

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5499

AS OF FEBRUARY 25, 1991

Brief Description: Adopting the student learning alternative program.

SPONSORS: Senators Bailey, Murray and Pelz.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Staff: Larry Davis (786-7422)

Hearing Dates: February 25, 1991

BACKGROUND:

Over the years, the state has enacted a number of requirements in statute and through state agency rules in an effort to enhance the quality of the common school system. The Basic Education Act of 1977 included two major features: it significantly increased the state's contribution to the funding of schools in the state, and specified in detail what was required by the state for a school district to be eligible for "basic education funding."

Recent debate about educational reform and restructuring has focused on providing school districts greater authority to determine policies and practices to meet the varied needs of the students in their communities. It is suggested the state should reduce its requirements, enable districts to shift their attention from compliance requirements to educational outcomes, and hold districts accountable for the educational achievement of their students.

SUMMARY:

Legislative findings are set forth, including education as the most important function of society, and the commitment of resources for the education and welfare of children as the primary investment in the quality of the state's future. The mission of education in Washington is to develop flexible, self-directed, and interactive learners who demonstrate identified attitudes, knowledge, and skills.

STUDENT LEARNING ALTERNATIVE PROGRAM

Districts may comply with the basic education requirement of the State Constitution through the Basic Education Act or through participation in the Student Learning Alternative Program. Districts may begin participating in the Student Learning Alternative Program beginning September 1, 1991.

Eligibility and Applications. Districts are eligible to participate in the Student Learning Alternative Program if they have an approved program to improve student learning. At a minimum, the program must include: 1) formal commitment of the school board, staff, and community to demonstrably improve student learning; 2) specific local standards for student learning that incorporate the state mission for education; and 3) identification of the procedures that will be used to achieve the local standards for student learning.

Districts must submit applications to the State Board of Education to participate in the Student Learning Alternative Program. Applications must include specified information, including: the district's five-year plan, timeline for implementation, and process for updating the plan; and documentation that all parties are committed to work cooperatively during the term of the plan.

STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

The State Board of Education shall approve eligible applications and monitor each district's continued commitment toward implementation of its plan. If the district does not in good faith continue to implement its plan, the state board must withdraw the district's authorization to participate in the program, and the district is subject to the requirements of the Basic Education Act.

If demonstrable improvement in student learning is shown at the end of the five years, the district's program may be extended for another five years. If demonstrable improvement in student learning is not shown at the end of the five years, the district is subject to the requirements of the Basic Education Act.

PROVISIONS APPLICABLE TO PARTICIPATING SCHOOL DISTRICTS

The following provisions apply to districts participating in the Student Learning Alternative Program:

- 1) The district has five years from the time their basic education exemption is granted to achieve measurable improvement in student learning;
- 2) The district must report annually to the public, student achievement and staffing on a district and school basis;
- 3) Each student's parents and teacher must meet at least four times each year to review the student's program and achievement;
- 4) The district must measure the attainment of students using appropriate statewide tests that may be supplemented with alternative means of measurement;
- 5) Each student must demonstrate mastery of essential material to be learned at each grade, course, or unit level. Mastery must be demonstrated before progressing

to another course or unit, being promoted, and graduating.

- 6) The district may allocate staffing in patterns that best suit student learning in the district.

COMPLIANCE EXEMPTIONS

Districts participating in the Student Learning Alternative Program are exempt from statutory requirements relating to: student-teacher staffing ratios, teacher contact hours, program hour offerings, self-study, and student learning objectives.

ADDITIONAL DAYS

Districts participating in the Student Learning Alternative Program shall receive additional state funds equivalent to two working days for each staff member. The district determines how the additional funds may be used.

SUPERINTENDENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

The Superintendent of Public Instruction must provide technical assistance to districts, upon request, in areas such as: successful instructional, organizational, and administrative strategies; curriculum development, assessment of student learning, and program evaluation.

By September 1, 1993, the superintendent must develop methods of measuring the mastery of the attitudes, knowledge, and skills in the state mission of education.

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

The Governor's office is directed to initiate processes to coordinate the Student Learning Alternative Program, graduation requirements, college entrance requirements, and the use of Carnegie units.

Appropriation: none

Revenue: none

Fiscal Note: requested February 22, 1991