

SENATE BILL REPORT

HB 2086

As of April 3, 1995

Title: An act relating to the learning assistance program.

Brief Description: Changing learning assistance program funding provisions.

Sponsors: Representative Brumsickle.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Ways & Means: 4/4/95.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

Staff: Bill Freund (786-7441)

Background: The Learning Assistance Program (LAP) is a state-funded remediation program for students in grades K-9 who need extra help to acquire basic learning skills. LAP funding is based on the percentage of each district's students scoring in the bottom 25 percent (quartile) on the fourth and eight grade tests.

In 1990-91, 22.4 percent of the fourth grade students scored in the lowest quartile on a nationally normed test. A new test was implemented in 1991-92. With the new test, the number of students scoring in the lowest quartile increased to 25.2 percent and is estimated to grow to 29 percent by 1994-95. Questions have been raised about the validity of the new test due to: the jump in the percentage of students scoring in the lowest quartile; and the fact that more fourth grade students in Washington are scoring in the lowest quartile than the national average.

In 1993, due to concerns about the validity of the test, the LAP funding stature was amended authorizing the LAP funding formula to be specified in the appropriations act. For 1993-95, the formula was revised, discounting the test results 14 percent. The superintendent was directed to recommend a new funding formula consistent with the assessment system being developed by the Commission on Student Learning. The new formula recommendation was due by the 1995-97 biennium with provision for the superintendent to delay the recommendation if the assessment system was not developed. Since the assessment system is not yet developed, the superintendent made no recommendation.

Summary of Bill: The authority to specify the LAP funding formula in the appropriations act is extended for two more years, through the 1996-97 school year.

The superintendent is required to develop recommendations for a new LAP allocation formula by December 1, 1995. The recommendations are to be based on the initial development and implementation of the assessment system by the Commission on Student Learning for reading, writing, communication, and mathematics.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on March 20, 1995.

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