

SENATE BILL REPORT

SHB 2608

As Reported by Senate Committee On:
Early Learning & K-12 Education, February 16, 2012

Title: An act relating to adopting early learning guidelines.

Brief Description: Requiring the department of early learning to develop state early learning guidelines.

Sponsors: House Committee on Early Learning & Human Services (originally sponsored by Representatives Kagi, Orwall, Sullivan, Haigh, Maxwell, Kenney and Tharinger; by request of Department of Early Learning).

Brief History: Passed House: 2/10/12, 74-22.

Committee Activity: Early Learning & K-12 Education: 2/15/12, 2/16/12 [DP].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators McAuliffe, Chair; Rolfes, Vice Chair; Litzow, Ranking Minority Member; Eide, Fain, Harper, Hill, King, Nelson and Tom.

Staff: Lidia Mori (786-7755)

Background: The Washington State early learning guidelines were formerly known as the Washington State Early Learning and Development Benchmarks (Benchmarks). The Benchmarks were created in 2005 through a joint effort of the Office of the Governor and the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI). The creators of the Benchmarks recognized the importance of regularly revising the Benchmarks and agreed that they would be reviewed and updated every five years. The Benchmarks were created as a tool to enhance the health and development of children in Washington State. The Benchmarks depict what children typically know and are able to do at various ages, and include ideas to guide the type of activities and interactions that help promote children's development at specific ages.

A guidelines redesign steering committee was convened in October 2010 by the Department of Early Learning (DEL), OSPI, and Thrive by Five Washington (Thrive) to redesign the early learning guidelines based upon the results of a widely distributed user survey and input from diverse stakeholder groups. The outreach process has sought to obtain feedback from

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individuals and communities around the state, with an emphasis on traditionally underrepresented communities. On January 3, 2012, the steering committee began the final round of outreach to solicit advice on the final guidelines.

For parents, early child care professionals, and educators, it is believed that the early learning guidelines will provide information as to what they might expect to see as children grow and learn as well as how to support and even enhance the child's development and learning. It is expected that another benefit of the guidelines will be that teachers can use them as a framework for a learning continuum that will help ease children's transition from one stage of development to the next.

Summary of Bill: DEL, jointly with OSPI and the nongovernmental private-public partnership, must develop early learning guidelines and make them widely available. In addition, the guidelines are to be periodically reviewed and revised with a committee offering broad stakeholder representation and a tribal member from a federally recognized tribe.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: This bill is even stronger now that the guidelines are to be developed jointly with OSPI. The guidelines go through the early elementary years and they should be developed jointly with OSPI. The guidelines are an essential and basic element of any early learning system. Superintendent Dorn is supportive of the guidelines. This is a fine piece of legislation.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Amy Blondin, DEL; Bob Butts, OSPI.