish and maintain a confidential online survey for parents or guardians to complete, at their option, upon transferring or withdrawing their student from a public school or school district.

To avoid duplication in the data collection process, the survey must use the statewide student identifier for each student for which there is a survey response. The purpose of the survey, which must be operational by September 1, 2024, is to:

- collect data for school officials, policymakers, and the public about the purposes and reasons that parents or guardians transfer or withdraw students from public schools and school districts; and
- identify, through the collected data, potential opportunities for improving the public school system to better meet the needs of students and their parents or guardians.

Public schools must notify parents or guardians of the survey and provide a link to it upon receiving a request from a parent or guardian to transfer or withdraw a student.

Beginning December 1, 2025, the OSPI must annually provide a summary of the data received through the survey during the school year preceding the issuance of the report to the public schools and school districts from which survey responses originated, and the education and fiscal committees of the Legislature. The OSPI must also post and maintain an aggregate statewide summary of the data on its website.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

As compared to the original bill, the substitute bill:

- directs the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), in establishing and maintaining a confidential and voluntary online survey for parents or guardians, to consult with the Washington School Information Processing Cooperative;
- specifies that, for the purpose of avoiding duplication in the data collection process, the survey must use the statewide student identifier for each student for which there is a survey response;
- specifies that the purpose of the survey is to: collect data about the purposes and reasons that parents or guardians transfer or withdraw students, and identify, through the collected data, potential opportunities of improving the public school system and to better meet the needs of students and their parents or guardians;
- removes provisions obligating school district superintendents to provide parents with a link to the survey upon receiving declarations from parents indicating intent to withdraw a child from a public school and provide for home-based instruction;
- directs the OSPI to ensure that implementation of the survey provisions occurs in conformity with requirements governing the privacy of student education records;
- removes: the requirement that school districts post the survey on district and individual school websites, and provisions encouraging public schools and school districts to make the survey link available through their internet-based communications and other digital and nondigital communications;
- requires the annual summary reports of the OSPI to be for the school year preceding their issuance;
- requires the summary data posted on the OSPI's website to be statewide aggregate data;
- defines "statewide student identifier" using an existing definition in statute; and
- modifies intent language.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date of Substitute Bill: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the

session in which the bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) The public sector uses exit surveys to collect feedback for improvements. Public schools are losing students, and unless policymakers know why they are leaving, we cannot do better. The goal of the survey is to build policy on the results and to do better for students and families. Policymakers need to hear parents, respond, and meet the needs of the students and parents who are their customers.

The Washington School Information Processing Cooperative (WSIPC) is ready to assist. Educational service districts, school districts, the OSPI and other entities use resources of the WSIPC in support of public policy.

(Opposed) Parental privacy should be respected. Contacting parents about the survey is inappropriate.

(Other) There is interest in the idea of a survey, but the bill could go further and require the collection of information from parents with students still in school. A larger sample size should be used for the survey, and requiring the use of qualified researchers with appropriate expertise could strengthen the bill.

A voluntary survey may result in data from a subset of parents and may not be reflective broader opinions.

Superintendents do not need to submit a link to parents who file a declaration of intent to provide home-based instruction; the withdrawal happens at school, so the issue is covered and should be removed from the bill. A superintendent who provides the survey link to a parent may be violating the law.

Persons Testifying: (In support) Representative Stephanie McClintock, prime sponsor.

(Opposed) Julie Barrett, Conservative Ladies of Washington; Carol Rich; Eric Lundberg; Rachel Thornley; and James Brown.

(Other) Eric Pratt; Jennifer Garrison Stuber, Washington Homeschool Organization; Dana Anderson, Washington School Information Processing Cooperative; Nasue Nishida, Washington Education Association; and Mikhail Cherniske, Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.